

## NYS TESOL Updates and News of Note

by Susanne Marcus, Immediate Past President and Chair, Transition Team

Roles in every nonprofit organization are becoming more specialized, a reflection of the fast-paced, technology-based world in which we all live. In our efforts to keep up with this demanding environment, your NYS TESOL Executive Board (EB) has been working to update our organizational structure as well as the job descriptions of all Executive Board roles and responsibilities.

“Nonprofit leaders have a complex task: Carrying out challenging missions with limited resources and sometimes conflicting demands in the midst of constantly evolving networks of organizational and personal relationships” (Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, 2014). Recognized leadership competencies include ethics, integrity, trust, the ability to manage NYS TESOL’s vision and mission, the individual’s presentation skills, the ability to make decisions, to write well, to delegate and follow through, to motivate others, and to set priorities.

NYS TESOL advocates, advances, and enriches TESOL professional leadership statewide. To foster and support this mission and develop our leaders, there has been much discussion over the past five to seven years among members of the NYS TESOL EB on the restructuring of our organization to reflect the rapid changes in information technology and the needs of the growing population of ELLs across our state. This has led us to create positions that did not exist before our cyberworld became such a quick reality, such as the creation of a vice president of advocacy. In addition, to highlight a few of the most recent changes over the past five years, NYS TESOL has successfully implemented an online voting ballot, an active webpage, moved this newsletter, *Idiom*, to online only, and created our first peer-reviewed online journal. All these changes have required us to reconfigure many roles and responsibilities of the EB members; one critical goal has been cultivating a culture of volunteers.

To implement the changes we believe still need to be made, we’ve consulted with Leadership Solutions International (LSI), a consulting firm for nonprofit membership organizations, to create a business plan to guide us in working toward our vision. The objective of consulting was to make our organization run more efficiently and effectively, with more responsibilities delegated to volunteers rather than to paid employees. In this report, we are proud to share with you the work we have completed with Holly Duckworth, CEO of LSI, which we think will bring our operations more in line with other TESOL affiliates.

Under Holly’s guidance, the EB created the Transition Team (TT) to review the structure of NYS TESOL and the roles/responsibilities of our EB members and officers. The TT, comprising former NYS TESOL presidents along with Holly, are: Susanne Marcus (chair), Connie Dziombak, Rebekah Johnson, and Fran Olmos. Together, we reviewed research on how to mentor the emerging and younger leaders in NYS TESOL. Questions we reflected on included:

- What are common leadership competencies for NYS TESOL leaders?
- Is there a model we can use to identify and develop our NYS TESOL leaders?
- How do we validate or modify our assumptions about our organization?
- How can we be innovative and knowledgeable in supporting leadership?

- (By now, all members should have already received a letter from the TT; the letter can also be read on our website.)

NYS TESOL is the only professional organization in our field that specifically supports educators, researchers, and professors at all levels who are concerned about the education of our multilingual learners (MLLs) throughout our state. From the teachers who are the only ESL or bilingual education teacher in their building, to others who are part of a faculty of 100 ESL/BE educators, we must also recognize that other educators of ELLs may be the only educator in their entire district, traveling from school to school to provide services to students in more rural areas of our state.

The time has come for us to have a formalized approach to advocacy at all levels—state, federal, and local. It is clear that ELLs in our public education system are in danger of not receiving an optimum educational experience. This is due to many political and economic factors and not education, but it is all too easy to scapegoat public education as responsible for the ills of society.

Angelica Infante-Green, the recently appointed associate commissioner for the Office of Bilingual Education/ESL and World Languages, has reached out to us to learn more about what is truly happening in the field. Our voices are being heard, and now is the time to speak not only among ourselves, but with our colleagues and administrators who are not in the field of second language acquisition and thus not familiar with working with the variety of ELLs we encounter.

A large aspect of our growth as professionals is the ability to look at a broader landscape. Principle number one of the NYS Blueprint for ELL Success is “All teachers are teachers of ELLs,” and that is now expected of all teachers, teacher-educators, and administrators in our state.

At NYS TESOL, there will be more opportunities for people to participate in leadership positions, to spearhead a time-limited specific project, or to take on a larger role in NYS TESOL. We need you all, and each ESL/ENL or bilingual education teacher needs us, too.

We are your professional organization, where you can find support, answers to NYSED regulation inquiries, updates on new mandates, and much more. We gain valuable insights by talking with our colleagues about the ways we tackle particular challenges in our professional careers. By including all teachers, you will get back so much more than you could ever imagine. As president for two years, and current immediate past president, I can personally attest to what I call the “psychic income” I have gained from my active participation in NYS TESOL.

With the new CR Part 154 regulations at the K–12 level, collaboration between all ESL/ENL teachers and content area or grade-level teachers is a given. In fact, university programs offering condensed and quick course work in applied linguistics/second language acquisition and ESL/BE are growing at an incredible pace!

We are now working closer than ever with our sister organizations and have formed collaborative relationships with others in our efforts to join forces in our advocacy efforts. From this work, to provide perspective on some proposals the NYSED had considered to remedy the shortage of duly certified ESL/BE educators—proposals that we, as professionals, felt were not the optimal solution—we have been able to share our thoughts with policymakers in Albany and offer some more appropriate suggestions.

Finally, always remember that there is strength in numbers. We are reminded of what Margaret Mead said long ago, “Never doubt that a small group of like-minded people can change the world. In fact, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

*Susanne Marcus*

Susanne Marcus  
Chair, Transition Team  
Immediate Past President  
[pastpres@nystesol.org](mailto:pastpres@nystesol.org)

**References**

Minnesota Council of Nonprofits. (2014). Toward a nonprofit theory of leadership and organizational culture. Retrieved from <http://nonprofitquarterly.org/2014/07/28/non-profit-leadership-theory-and-organizational-culture/>