



A Professional Association of Educators in English Studies, Literacy, and Language Arts

Resolution on the Students' Right to Their Own Language

1974 NCTE Annual Business Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana

Background

Members of NCTE and its constituent group, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), became concerned in the early 1970s about a tendency in American society to categorize nonstandard dialects as corrupt, inferior, or distorted forms of standard English, rather than as distinct linguistic systems, and the prejudicial labeling of students that resulted from this view. Be it therefore

Resolution

Resolved, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm the students' right to their own language—to the dialect that expresses their family and community identity, the idiolect that expresses their unique personal identity;

that NCTE affirm the responsibility of all teachers of English to assist all students in the development of their ability to speak and write better whatever their dialects;

that NCTE affirm the responsibility of all teachers to provide opportunities for clear and cogent expression of ideas in writing, and to provide the opportunity for students to learn the conventions of what has been called written edited American English; and

that NCTE affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to understand and respect diversity of dialects.

Be it further Resolved, that, to this end,

that NCTE make available to other professional organizations this resolution as well as suggestions for ways of dealing with linguistic variety, as expressed in the CCCC background statement on students' right to their own language; and

that NCTE promote classroom practices to expose students to the variety of dialects that comprise our multiregional, multiethnic, and multicultural society, so that they too will understand the nature of American English and come to respect all its dialects.

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