



New York State
nystea
Theatre Education Association

Perform. Transform.

September 2023

Dear NYSTEA Community,

The most beautiful facet of September is a sense of renewal. No matter how frustrating last year's programming was or how difficult last year's students were, September is a time to start again with a positivity only an educator can truly understand. It is also a time for action: a new school year brings us boundless energy and unfettered creativity after a summer of rejuvenation and reflection. Perhaps the promise of September has contributed to the many well-known songs lauding its arrival. Indeed, *try to remember the kind of September when grass was green and grain was yellow* and please *wake me up when September comes* so we can start the school year anew one *September Morn*.

The *action* of September reflects a wider discussion that the NYSTEA board of directors had at the summer retreat at the Villa Roma. One of our roles is to set the direction of the organization. Through team-building activities, board members analyzed how the actions that we take affect our members' well-being, and we overwhelmingly agreed that **service to members** is our top priority. What we offer to you can make a positive impact on your professional life and personal pursuits, which in turn may help you focus on student growth and achievement. While we principally serve educators, I believe that the focus on students is why we work so hard to make NYSTEA a high-quality organization. I continually ask, "how does this further our vision?" but realistically the most important question for me is, "Is this good for kids?" All the professional development workshops offered, all the classes taught at conferences, all the work on state standards for theater curriculum and certification, and all the networking opportunities afforded professionals affect the transformation of student lives.

For the past nine years, I served as a trustee and past president of the board of education of the East Meadow (Long Island) Union Free School District. In this role, I was able to use my strong background in the performing arts to increase opportunities for students at all grade levels. The new full-day kindergarten program that I helped bring to the district is based on the arts, providing our youngest children with unparalleled access to professional theatre through local partnerships. Twelve school theaters: six elementary all-purpose rooms, three secondary little theaters, and three secondary theaters received significant stage lighting and audio upgrades so that students could create art through technology while hundreds of kids performed on stage.

I bring up the examples from my own school district to illustrate how advocacy can make a real difference in the day-to-day functioning of public schools. NYSTEA's Advocacy Committee is hard at work in helping to keep theater education at the forefront of NYSED discussions, but it is up to individual members like you and me to advocate at the local level for the allocation of funding and resources that keep our theatre programs robust. Voting for school board members who agree with our shared mission is a great place to start! Please reach out to us so that we can help you advocate for theatre education in your local community.

I hope to *see you in September!* Have a wonderful year and please keep NYSTEA informed of your accomplishments.

Sincerely,

Scott M. Eckers
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