



## Portrait of a Volunteer

### Bobbi Ciriza Houtchens

Bobbi Ciriza Houtchens teaches at Arroyo Valley High School in San Bernardino, California. She participated in “The Expanding Canon: Teaching Multicultural Literature in High School,” a professional development television series that was produced in collaboration with NCTE. She chronicles some of her many other activities in the following interview.

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#### **What is your volunteer involvement with NCTE?**

I have been involved with NCTE for about 16 years, working first on convention planning, then as an editor for a column in *English Journal*, as a member of many committees, as co-director of the Latino Caucus, and now as a member of the Secondary Steering Committee. I have also volunteered on the Co-Sponsored Speakers Program, giving me a chance to speak to NCTE affiliates around the country.

#### **What keeps you motivated to volunteer?**

I enjoy meeting with other English teachers, sharing practices and stories about our experiences and students. In addition, as a volunteer at NCTE, I have the opportunity to meet with experts in the field of English/language arts and with other dedicated teachers. NCTE is a place for me to renew my passion for teaching and learning.

#### **Can you describe a current volunteer role you have with the Council; what does it entail?**

As a member of the Secondary Steering Committee, I participate in addressing issues the Council faces in regards to high school English. These issues include curriculum, standards, standardized testing, teaching environments, philosophies of teaching, as well as ways of ensuring inclusion and appreciation for our diverse students and the many cultures that exist in our classrooms.

#### **What satisfactions do you derive from volunteering?**

Volunteering at NCTE has provided me with a circle of professional friends that inspire me to continue to battle for the very best for our students. In addition, they motivate me to continue in my own education in order to help me become the best teacher I can be.

#### **How has your affiliation with NCTE and volunteering improved your professional development and your career?**

My affiliation has affirmed my feelings of being a professional, able to engage in professional dialogue with other dedicated professionals. In addition, participation in planning, presenting, and attending NCTE-sponsored events provides me with the latest and the greatest in sound pedagogical practice.

#### **Why would you recommend volunteering to another NCTE member?**

I recommend volunteering to all English/language arts teachers. So often, we become isolated in our classrooms, or have difficulty finding opportunities to dialogue in a professional manner with other

passionate educators. Volunteering at NCTE has opened many doors to me, providing opportunities for me to publish some of my best practices, both in print and video media, as well as opportunities for exploring controversial topics in the field.

**What do you find most useful from among NCTE's professional development offerings of books, journals, conventions, programs, services, etc.?**

I find professional meetings and the journals most useful.

**How has being part of NCTE's educational community improved your abilities as an educator?**

I feel that being part of the educational community has opened my eyes to opportunities, issues, and colleagues around the nation.