

Position Statement on Immigration Reform in the United States

In the debate over immigration reform in the United States, proposals to the immigration system have ranged from purely punitive measures to indiscriminate amnesty. With estimates of 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States, there are clearly challenges with the U.S. immigration system that need to be addressed. However, because of the complex issues that surround immigration, any reform of the U.S. immigration system needs to be fair, equitable, and comprehensive. Punitive “enforcement-only” proposals will not promote security, and are contrary to the values of pluralism, acceptance, and tolerance that are ingrained in the history and culture of the United States.

TESOL strongly opposes measures that would create unduly harsh provisions, such as criminalizing those who work with or offer assistance to immigrants and their families. English language educators working with immigrants and their families are focused not on policing their students’ immigrant status, but on making better educated citizens and providing effective language instruction leading to high educational achievement for all learners.

As the world becomes more and more interconnected, TESOL values respect for diversity, multiculturalism, and collaboration in a global community. The United States has grown and prospered through the measurable and immeasurable economic, linguistic, and cultural contributions of all immigrants, and continues to do so. TESOL urges open and reasoned debate and avoidance of heated rhetoric that will only inflame anti-immigrant sentiment. Problems with the U.S. immigration system will only be fixed through fair, equitable, and realistic solutions that treat all human beings with respect.

In addressing the many issues surrounding the U.S. immigration system, TESOL encourages intelligent and open debate. TESOL supports carefully considered and comprehensive immigration reform proposals that

- lower the barriers that unfairly target students and scholars who wish to come to the United States legally for academic and language study;
- offer orderly and fair pathways to legal residency and citizenship for all immigrants;
- create opportunities for immigrants to learn English and civics by building and enhancing the capacity of current systems and programs;
- foster respect and appreciation for the contributions made by all immigrants and those who work with them; and
- respect the human and civil rights of immigrants and their families.

*Approved by the Board of Directors
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