

Date: January 21, 2020

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To: NSTA Chapters and Associated Groups

From: NSTA Presidential Chain

Subject: Summer Congress

As you know, NSTA is going through an exciting, yet challenging, time of change. As we move to a new digital platform and a new way of interacting with members, it necessitates a discussion of how we interact, not just with members, but also with our Chapters and Associated Groups (CAGs). We want to use our resources wisely and in the best ways possible that will allow us to continue to support, interact, and collaborate with these groups.

Currently, the main interaction with CAGs is via our Council members and during the National Congress on Science Education (NCSE). Council members do an excellent job of interacting with and supporting state chapters. However, the NCSE has been attended by fewer and fewer CAGs each year. As a result, we believe it is time to evaluate the NCSE and examine how NSTA interacts and supports the CAGs.

Historically, the NCSE emerged from a Blue Ribbon Report issued 20 years ago that examined the relationship between the chapters, associated groups, and NSTA. The first annual meeting of the NCSE convened July 13, 2000 in Williamsburg, VA. The purpose of the meeting was to establish and maintain relationships between the groups. The meeting also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss important and relevant topics related to science education, and provide opportunities for current and emerging leaders to enhance their knowledge and skills as they helped to shape the future of the science education profession.

The NCSE is a separate and independent body that identifies, supports, and voices their own positions through the convening of delegates. As an independent body that focuses on science education, the NCSE provides support for national legislation and policy separate from NSTA representing a local perspective.

While the main focus for the NCSE was for the discussion of important and relevant topics related to science education, an additional overarching purpose was to provide opportunities for current and emerging leaders to enhance the knowledge and skills to shape the future of the science education profession.

In the past 20 years NSTA has provided substantial monetary support to both individual chapters and associated groups by sponsoring delegate representation and attendance. In addition, NSTA provides substantial financial support to underwrite meeting space location, meals, technology resources, and other expenses.

Substantial costs are also incurred by the CAGs. Since the CAGs are experiencing the same kind of financial strain and drop in membership as NSTA, their ability to send participants to the NCSE has been limited. As a result, fewer groups have been able to attend the NCSE and to gain from the experience. Simply put, we are now seeing an inequitable system where many chapters that have the greatest need for support from NSTA and could benefit most from interactions at NCSE are not able to participate.

We understand how important the NCSE is to the CAGs and we value the benefits our association incurs from a strong CAG network that supports NSTA at the state and local levels. However, because of the financial situation of most CAGs and the current challenges NSTA is facing, the Presidential chair is proposing the re-visioning of NSTA's relationship with CAGs. Specifically, we want to examine how we can leverage the new NSTA digital platform to hold substantive professional learning opportunities, seminars, online forums, etc. in place of a single summer event. To do so, we are proposing the following:

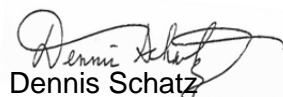
1. Discontinue the current NCSE as a face-to-face summer meeting.
2. Instead, the Congress Planning Committee will immediately develop a process to survey all CAGs to determine the topics, professional learning, and issues that would be of most interest to the state chapters.
3. Armed with this information, the Congress Planning Committee will develop a programmatic schedule(s) proposal and suggest speakers, topics, and issues then work with NSTA staff to determine the best digital method(s) to accommodate their proposal(s).
4. The Congress Planning Committee will, with consultation with CAGs, determine if an alternative face-to-face meeting that would allow more groups to attend (and find valuable) would be feasible.

We realize that this is a significant change to the way we interact with CAGs. However, we believe moving forward in this way increases the opportunities for more CAGs to participate while considering more fiscally responsible methods for possible face-to-face meetings.

As we move forward, the Congress Planning Committee will be helping with the re-visioning. They will seek your input as part of this process during the coming months. We will also be sure to include you in other discussions, updates, and decisions so that you can provide feedback and ideas. In addition, to provide the opportunity to discuss these changes face-to-face there will be a two-hour discussion in Boston. More information about the session will be sent as we get closer to the conference.

Thank you for all that you do for NSTA and for science education.

Sincerely,



Dennis Schatz



Elizabeth Allan



Christine Royce