

*A Brief History of
New York State Association of Teacher Educators
(NYSATE)*

~1956-Present~

The formative years

On Saturday, May 5, 1956, twenty-three members of the National Association for Student Teaching from the New York State area met in the Founder's Room of the Maxwell School of Citizenship at Syracuse University. The purpose of the gathering was to establish a New York State Unit of NAST. From this "humble" beginning the New York State unit has grown from a small committee organization to a reputable and influential organization aligned with the national agenda on teacher education.

The first officers and executive board

At this first meeting, the following were elected to leadership positions in the NYSAST: President - Ernest J. Milner (Syracuse University), Vice-President - Margaret Lindsey (Columbia University), Secretary-Treasurer - Dorothy Shenk (SUNY, Cortland), The Executive Committee - Charles Smith (SUNY, Plattsburgh), Danna M. Sanders (Brooklyn College), Anthony Milanovich (SUNY, Buffalo), Florence Hill (Cooperating Teacher, Roaring Brook School, Chappaqua), Richard Lawrence (Secretary, American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education), and Wendell Andrews (Schenectady City Public Schools). The slate was elected in the fall of 1956 and the first Executive Board meeting took place in December of that year.

The first conference

Over two hundred educators attended the first conference held at Syracuse University on May 4, 1957. Of these, seventy were cooperating teachers from twenty-seven school systems, nine public school administrators, twelve college students, twenty-seven student teaching supervisors from campus schools, sixty-six college instructors and/or supervisors of student teaching from twenty different colleges, fourteen administrators or directors of educational programs in colleges and universities, and two representatives of state and national professional groups. The conference theme, "Guiding the Student Teacher," was implemented with three different approaches: a symposium, discussion groups, and a culminating address by Dr. Florence Stratemeyer of Columbia University. During the first conference, a Constitution was written, discussed, and approved by the membership.

Organizational focus, meetings, and membership

Annual meetings of the NYSAST took place in various locations during the first ten years: New York City (1958), Schenectady (1959), Buffalo (1960), New Hartford (1961), New York City (1982), Rochester (1983), Ithaca (1964), Plattsburgh (1984), Buffalo (1968), Syracuse (1967) and Albany (1968). Conference themes were focused on student teaching: "Promising Practices in

Student Teaching" (1958), "Conferencing Today with Tomorrow's Teachers" (1961), and "Teaching: Change and Challenge" (1965).

The focus of the organization in the early years was to "stimulate both in-state and inter-state exchange of ideas on student teaching and other types and phases of teacher laboratory practices in New York State." However, when the national organization became the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) in 1970, the New York State unit revised its Constitution and By-Laws to indicate the following purposes: (A) To promote quality programs of teacher education in New York State, (B) To provide opportunities for individual professional growth for all persons concerned with teacher education in New York State, (C) To cooperate with other professional agencies and organizations for the continuous support and reappraisal of effective professional standards for the teaching profession in New York State, (D) to concentrate one's efforts in working for the improvement of elementary, secondary, and higher education in New York State, and (E) To stimulate research, investigation, and experimentation within various fields allied with teacher education.

Conferences continued to be held in various locations in New York State, always in the spring but, beginning in the 1970's, in the fall as well. Conferences reflected the issues and the times; for example, the theme of the 1974 conference was "Preparing for Competency-Based Teacher Education (CBTE)." Many of our conferences and activities have been co-sponsored with the New York Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (NYACTE) -- for example, "Critical Issues Facing Teacher Educators Today," (fall 1977), "The 1980's: Teacher Education in the Pressure Cooker," (fall 1980), "Changing Roles and Multi-cultural Concerns: Strengthening the Profession" (fall 1989), and "The Education of Teachers: Celebrating Our Best Practices" (spring 1996). In the mid-1990's both NYSATE and NYACTE were proactive in the initiatives of the Regents Task Force on Teaching, particularly in the successful establishment of a Professional Standards and Practices Board, as well as opportunities for colleges and universities to choose from several paths to program accreditation, rather being limited to a single accrediting agency.

The historical evidence is clear: NYSATE has been a strong, dynamic force for improving education in New York State. As a unit of the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), many state members have held active service roles and leadership positions on the national level. NYSATE continues to provide direction to more effective methods for the development of teacher competence. It has promoted best practice for both pre-service and in-service practitioners and worked cooperatively with organizations and agencies to strengthen and enhance its mission.

Now another milestone has been reached: A 50th Birthday Celebration! On behalf of earlier historians Anna Mae Lokken, Ruth McKinney, and Jim Collins, and Ralph Ware we add yet another page to the history book.

Happy Birthday, NYSATE!