



Greetings, NSTOY-PA Friends!

I hope that this newsletter finds you in good health and filled with great anticipation for what the New Year 2012 holds for you. 2011 was certainly a busy year for NSTOY-PA, and we have much for which to be thankful and excited.

It is hard to believe that over a month has already passed since our Pennsylvania Teacher Forum and the Keystone Awards of Excellence celebration in Hershey, PA. For those who were able to attend, I am sure you would agree that, despite the many growing pains and changes that we faced, the event was a wonderful success, friends reunited, and twelve new members were welcomed to our NSTOY-PA family. Congratulations to Tricia Miller, 2012 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year. We are quite certain that she will represent all of us well and will be a positive voice for all Pennsylvania educators.

At our NSTOY-PA Orientation Meeting on Sunday afternoon, I welcomed our members and eager, slightly nervous, Finalists to our Forum with a play on one of my favorite *Good Morning, America* segments called "Your Week in Three Words." I continue to find it fascinating how the essence of what is important and meaningful, emotional and monumental, in our worlds can be conveyed in just three words. If I may, allow me to revisit this theme and reflect on some of the Forum events and happenings, again using the three questions that I posed to my third grade students for their thoughts.

**Question #1: What does SAS stand for?** In typical third grade style, my students responded:

Short And Sweet

Special Air Services

Sugar And Spice

Santa Arrives Soon (You can tell what time of year it was!)

Professionally, however, we know that SAS actually stands for Standards Aligned System. Part of our professional development during our three days in Hershey included information and updates about SAS and how this framework is implemented to support quality education.

In Monday's opening general session, Grant Wiggins shared key inquiries about learning, which include student engagement, persistence in the face of challenges, long-term memory and recall of information, content extension, transfer of learning, conditions for greatest improvement, and autonomy. Dr. Shirley Black and Angela Kirby-Wehr, PDE representatives, followed Mr. Wiggins' presentation with how the SAS framework has been modified and can provide a means for teachers to tap resources that may illuminate and further address the learning inquiries presented by Grant Wiggins. Notable is that the Interventions circle in the SAS framework has been replaced by information on Safe & Supportive Schools and that the Literacy Design Collaborative, a Bill and Melinda Gates initiative, and its accompanying teacher-designed tasks appropriate for the secondary level, can be found on the SAS portal under the Materials & Resources tab.

Highlights of Monday's professional development sessions, as always, included our Best Practices presentations and our Town Hall – Educators' Voices Matter. Thank you to 2011 Finalists Diane Lupia and Angela Homan, who coordinated the Best Practices sessions and presented, in addition to Kimberly McWherter, Paul Wright, Gretchen Stoddard, and Tim Chelednik who demonstrated activities and techniques that epitomize the elements of quality, effective instruction. Special thanks also go to Cindy Ollendyke and Doug Martin for spearheading our first Teacher Town Hall that provided an avenue for positive dialogue on current topics in today's educational environment.

Jeffrey Chou, 2011 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, and Michelle Shearer, 2011 National Teacher of the Year, took us on an often amusing, reflective, and inspirational journey that was enthusiastically received by all in

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attendance at Sunday evening's NSTOY-PA dinner. Those attending the Institute dinner running concurrently with our dinner sorely missed out hearing the messages of two truly compelling educators!

**Question #2: In three words, what does change mean?** Again, thinking from the perspective of a third grader, they responded:

- Money Left Over*
- Grew Two Inches*
- Same But Different*

Interestingly, children recognize that with change some things remain, while others will evolve. With directives to change the format of our Teacher Forum and Teacher of the Year Ceremony to incorporate it within the SAS Institute and a broader Keystone Awards for Excellence celebration, our Executive Board worked tirelessly to maintain many of our past events, to provide time to connect with friends and colleagues, and to offer opportunities for professional development.

One true gem that emerged from this change opportunity was the NSTOY-PA Induction Ceremony. In addition to the Finalists receiving their pins, shirts, words of wisdom, and assorted awards and contributions, the gift that we received was hearing from each Finalist. From one Finalist to the next, what mesmerized all of us were the words of gratitude and appreciation to family and friends for their support, and the words that conveyed both the depth of their passion for teaching and the purpose they feel each day in their classrooms. The Induction Ceremony was truly a moving and celebratory event for all!

**Question #3: In three words, what does it mean to be a great teacher?** Truly, out of the mouths of babes, my third graders captured just what it is that brings us together and what makes each of our Finalists so special and worthy of recognition for their talents and efforts. My students said that a great teacher:

- |                                |                                  |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Makes Learning Fun</i>      | <i>Understands Me Completely</i> | <i>Keeps Me Focused</i>    |
| <i>Is Really Smart</i>         | <i>Makes Me Think</i>            | <i>Guides My Decisions</i> |
| <i>Keeps My Interest</i>       | <i>Helps Me Learn</i>            | <i>Keeps Me Safe</i>       |
| <i>Challenges My Abilities</i> |                                  |                            |

After meeting each of our Finalists, it is without question that these phrases describe each of them perfectly, and countless other educators across our state. Let us continue to remember in the coming days, weeks, and months, that, amidst the many acronyms that permeate education and the changes that have come to our organization and our state, we celebrate excellent educators who teach, cheer, support, challenge, inspire, and guide young learners each and every day with passion, poise, and purpose. Continue to be that positive voice for education that you all are!

In conclusion, 2011 proved to be a challenging, yet rewarding year for NSTOY-PA. I am excited about the possibilities that are ahead for us. On this note...

*In 3 words:*

- |                       |                      |                       |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Change Is Hard</i> | <i>New Can Work</i>  | <i>Thanks To Many</i> |
| <i>We Did It</i>      | <i>Keep In Touch</i> | <i>Happy New Year</i> |

Fondly,

Lora O'Brien  
NSTOY-PA President

# A Forum Highlight . . .

## **Town Hall Meeting**

**Moderator: David Volkman, PDE**  
**“Educators Voices Matter”**



NSTOYPA unveiled a new breakout session format this year with our first Town Hall. This was a positive interactive discussion focusing on how to creatively help our students succeed. Using a panel and moderator format with audience participation on CPS response clickers, the session centered on specific issues teachers face in PA classrooms as surveyed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Survey of 40,000 educators. Topics included: Professional Development, Performance Feedback, Teacher Retention, and State Standards. The sessions were streamed live on U-Stream. There is a direct link to our videos of the Town Hall thanks to Doug Martin. It is <http://www.ustream.tv/user/NSTOY-PA/videos>. Opening remarks were made by David Volkman, Executive Assistant for the Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, PDE.

### **Our Distinguished Panelists Included:**

Jeffrey Chou, 2011 PA Teacher of the Year  
Highland Elementary Grade 6, Abington School District.

Michelle Switala, 2010 PA Teacher of the Year  
Pine Richland High School Mathematics, Pine Richland School District

Jamilla Rice, 2009 Milken Award Winner  
Supervisor of Teacher Services, English Department Chairperson, and AP English Teacher at Urban Pathways 6-12 Charter School

Dr. Regina Palubinsky,  
Assistant Superintendent of Phoenixville Area School District  
Formerly Assistant Deputy Secretary at PDE

Sandy Martin , 2004 PA TOY Finalist  
Retired, taught in New Oxford Middle School, Conewago Valley School District  
Currently a part-time Education Professor working with Student Teachers at Dickinson College

After both sessions NSTOY members were approached by several Superintendents about doing other Town Halls and offered to become involved in future panels! “This is the kind of discussion superintendents need to hear from teachers in the classroom.”

# Photos from the Forum . . .



Class of 2012



Jeffrey Chou and Michelle Shearer



# Congratulations!

Tricia Miller- Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, 2012



*Kudos to the most recent recipient of the NSTOY-PA Apple Award:*

**Michael Carlson, 5th grade math and social studies teacher  
Punxsutawney Area School District.**



Any active NSTOY-PA member can recommend a colleague by completing an Apple Award Recommendation Form. The Recommendation Form is available at the NSTOY-PA web page. Go to

<http://www.nstoy.org/chapters/pa/>.

A graphic of a spotlight with a yellow beam of light shining down on the text.

## Member Spotlight . . .

Thanks to **Bruce Buckle** for creating a professional learning community at <http://teachnstoy.wikispaces.com/> for TEACH mentees, their mentors, and NSTOY-PA members to share their thoughts about learning and teaching. Please feel free to post your thoughts to wiki, so that we may all continue to learn and grow.



## Note: Contact Information Requested

PDE has requested a current list of our membership with level/content area and contact information identified to foster communication and contact with teachers to serve on various committees, panels, or be involved in PDE work in general. Our Executive Board will discuss and finalize this list at our next scheduled Board meeting on Saturday, February 11, 2012, and will submit it to PDE shortly thereafter. If you DO NOT wish to have your contact information (home address and email address only, no phone numbers) shared with PDE, please notify me by email at [obrien918@comcast.net](mailto:obrien918@comcast.net) by February 8th. Thank you!

## In search of . . .



If you have information about how to contact any of the following members, please notify Ellen Burke at [beg1242@verizon.net](mailto:beg1242@verizon.net).

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SUSAN McDONALD  
DENNIS MOSER  
ART RICHARDSON  
JOSEPH OWSLEY  
PAULA RUDY  
GAIL SHTURTZ  
DEBORAH SPENCER

We, the National State Teachers of the Year- Pennsylvania, a service organization representing educators, believe that education is that part of the democratic society which contributes to the continued improvement of humankind. Supporting the principles upon which the United States was founded, we endeavor: to encourage professional educators, to promote the image of education through public awareness, to stimulate the personal and professional growth of our members, and to be actively involved in the recruitment of young people into the education profession.

[www.nstoy.org/chapters/pa/](http://www.nstoy.org/chapters/pa/)

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