

## Position Statement on Language Rights

Around the world and throughout New Jersey, awareness and prevention of bullying, harassment, and hate crimes have become paramount in schools. There is increasing concern over verbal and/or physical attacks against those who are perceived as different from the majority. The 2013 Census indicated that in New Jersey approximately twenty-seven percent (27%) of the total population live in households where another language is spoken at home (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Consequently, New Jersey has grown and continues to grow through the economic, linguistic, and cultural contributions of all immigrants. As a result of this phenomena, and the world becoming more interconnected, NJTESOL/NJBE has created this position paper to express our value and respect for diversity, multiculturalism, and collaboration in our communities.

Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and *national origin* in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Home language is connected to the national origin of our population. Moreover, the ability to communicate in more than one language provides access to opportunities in this increasingly interdependent world, therefore the language diversity in New Jersey should be viewed as a rich resource to be cultivated, rather than as a deficit that needs to be eradicated.

As a result of these data and laws, legislators and policy makers must focus their efforts on creating an environment that fosters bilingualism and multilingualism. International TESOL has historically opposed restrictive language policies, as stated by its Resolution on Language Rights (1987) and its Position Statement on Language Rights (2000). As an affiliate of International TESOL, NJTESOL/NJBE concurs with this position.

- *It is TESOL's position that indigenous and immigrant people within a country have a right to retain and use their own native languages in public and in private without interference on the part of any governmental agency, regulations, or statutes. TESOL advocates that the governments and the people of all countries have a special obligation to affirm, respect, and support the retention, enhancement and use of indigenous and*

*immigrant heritage languages of those members in its society who wish to maintain and express themselves, without fear of reprisal, in diverse public and private settings.*

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In light of the current public instances whereby English speaking individuals demand that all others speak English, NJTESOL/NJBE wants to ensure that diversity among human beings is celebrated. As the professional association for English language educators, NJTESOL/NJBE values individual language rights and respect for diversity and multiculturalism.

In order to address these issues, NJTESOL/NJBE supports

- Development of district policies that respect and support the use of heritage languages and the acquisition of a Seal of Biliteracy
- Development of practices that value diversity and the civil rights of language minority students

## References and Resources

Languages in New Jersey <https://statisticalatlas.com/state/New-Jersey/Languages>

TESOL Member Resolution on Language Rights (1987) [http://www.tesol.org/advance-the-field/tesol-member-resolutions/member-resolutions/tesol-member-resolution-on-language-rights-\(1987\)](http://www.tesol.org/advance-the-field/tesol-member-resolutions/member-resolutions/tesol-member-resolution-on-language-rights-(1987))

TESOL Position Statement Opposing Bullying, Harassment, and Hate Crimes  
<http://www.tesol.org/docs/pdf/12299.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

TESOL Position Statement on Language Rights  
<http://www.tesol.org/docs/pdf/2115.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000d et seq.  
<https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI-Overview>

US Census <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2013/demo/2009-2013-lang-tables.html>