



NSTA's 75th: A Beginning, Present, and Future Connected by the Need for Science Education

Christine Anne Royce, Ed.D.

In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in April 1944, following many years of discussion, two separate associations—The American Science Teachers Association and the American Council of Science Teachers—proposed and adopted a constitution which merged their memberships and organized a single national group advocating science education. Its founding purpose was to “stimulate, improve, and coordinate science teaching at the elementary, secondary, and collegiate levels of instruction.” (Carleton, 1976, p. 61) By the end of 1944, the seed that had been planted broke through the surface and emerged as the National Science Teachers Association.

There is no doubt that the importance of science teaching and science learning has always been the driving force behind NSTA. Society as a whole has an ongoing need to provide instruction to students to help them understand scientific and technological advances. Robert Carleton penned the following for NSTA's 25th anniversary: “The challenge to NSTA and to the profession is to tie science education together with the lives of people and the problems of society in a truly functional manner.” (Carleton, 1968, p. 30) As science educators we have the ability to make connections between new advances and everyday life, influence the future, and to

extend the reach of science to many.

On our 50th anniversary, then-President Gerry Madrazo likened our association to a giant sequoia that has grown slowly by planting deep roots, reaching wide, but not yet realizing the fullness of the tree's expanse. The challenge to tie people's lives and science together and the need for NSTA to continue to develop and expand its reach still exists!

Throughout the last 75 years, NSTA has weathered many changes: programmatic offerings, the location of our headquarters, changes in our governance structure, and the manner in which we engage with our members and meet their needs. These events, strategies, and changes offer opportunities to interact with our members and look toward the future of science education and the growth of our association. While history provides us context, the future provides us promise.

NSTA has become the largest organization devoted to the teaching and learning of science in the world. Like the sequoia, we have grown with time and arrive at a new era where our historical roots are deep, and there is strength in our core message “...to promote excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning for all.” Our potential reach and growth still hold promise

by modifying our strategies to meet the future of science education and needs of our members.

Join us throughout 2019 as we uncover and reveal some of the new features of NSTA's digital presence and overall engagement strategy. As we look to the past with an eye on the future, it is clear that the science taught and need for science educators who create a love of learning and interest in students is as necessary today as it was in 1944.

How we engage ALL students in science learning and ensure that all science educators continue their own lifelong, lifewide, and lifedep learning process is the focus for our future growth. With that goal in mind, the voice of the science teacher and need for all educators to advocate and speak out for science education is more prominent than ever before.

References

- Carleton, R. H. (1976). *The NSTA story: 1944-1974*. Washington, DC: NSTA.
- Carleton, R. H. (1968). The NSTA silver year review. *Science and Children*, 6(1), 23–30.

Christine Anne Royce (caroyce@aol.com) is a professor at Shippensburg University in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, and President of NSTA.
