

Position Statement Opposing Bullying, Harassment, and Hate Crimes

Around the world, starting in the 1980's, awareness of bullying, harassment, and hate crimes has been increasing. Whether it be racial and linguistic minorities; immigrants; or gay, lesbian, or transgendered individuals, there is increasing global concern over verbal and/or physical attacks against those who are perceived as different from the majority.¹

English language educators working with racial and linguistic minorities; women; and gay, lesbian, and transgendered people must make clear that diversity among human beings is not only to be tolerated but celebrated. As the global association for English language educators, TESOL values individual language rights, collaboration in a global community, and respect for diversity and multiculturalism. TESOL strongly opposes bullying, harassment, and hate crimes, which it defines as follows:

Bullying, which can be carried out by individuals or groups, is unwanted conduct affecting the well-being of people at school and at work, related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics. Harassment consists of various unsolicited behaviors that make the recipient feel uneasy, humiliated, intimidated, or uncomfortable.

Hate crimes are crimes such as murder, sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, manslaughter, arson, and other crimes involving bodily injury to any person in which the victim is intentionally selected because of the actual or perceived race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other difference. Often there is an abuse or misuse of power.

In order to address these issues, TESOL supports

- Development of educational practices by TESOL professionals to assist students and scholars experiencing bullying, harassment, and hate crimes
- Development of educational practices by TESOL professionals to teach majority- group members the value of diversity and of the human and civil rights of minorities
- Creation of opportunities by TESOL professionals for members of minority groups to educate their peers
- Encouragement by TESOL professionals of appreciation and respect for those who do not look/ behave like the majority

*Approved by the Board of Directors
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¹ According to Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics on reported hate crimes in the United States in 2007: "50.8 percent were motivated by a racial bias, 18.4 percent were motivated by a religious bias, 16.6 percent were motivated by a sexual orientation bias, and 13.2 percent were motivated by an ethnicity/national origin bias. One percent involved a bias against a disability." (source: http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel08/hatecrimestats_102708.htm)