Our Column’s Mission

English/Language arts educators are accomplishing great things at the state and national levels, and we want to give a shout-out to all of those working to ensure our students are receiving the best education possible in our field.

This column is designed to share a few of those activities and inspire our members to make connections with their state affiliates because, while good things are definitely happening, we know there’s much more work to be done. We’re hoping other affiliates will borrow some of these ideas, and individual members will step up to be a part of efforts. As educators, we know we can all learn from each other!

Here’s a brief look at some of the state affiliates’ highlights. We think you’ll find them both insightful and inspiring. Our affiliates are developing creative and engaging ways to reach out to its members and to support their professional development.

Georgia Council of Teachers of English (GCTE)

The Georgia state organization has a website (https://gcte.wildapricot.org/about) filled with their recent and upcoming activities, from award-winning teachers to mini-grant winners and opportunities for the publication of student writing. But, leading the way is this first for the Georgia Council of Teachers of English—a writing retreat in Fall 2018 featuring Antero Garcia of Stanford University’s Graduate School of Education. GCTE teamed up with the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project to offer three days of writing and professional development in the perfect place to write—the scenic Amicalola State Park & Lodge. Jennifer Dail is chair of the conference, and organizers hope to make it an annual event.

Hmmm . . . fall weather, located in a beautiful state park, a nationally known presenter, and a three-day getaway with educators who love writing and teaching writing. Sounds like a recipe for success!

Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English (OKCTE)

The Oklahoma affiliate, Oklahoma Council of Teachers of English, showcased some of the state’s best student writers as well as its best new English teachers during a spring awards ceremony. And activities were to kick off with a collaborative poetry session to get attendees in the right spirit.

If you check out their website (http://www.okcte.org), you’ll find plenty of opportunities for professional development. Among those provided are OKCTE Voices (http://www.okcte.org/okcte-voices) and a resources page that links to state and national resources (http://www.okcte.org/resources.html) to support English/language
arts educators who want to make their classrooms engaging learning opportunities for all students.

While honoring the best new ELA educators, it seems OKCTE is providing opportunities (and links!) to help educators continue to be leaders in the profession. (And you don’t have to be teaching in Oklahoma to take advantage of that collection of resources!)

Arizona English Teachers Association (AETA)

Arizona’s state NCTE affiliate (Facebook page, https://tinyurl.com/ychuv99) is taking its message—and its resources—to all four corners of the state—literally. State leaders decided to make a deliberate push to get educators from all areas of the state involved in the organization. The group developed a plan to expand their organization’s reach beyond the state’s major cities so that those in rural areas could also receive professional development. And that’s how the Four Corners Scholarship project began.

Through hundreds of emails, they made teachers across the state aware of their efforts to help increase involvement in AETA. In its initial year, the organization offered scholarships to three teachers from the small Arizona towns of San Manuel, Nogales, and Ganado to attend the annual state conference, acccording to Anthony Celaya, director of diversity for the group. Those educators were honored at the conference, and they were recruited to help the state connect with more educators from their communities.

It’s a great model for a state program reaching out to make sure all teachers have access to resources, and the group is planning to build upon the past year’s success. Knowing the value of professional development, they’ve found a creative way to spread the word.

When you can spend a few winter days on an island connecting with others who teach English/language arts, what’s not to love? That’s exactly the opportunity the South Carolina Council of Teachers of English provides with its 2019 conference at Kiawah Island, SC.

As if the setting isn’t enough, attendees will be focused on “No More Faking: Authentic Literacy, Meaningful Learning” as a way to get students seeing the lifelong value of literacy—and not just something to be used for tests. They’ll have sessions focused on project-based learning (PBL), with an expo to highlight even more PBL opportunities, plus an Advanced Placement teachers’ workshop. And don’t forget the session strands for National Writing Project affiliates.

To encourage even more sharing of resources and insight into the profession, the SCCTE (http://www.sccte.org) is taking its peer-reviewed journal, South Carolina English Teacher, into the world of digital publications next year. That means their annual publication will be available at your fingertips, even if you’re not on a beautiful island somewhere.

Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts (PCTELA)

The Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English and Language Arts has made the most of its NCTE 2016 Teachers for the Dream Affiliate Award. And, as it turns out, that was only the beginning for their mentoring projects.

The state affiliate (http://www.pctela.org) was one of only five recipients of the 2016 award and used the grant funds to support the mentoring of three preservice/early-career teachers in Pennsylvania. Those individuals were paired with board members of PCTELA, who served as mentors. This year, the organization received additional funds for two more projects for preservice teachers, so their progress is being recognized.

Congrats to PCTELA for continuing its efforts to bring diversity into the classroom and into the discussion.
Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts (MATELA)

The NCTE affiliate group Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts strives to coordinate collaborative efforts in its geographically large and predominantly rural state. MATELA (http://www.matelamt.com/) has active partnership with the state teachers’ union, creation of joint memberships with state math and science curriculum groups, collaboration with the Montana Office of Public Instruction’s ELA Coordinator, and support of Writing Education for Learners and Leaders, which provides writing workshops in rural areas.

Its executive board of officers includes both veteran and novice members, representing educators from state universities, public high schools, and middle schools across the state. Historically, they have seen a greater membership of secondary educators, so they’re working to provide more connection to elementary teachers, including key conference speakers.

MATELA publishes its newsletter, Update, three times a year and Montana English Journal annually. Update has been recognized by NCTE as a Newsletter of Excellence. Its most recent issue includes young adult, middle grade, and children’s book reviews, information on upcoming professional development within the state, and information about a teacher’s poetry website. The variety of contributors to the publication grows as they make a significant effort to hear the voices of their members.

Get Involved

Exciting things are happening at the affiliate level, and we hope you’ll find inspiration in their efforts. If you’re involved at the state level, thank you! If you’re not, don’t be shy—contact your affiliate so you can be part of these activities. Need some help figuring out who to contact in your affiliate? You can find affiliates on the NCTE website under Groups! For questions regarding having your state affiliate highlighted in future columns, please email lagoodson@ksu.edu.