New School Year ~ New Roads to Build! This is going to be the BEST School Year Yet!

Preparing for the First Day of School is always exciting! In our family that means excitement at all age levels! My grandson has a countdown calendar to his first day of PreK. Back to School Shopping for a new backpack and school supplies is still at the top of the list for my youngest daughter, too. Only this year, her countdown is for her first day of student teaching second grade! As anticipation builds for the new school year, we all believe that “This School Year Will Be THE BEST!” Yet!

So, how are we going to do that? If you take a few tips from Kay Winters in her book, *This School Year Will Be THE BEST!*, there are some milestones for students to gauge the school year. For example: *When the nurse measures, I’ll be taller. This year I’ll kick the soccer ball into the right goal. I’ll get the BEST seat on the bus. I hope I won’t be a vegetable in the school play!*

As teachers, we want to have the best school year, too! My best school years have been ones in which I have enjoyed learning new things and creating engaging lessons, then sharing them with colleagues, students, and parents. It is in collaborating and building those critical relationships that the most memorable learning occurs. This summer I was reminded of the positive synergy that occurs when passionate, creative people work together! I experienced it first hand at the 2015 NNSTOY National Conference in Salt Lake City, and in The TEACH to Lead Summit held in Washington, D.C.

In Salt Lake City, the theme was Transformers: Innovating Education. Importance was placed on building your Professional Learning Toolkit to Transform Professional Learning, Elevate Teacher Leadership, Strengthen Student Voice Through Social and Emotional Learning, and Sharing Instructional Practices. NSTOY-PA has been given the wonderful opportunity to continue striving for these same goals through the TEACH to Lead program. Fran Nesta has always said that we should take advantage of opportunities that will strengthen NSTOY-PA’s ability to make a difference for students and teachers in Pennsylvania. This is one such opportunity! 
Our team would like to thank everyone in the NSTOY-PA membership who gave input to the proposal that was accepted for the TEACH to Lead Summit in Washington DC July 22-24, 2015. We came in to the process with what we thought was one plan, but we left with two separate logic plans both related to collaboration but on different levels. In the coming months, you will hear more about the formation of a Teacher Advisory Panel who will build communications with PDE and our policy makers, as well as a state wide Teacher to Teacher initiative to share best practices with pre-service and new teachers. The exciting thing about the TTL Summit was that we were given the time, resources, and collaboration opportunity to shape this proposal to best meet the needs of the teachers and students in our Commonwealth. Our efforts caught the attention of the Summit organizers which led to Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, being escorted to our table to discuss our ideas. He liked that we were a team comprised of teachers, a PDE representative, a PA State Representative on the Education Committee, a Superintendent, and a Principal Fellow in the US Department of Education. All these voices working together as one unit to Make a Difference for Teachers and Students!

I understand that this is a first step in launching our TEACH to Lead proposal and there is work to be done. But, we are moving forward with dreams and ideas that were started by so many of our NSTOY-PA members. I believe that we truly stand on the shoulders of GIANTS ~ starting with Violet Geib and the Charter members of NSTOY-PA twenty years ago! Exciting things continue in PA. We need to get that word out! Look for us in the Twittersphere @nstoypa! Our summer has been a productive one. I can’t wait to see those ‘Back to School’ commercials and those School Buses go down the street! I look forward to hearing about all of your adventures in the classroom. Our students are the center of what we do. And that is the way it should always be!

Together Let’s Make This THE BEST SCHOOL YEAR YET!
With my Rose-Colored Glasses Firmly in Place,

Cindy O.
NSTOY-PA, President

NSTOY-PA TTL Team: Sharif El-Mekki, Principal Mastery Charter School & US Department of Education Principal Fellow; Karl Streckewald, PDE; Angela Homan, NSTOYPA; Sam Rotella, Superintendent Southern Tioga Schools; Janet Miltenberger, NSTOYPA; Mairi Cooper, 2015 PASTOY; Cindy Ollendyke, NSTOYPA and PA State Representative Dan Truitt – Education Committee

PS: See you at our 20th Year Anniversary Celebration December 6-8 in Hershey, PA!
Welcome to our Membership the Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year 2016 Finalists!

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We Can’t Wait to Meet You! See you in December!
Silent Auction 2015
Tips for Success

I wanted to take this opportunity to reflect on last year's auction and give you some tips and ideas for this year. First of all, we have to remember that this fund-raising activity for membership pins is wedged into a very busy schedule. Second thing to keep in mind is that the auction is not the main function of that evening. We need to promote it as much as we can before and during the event, but it is a secondary activity. Past auctions have shown that high ticket items are not overly successful because people are not expecting those items. Some of them only appeal to a small number of people. The Disney tickets are the one exception to that. Most everyone knows they are available, and while they don't go for much more than half value, that is part of the point of getting a deal at the auction for the buyer. The last key things to remember is that we don't have time for a live auction and that we have a limited audience for the items we bring.

So, you are probably wondering what we should be doing to be most successful. Think about our attendees: teachers, spouses, parents, and children. Many of our members and their families are incredibly talented and creative. We also love having things other people have made: cake, cookies, quilts, jewelry, stained glass, small bags, cutting boards, mittens, and other small beautiful items of remembrance. If you have a craft or hobby that lends itself to such things, consider making one or two items and donate them. Remember that everyone is on some kind of budget, so if we can sell many items at a reasonable price we will do well. Unfortunately, some very beautiful, expensive items have been donated that did not come near to bringing their original value. Please don't spend a lot and then be disappointed if it does not bring what you paid. Small activity baskets for kids or items that children can enjoy or buy for their parents for Christmas are good items. If you received something as a gift you cannot use, consider donating it to the auction. You could donate jewelry that you don't wear anymore but someone else would love to add to their collection. Teachers love books and activity baskets they can use in their classrooms. We all love unique, antique, cultural, and artsy things. If you are downsizing, consider donating smaller, interesting items - someone new will be fascinated with them. Essentially, don't over spend to make a donation; make it personal, make it fun, make it affordable. Variety is the spice of life and makes for a fun auction. Start making or collecting your items to donate and come prepared to bid often and bid high on the other donations. See you at the auction.

Carol Johnson
Silent Auction Chairperson
Thank You, Teachers!
A Collaborative Writing/Art Display to Celebrate NSTOY-PA’s 20th Year

Everyone has a special teacher who has helped along the way. Imagine a tree filled with apples, where on each apple is a note that thanks a specific teacher. This is the display I would like to make for this year’s Forum, and here’s how you can help...

1. Write note of thanks that mentions your teacher by name. Share a small story that shows how this teacher was extraordinary.
2. Send the note in the body of an email to me (it’s that simple).
   michaelmiller229@gmail.com

All of the notes will be displayed on a large tree-shaped structure placed in a prominent place at the Forum. Forum attendees will also be asked to participate, so the tree will continue to produce fruit during the course of the conference.

My best application essay was where I wrote about Mrs. Spaulding, my high school art teacher. I later sent her the essay with a note of thanks. Later that year, I was invited to a special birthday party for her, where many people spoke fondly about her as a mom and grandmother. I was so surprised when her husband asked if he could share my essay with group. Fortunately, someone else read the essay, because I would not have been able to read it with becoming too emotional. Each year at the Keystone awards, we all fight back, or maybe shed some tears as the student presenters speak about their teachers. I hope this display can capture and help share some of these stories.

Thanks for your help,
Mike

Presenters Needed for "Best Practices" Session

In the last few years the "Best Practices" sessions at the SAS Institute/ NSTOY-PA Forum given by the outgoing NSTOY-PA classes have attracted nice crowds and received rave reviews from attendees. So, this year, an additional "Best Practices" session will be added for any NSTOY-PA member who would like to present. This is an excellent opportunity to promote what is happening in classrooms across Pennsylvania. Many of the attendees of the SAS Institute are administrators interested in taking new ideas back to their school and/or district. Please share your insight, innovation, and creativity! Presentations should be about ten minutes in length and include some sort of visual (power point, keynote, handout, etc.). Janet Miltenberger, NSTOY-PA Professional Development Chair, will be organizing this event. Please send your topic idea to her at janet.miltenberger@gmail.com by Oct 30, 2015. She will be happy to answer any questions you have and provide the support you need for your presentation. The "Best Practices" session will be held in Hershey on December 7, 2015.

NSTOY-PA is now on Twitter! Please follow us @nstoypa. Our goal is 1,000 followers in a year! We will be using this account to share our initiatives for TEACH to Lead. Join us to lead education in Pennsylvania!!!
And Meeting the President Wasn’t The Best Part

by Anthony Grisello

Yes. I just said that. I do not want to diminish the opportunity to speak with President Obama in the Oval Office. In fact, it was so overwhelming that I mistakenly blew off the Secretary of Education Arne Duncan when I was three people away from meeting the President. (He tapped me on my shoulder while waiting in the vestibule outside the Oval Office to shake my hand and congratulate me. I shook his hand and was like, “Yeah, yeah, thanks.” I later apologized and he told me it was OK, totally understanding the intensity of the moment.)

Back to the President – meeting the President was a lot like my wedding. You stress about it up until the second it happens and then the moment is there and gone before you realize it. The President was very calming and low key. He shook my hand and we shared some words. I don’t remember what the Oval Office looks like, nor if I smiled for my photo. The ceremony naming the new National Teacher of the Year, Shanna Peeples, was in the Rose Garden on a warm, beautiful day. Her speech was amazing and focused on how teachers sell hope to their students. We ended the ceremony with the chorus from our “song” written by NSTOY-ND Dean Aamodt. The President then left with Shanna to go get coffee at a nearby coffee shop.

I am sure you have lots of questions about things I either omitted from the recollection above or glossed over. Please feel free to find me in December or write to me before to get all the details. But that one moment of my experience is not a defining moment. Truth is, when I met Mr. T (yes, that Mr. T. “I pity the fool.”) in the early 90’s, it was much more intense. His charisma stayed with me for days. The President was so chill and laid back, that it just made me admire him a bit more. But it definitely didn’t define my experience. Learning that we, as teachers, are part of a huge family that spans the globe and that we are strong and need to be heard has been the definition of my experience. In Arizona this seed was planted and in DC it was nurtured. On both occasions, I grew closer to many of the other STOYs from across the country. Their stories are incredible and their passion is infectious. I learn something new every time I speak with them. I grow as a teacher leader and as a learner. I can’t express how powerful it is to develop this bond between all the other teachers. Here is a sample of their wisdom:

“Teacher leadership is not an appointment, it is an attitude.” – James E. Ford, NSTOY-NC

“Do something that scares you every day: like zip line.” – Shanna Peeples, NSTOY-TX, NTOY 2015

Message to education majors and new teachers, “Who are you? Why are you?” – Jody Zepp, NSTOY-MD

“What we learn becomes a part of who we are.” – Clemencia Spizzirri, NSTOY-IA

This empowerment continued to grow in Colorado at the Educational Commission of the States National Forum. Spending a conference with policy makers from all over the country was extremely eye opening, while listening to my colleagues speak on educational issues, challenging these policy makers to focus on all students as learners was one of the most inspiring moments of my career. Their poise and poignancy was impressive. It makes me proud to be part of such an incredible profession and family.
We now arrive at Space Camp in Hunstville, Alabama. This trip is integral to the whole experience. It allowed us to see each other as students while further developing our bond as a family. The introduction of several international teachers, as well as teachers from other groups, made the family larger and even more global. We were all pushed to exhaustion with the simulations, challenges and learning opportunities. We spoke with astronauts, engineers, and current NASA employees. Overall, it was an incredible experience furthering the connection between all of us.

I now look towards October when this group of teachers comes together for our “final” event in Princeton, NJ. I am excited to be further inspired by their energy and focus. But I am also sad that it is our last planned event. I do know that this family will not easily be torn apart. Social media is enabling us to stay part of each other’s lives and classrooms. But this is not the only reason this family will remain strong. This family is strong because it is full of confident teacher leaders determined to ensure high quality education for all students. This family is the foundation of change in education. And the best part is, this family is all-inclusive. This family includes my NSTOY-PA family. We are strong. We touch the future. We are teachers. Nothing is more awesome than that. Not even meeting the President.

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2015-16 NSTOY-PA Dues Information

DUES ARE NOW BEING COLLECTED
ALONG WITH CELEBRATION AWARD DONATIONS
Annual Dues are $30.00 Life Memberships are $200.00

Donations to the Celebration Award help our TOY with traveling expenses, etc.
Please consider donating to this worthy cause.
MAIL YOUR DUES & YOUR CELEBRATION AWARD DONATIONS
MADE OUT TO NSTOY-PA TO:
ELLEN G BURKE
12 S. PHEASANT STREET
CLEONA PA 17042-3268
There is a dark and gloomy underbelly, which comes with being Pennsylvania’s representative for the National Teacher of the Year events. No one really talks about it, but you can’t avoid it. It is linked to every event, every speech, and every conference. It is the pain of packing to travel.

You read it correctly; packing a suitcase can really stink. Since January, I have flown on 11 flights. Packing for a flight is the worst. When attending the events in Washington, DC, it was easy. I could bring whatever I wanted since I drove and could pack my car to the roof. But with flying, you need to figure out if they charge you for your first bag; you can try to pack using only a carry on; and you cross your fingers that your bags will make it to the destination. (The answers are yes [$25], no [there is no way to travel with only one bag unless you plan on wearing the same clothes two or three times] and usually.)

So once you have decided to check one bag while traveling with a backpack and a carry on, you then need to figure out what you are bringing. It is hard to plan for events when you are not sure if they are business (ugh!), business casual (slightly less ugh!), casual (woo hoo!), or shorts and t-shirt (extreme woo hoo!). I never knew I needed so many clothes, ties, and shoes. I also didn’t know how to squish them all in a suitcase without making them super wrinkled.

My trips were to Arizona, DC, Colorado, and Alabama. These are all very different places, all needing lots of stuff packed. I got to a point where I had a set group of items that always went in the suitcase, which allowed for the greatest number of clothing combinations. I then had to add specific, unique items to make up the rest of what I needed.

It was then that I realized this was like teaching. Our students are like suitcases, which we need to pack with all the things they are going to need at their final destination. What do we need to pack into our students? From my travels this past year, I would say they need a little bit of everything to be prepared for whatever comes their way. It is not enough to churn out great math and language arts students. They need to know how to apply these skills to be creative problem solvers and critical thinkers. Given various tools, they can utilize them together to be more successful in this ever-changing world. They need technology skills, research skills, collaborative skills, and perseverance skills. They need a well-packed bag containing a range of abilities giving them the aptitude to succeed no matter what.

But, they also need the unique items. Our students are going to end up in many different destinations. And just like my travels, each destination is going to require specific skills to enable them. We need to continue to differentiate for all our students helping each of them develop these unique skills. This is not easy, but we need to work hard and continue to reach all students no matter what skills they need.

I have become an expert at taking off my shoes without untlying them. I can empty my pockets in record time and collect my belongings even faster. My travels have been revitalizing and exhausting at the same time. But, I am more determined than ever to make sure every student gets a chance to succeed in this world. Our students are just beginning their journeys, and we must help them pack.
Calling ALL NSTOY-PA Members!

This is a big year for NSTOY-PA: it’s our 20th Anniversary! To celebrate, we are creating a showcase of the wonderful things that are happening in NSTOY-PA members’ classrooms and schools across the state. This showcase will be on display at the SAS Institute/ NSTOY-PA Forum December 6-9, 2015.

What: We would like you to share something awesome that you do.

How: Choose one of the poster formats in Word or Pages, write a description of what you do, and visually depict it with photos
-If you would like, you can add a QR code and/or website address where viewers can find more information
-A submission can be more than one page
-You can submit more than one idea
-Be creative and have fun with it
Send your submission to: janet.miltenberger@gmail.com

When: Submissions needed by October 30, 2015 (but the sooner the better)
For display at the SAS Institute/ NSTOY-PA Forum December 6-9, 2015

We know that you are doing AMAZING things! Please share them so we can “wow” the attendees at this event!

If you make a submission but are not able to attend the Forum, I will take pictures of the event and send them to you.

If you have any questions, please email Janet at janet.miltenberger@gmail.com
I am writing this article from the front porch of our new house. For the past week my life has been about packing, unpacking and making an impressively large pile for Goodwill. In the process I have unearthed the box of “goodies” that my mother saved from my elementary school days. Between many useless worksheets (a sign that education is completely different than it was 35 years ago) I found a writing assignment that my teachers apparently assigned every year. So, in honor of my youth, I thought that I would revisit the assignment...

“What I did on my summer vacation”

My summer began with a trip to Notre Dame University in order to say goodbye to and celebrate the life of one of my childhood friends, Robert Sedlack. Robert and I met 42 years ago on the first day of elementary school. He was none too pleased to be at a new school and so he barricaded the door, forcing his mother to physically push him into the classroom. From that moment on, I watched Robert with a sense of awe. As a professor at Notre Dame University, he argued that “design turns an existing situation into a preferred situation.”

Robert not only used his own designs to impact underserved populations all over the world but also developed a curriculum for his students to realize their potential to create change through design. On the late night drive back to Pittsburgh after the wake, I found myself contemplating Robert’s ability to take the existing situation at Notre Dame University and use it to create preferred situations all over the world. It was a powerful way to begin what has been a transformative summer.

To be perfectly honest, my plan for the summer was to catch my breath, assess my teaching and try to get back into shape. For the first five months as PA teacher of the year, I delivered speeches, wrote articles, conducted our musical and continued teaching...all with very little sleep. While I enjoyed every moment, I especially treasured the time that I spent in conversation with teachers from across the Commonwealth. These conversations were rich and all centered around one common theme, the well-being and success of students. Under this umbrella, three sub themes existed. Most notably, teachers expressed concern that students struggling with poverty or poor home situations did not have the support and services that they needed to succeed. Secondly, teachers felt that that the overwhelming number of initiatives from the federal, State and local levels inhibited their ability to think creatively about their own students and teaching. And finally, many teachers felt that their voices and the voices of students in their classrooms were not being heard by the policymakers who directly influence them.
With Robert’s wisdom and the voices of teachers across PA in my mind, I headed to Salt Lake City to attend the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) conference in early July. This conference is hands down the best professional development experience that I have ever attended. It brings together the State Teachers of the Year, finalists and representatives of State NSTOY chapters for a service project and 3 days of incredible presentations, workshops and networking opportunities. (I can't wait to convince my fellow classmates from the PA class of 2015 to join me at this conference next year in Chicago.) The theme of the conference was “Transformers: Innovating Education.” After three days of listening to and meeting educators who are transforming their students’ lives, their colleagues’ professional experiences and their State policymakers’ understanding, my own path became a little clearer.

Two weeks later, Cindy Ollendyke, Angela Homan, Janet Miltenberger and I headed to a Teach to Lead Summit in Washington, D.C. Our team also included State Representative Dan Truitt (thank you, Anthony Grisillo for connecting us) and Karl Streckenwald from the PDE. The TTL Summit was the beginning of the rubber meeting the road for me. As we hammered out ideas to build a pipeline from our classroom experiences to policymakers in Harrisburg and created a network for expanding and enhancing professional development for pre-service and new teachers, I began to see that we might be able to transform education in the Commonwealth.

I now firmly believe that we can take the existing situation in education in PA and turn it into a preferred situation. It will require the talents and energy of every caring educator in the Commonwealth (be prepared for an email from me) but we can make a difference. We can change the lives of students across the Commonwealth. Because as Cindy says, “We are…PA.”

I am up for the ride and am so hoping that you might come along!

Mairi
We, the National State Teachers of the Year—Pennsylvania, a service organization representing educators, believe that education is that part of the democratic society which contributes to the continued improvement of humankind. Supporting the principles upon which the United States was founded, we endeavor: to encourage professional educators, to promote the image of education through public awareness, to stimulate the personal and professional growth of our members, and to be actively involved in the recruitment of young people into the education profession.

http://www.nnstoy.org/state/

Contact Us

President
Cindy Ollendyke
collendyke@comcast.net

Executive Director
Fran Nesta
francisnesta@gmail.com

Immediate Past President
Lora O’Brien
obrien918@comcast.net

First Vice President
Angela Homan
angteach456@gmail.com

Second Vice President/Forum Chair
Jacqui Wagner
jwagner@pennsylvania.org

Treasurer
Michele Switala
mimiswitala@gmail.com

Secretary
Michael Miller
michaelmiller229@gmail.com

Director of Professional Development
Janet Miltenberger
jmlt@ptd.net

Round II
TEACH Liaison
Lois Rebich
elirebs@aol.com

Technology
Douglas Martin
dgmartin@gmail.com

Round II
Membership
Ellen Burke
beg1242@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor
Lauren Zucker
zuckerlauren@yahoo.com