



December 3, 2006

From: New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
To: Chancellor Bennett,
Regents Bottar, Tisch, and Cohen, EMSC Co-chairs
CC: NYSABE, TESOL, Press

As the professional organization representing the ESL teachers in this state, NYS TESOL feels it is our duty to support the three motions suggested by Regent Saul Cohen in his memo of November 21 of this year. The arguments made by Regent Cohen in support of his motions are both moderate and sound. They recognize the specific needs and strengths of English Language Learners and how they differ from other classes of students as determined through years of educational experience and careful research. They also indicate the contradictions and confusions of the assessment mandates that the US Department of Education wishes us to follow. Regent Cohen's suggestions can replace these mandates with sound forward-looking educational practices, long a characteristic of educational policy in our state.

Due to the fact that the US Department of Education mandates contradict past policy and portions of the law they claim to be enforcing, we believe the actions suggested stand an excellent chance of being upheld in court. Significantly, the passage of Regent Cohen's motions will provide a high profile spotlight on weaknesses of the NCLB Act as the Act comes up for renewal. They will allow the Regents to influence the upcoming debate in a way that will likely render any court case moot. By contrast, inaction will implicitly support perpetuating the current situation, with all its negative effects on educational administrators, schools, teachers, and children. Clearly, this is the right moment to act.

Ultimately, the decision made on these proposals will have a profound effect on the educational experience and future prospects of many young New Yorkers. We hope the rest of the Board will take the lead in making a stand for these children's future.