

## **MOTIONS – ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

### **August, 2005**

**Motion 2005:37** To direct the President to create a task force that includes representation from groups already established within NCTE; e.g., ESL Assembly, NCTE/TESOL Coordinating Committee, the Language Commission, the Committee on Racism and Bias. The task force is charged to write a summary document on what we know and what we believe about English Language Learners in mainstream classes where English is the language of instruction. A progress report will be submitted to the EC before the November 2005 EC meeting. A final document will be submitted to the EC meeting before February 2006.

**Motion 2005:38** NCTE will educate its membership so that ELL becomes an intentional part of what we do, such as policy development, conference proposals, materials, resources, surveys, research briefs, and professional development

### **November, 2005**

**2005:52** To adopt the Summary Statement: English Language Learners in English Language Arts Classrooms.

#### **SUMMARY STATEMENT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS (adopted November 16, 2005)**

English language learners are, at present, a growing population throughout much of the United States, even in cities with declining student populations. Issues with such learners are complex, encompassing not only linguistic dimensions, but also social ones and issues related to identity. Many teachers, including many NCTE members, do not perceive this area to be of high interest - at times, the attitude may be that our students are the ones who already speak English; those who do not belong to someone else.

NCTE has, in the past, developed position and policy statements regarding a national language, preservation of a student's first language, and fluency in more than one language. The Council has also made available a limited number of books, articles, and web resources. The challenge is that many teachers do not know of the resources available, and many do not see NCTE as the place to go for help with this issue. NCTE's resources for these topics are not especially popular, and attendance at convention sessions is often thin. The time is right, however, for teachers to develop a strong sense of need for such information. Students who speak other languages are a required subgroup for reporting AYP under NCLB, and they are required to take high stakes tests in English. This policy context, along with a tide of immigration larger than the US has seen in almost a century, makes it imperative for teachers to gain better understandings of strategies, programs, and principles that are successful with ELL students - academically, socially, and in support of strong identities.

NCTE has an existing policy in support of bilingual education. Where bilingual education as a school policy is not practicable, however, even monolingual teachers need, in their English-dominant classrooms, to be able to support students who are learning English as an additional language. It is safe to say that most do not know how. In fact, existing research about how excellent teachers work in this situation is scant, and so the knowledge that teachers need is still undeveloped, or at least not widely shared in the profession.

It is in response to this context that we pursue the following **outcomes**:

### *Shaping policy*

NCTE will be able to document that it has worked to influence the US Department of Education toward flexibility in enforcement of NCLB provisions that address English Language Learners.

NCTE will document that it has reached outside of its membership to persuade educators and the general public to treat the development of advanced, academic literacy in multiple languages as a positive outcome of schooling, and to recognize that speakers of languages other than English bring significant resources toward achieving that outcome.

### *Leading in research and development*

Because of NCTE's efforts in this area, scholars will be able to write extensive reviews of literature on research about learners of English as an additional language in classrooms where English is the language of instruction and the dominant language for the teacher and most of the students.

Most NCTE members will be aware of specific practices for supporting learners of English as an additional language in their classrooms.

A select group of NCTE members will be recognized inside and outside the organization (manifest in their solicitation for opinion and expertise in varied venues) as knowledgeable about research and practice regarding ELL in ELA classrooms.

### *Providing resources*

NCTE will publish the best selling books in the field about English Language Learners in ELA classrooms.

NCTE website resources will regularly be accessed by educators, not yet members of NCTE, searching for information about teaching English Language Learners in English dominant classrooms. People outside the organization will report that they think of the NCTE website as the place to go for this kind of information.

### *Supporting teachers*

NCTE members and other literacy educators will manifest commitment to ELL in their attendance at sessions and conferences, in their attention to online resources, and in their purchase of books.

NCTE will provide ways for teachers to document their learning about English Language Learners in English Language Arts classrooms.

Staff will document that school districts across the country, when confronted with challenges posed by increasing numbers of students who speak other native languages, will seek out NCTE consulting services and resources, because they have heard we have the best people and resources in this area.

### *Executive Limitations*

NCTE takes responsibility for this issue itself, because we are the teachers who are accountable for the literacy learning of the nation. At no time will NCTE assume that the education of students learning English as an additional language in English-dominant classrooms should be the province of TESOL or other ESL groups. Alliances are appropriate, but this issue has a history of

being "someone else's problem," and so alliances are not to be taken as opportunities to replay that history.

Principles of language and literacy learning applicable to those developing literacy in their first language also apply to students who are developing a second language. NCTE's values, beliefs, and principles about reading, writing, and language apply to second language learners, and they must be explicit in materials, publications, statements, and consulting on the Council's behalf.

NCTE will subscribe to no language that expresses a deficit perspectives on language and literacy learners. (See Valencia, 1997 for definition and discussion of deficit perspectives.)

Ethnicity is inextricable from native language in this context, and so sensitivity to ethnic and cultural meanings is important to take into account. Staff should seek advice, when possible, from members of groups being discussed in particular materials.

Documents and positions regarding this issue must make reference to the fact that, in general, NCTE supports bilingual education. It is always a compromise to educate students in classrooms whose language of instruction they do not understand or speak.

Valencia, R. 1997. The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice. London: Falmer.