

*NJ Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/
NJ Bilingual Educators
NJTESOL/NJBE*

Statement Against Bigotry, Harassment and Bullying

NJTESOL/NJBE is an association of educators and administrators dedicated to the instruction of English language learners (ELLs/ELs) at all levels of public and private education. Our interests include classroom practices, research, curriculum development, funding, employment and socio-political concerns. We are strong advocates of multicultural and multilingual education and consistently encourage teachers to tap into the rich resources that ELLs/ELs can contribute to the educational environment.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of reports of violence and harassment aimed at immigrants and anyone who “looks like” an immigrant. Many Americans feel afraid and vulnerable. The Southern Poverty Law Center has noted that “anti-immigrant incidents remain the top type of harassment reported and that nearly 40 percent of all incidents occurred in educational (K-12 schools and university/college) settings.” They have counted “more than 700 cases of hateful harassment or intimidation” in the US since Election Day. Documented instances of bigotry and violence among school students have been filmed and reported by newspapers and televised news. Condemnation of diversity has exploded and politically-incorrect discourse is frequently openly used, many times with pride.

Some English Learners and students representing diverse cultural backgrounds have suffered hateful harassment because of their ethnicity and culture. This has dire consequences for the learning process. Curtiss Branch concluded, after reviewing the research on ethnic identities, that ... *(they) have implications for the learning process because they empower the learner to self-define and ... because they are ways by which the learner can exercise some control over their life space. (p.222)*

Some teachers who teach culturally diverse students or belong to diverse ethnic groups find themselves forced to answer and dispel bigotry attempts in the classroom and school environment. Many times, they must explain to their students -some of them small children- the chosen words of bigotry and harassment.

NJTESOL/NJBE strongly denounces behaviors of bigotry, harassment and bullying.

As a result of these incidents targeting our student and teacher population, we fear for their well-being and safety. Teaching and learning are not possible in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation. We stand in solidarity with families, teachers, and students and demand fairness and protection for cultural and ethnically diverse students and teachers. We must confront bigotry while striving to make our communities safe and welcoming.

Please contact NJTESOL/NJBE if you have any information you would like to share or if you would like to be involved in advocacy. njtesolbe@gmail.com

Branch, C. W. (1994) Ethnic Identity as a Variable in a Learning Equation. In Hollin, King, & Hyaman (Eds), *Teaching diverse population: Formulating a knowledge base*. Albany, NY: State University of NY Press