Dear NYS TESOL Members,

Welcome to our Winter 2014 Edition of Idiom. I took on the role of president of NYS TESOL at the 44th Annual Conference, “Empowering ELLS: Equity, Engagement, Enrichment,” in Albany. Now you will see the conference transformed across these digital pages, one of the many ways that NYS TESOL enriches TESOL education across the state. That is how I see my role as well: to carry out the vision of our organization. Our Executive Board recently expressed our vision in these words: NYS TESOL advocates, advances, and enriches TESOL education and professionalism statewide.

My goals as president are to advocate and to listen to the professional concerns of teachers as they relate to our English language learners. My focus this year will be on the new requirements of CR Part 154, which are to be in full effect as of the 2015-16 school year; this also includes the implementation of the Blueprint for English Language Learners Success. The key word here is success, along with high expectations for all students and the belief that all can learn more than one language. I would also like to see us advance using the tools that are readily available to assist us with scaffolding the Common Core English Language Arts Standards.

In addition, as a member representing NYS TESOL on the Bilingual Steering Committee, which recommended the writing of the Bilingual Common Core Progressions, I would like to see that the Progressions, which are now on EngageNY, are used by teachers across New York State. Working with Tanya Amodio from Angelica Infante’s department at the New York State Department of Education, I would like to see professional development for teachers on how to use these progressions to move students forward in proficiency levels as they acquire command over the English language as well as their home language.

In order to enrich our membership, I would like to see our Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and Regions offerings expand across the state. Did you know that one of your member benefits is that you get to choose a Special Interest Group when you join? From Salons to small conferences, such as the Applied Linguistics run by the students in the Applied Linguistics Department at Teachers College, to the Annual Conference, we would like to increase the number of these conferences across the state. Would you like to have a student-run conference on your campus? We can assist you with this! Check the Executive Board listing to contact a SIGs or Regions leader.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to ask you to submit proposals to these events. The first conference I ever submitted a proposal to was the 2007 NYS TESOL conference. The proposal chair, Helaine Marshall, came in and sat in my workshop. Though I did not have more than maybe 15 people in my workshop, Helaine encouraged me and told me to keep on presenting. I have gone on to do just that—present the workshop in different ways and to crowded rooms since then. That encouragement has assisted me in becoming the 2015 president. I am encouraging you too to submit proposals and to volunteer in our organization. You might start by volunteering to assist in a Special Interest Group—or in any area. Speak up on our listserv! We need you!

Sincerely,
Robin Finnan-Jones
President