



# Welcome, Technology Educators!

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**H**OW many times have you heard a colleague remark, "Why do I pay \$8 each month to these associations?" Questions of structure, operations, elections, membership benefits, and other procedures arise concerning various educational professional associations, including those that represent technology and vocational education. Technology education, like other educational disciplines, garners support from local, state, and national organizational memberships. Nonpaid elected or appointed leadership fills virtually every organizational level. Joining members include practicing classroom teachers and administrators, as well as postsecondary students.

Oftentimes undergraduates in teacher training institutions become acquainted with professional associations during their courses of study. Their college may require them to complete seminar credits that represent Student Leadership Organizations (SLOs), for which they elect on-campus officers, assign committee functions, and enter into skill or academic competition within their elected technical field.

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Graduates then commonly enter the profession continuing their affiliation with these professional associations.

On the other hand, teachers who enter the profession through alternative credentialing or certification often lack these experiences and an awareness of affiliate practices that organizations support. Teachers entering the profession from industry or military must discover these benefits as they begin their new career. Whether teachers come from traditional or alternative programs, we must possess a collegial unity of purpose to sustain common practices and goals for technology education.

## Student Leadership Organizations

Two major organizations comprise both secondary and postsecondary student leadership groups associated with technology education, applied technology, and vocational education.

The technology education movement has largely endorsed activities within both of these national groups. Depending on local, regional, or state emphasis, you might have a reason to support one more than the other. The International Technology Education Association (ITEA) aligns itself with the Technology Student Association (TSA) for secondary-level instruction and Technology Education Collegiate Association (TECA) for postsecondary.

Students engage in many types of technology experiences including, but not limited to, technical presentations, leadership practices, problem solving, critical thinking, and others, with competitions held at the local, regional, and national levels. Participants advance to higher levels of competition as they demonstrate their abilities in local contests.

The Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) aligns itself with the SkillsUSA competition, formerly known as the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). The SkillsUSA contests—highly endorsed and sponsored by industry—are held at local, state, and national levels. Students in both organizations represent the highest level of citizenry among their local student body. Both groups participate in directed competitions conducted under a set of rules and regulations, including uniforms. The SkillsUSA activities tend to more closely align with hands-on skill competencies and leadership practices.

Clearly, SLO involvement with either group has demonstrated a strong and long-standing tradition of excellence and character building. Teachers who involve themselves with student organizations often do so as an extra-curricular assignment. These professional duties often require extensive amounts of time and additional preparation.

## The Membership

New members joining professional associations may not fully understand the significance of their membership and participation. As a professional, you will have many decades of career representation afforded by your membership and by your elected or appointed colleagues. Of course, your personal involvement may also allow you to serve and work toward those professional issues. Our profession is always looking for strong leaders and those who would demonstrate a strong purpose within our profession.

## For the Record

Perhaps you are the teacher who knows about professional associations and wants to join but have questions about their purpose, operation, and leadership. Participation is vital to your career's success. The following perspective demonstrates how your membership contributes to those alliances, purposes, strategies, and representations among and between the specific

educational disciplines of technology and vocational education.

Whether you are a first-year teacher or a seasoned veteran, your membership should afford you a sense of confidence that your academic freedoms and entitlements are voiced in legislative sessions, conference planning and proceedings, and all other issues affecting your classroom preparation.

### Local, State, and National Membership

Organizations require dues for your registered membership because the collective representation encumbered by your association requires resources to administer its program. Written statements of goals, objectives, strategy, purpose or other forms of documentation likened to a business plan drive each level of organizational planning.

Many times you will personally know your local representative and possibly witness or be consulted in local decision-making issues. This makes it easier to share your concerns and engage in debates. State and national level representation will probably include fewer similar one-on-one dialogues. Yet your membership does not have to be impersonal. Email permits rapid and easy access to representatives. Be assertive and realize that distance no longer restricts your involvement and contact.

The first step to closing this distance is to begin knowing who your representatives are, determine how your local committee structure communicates with the state system, and follow this communication channel to your choice of national organizations. One person *can* make a difference. Local representation must hear and methodically express all of our concerns. Follow-up interests with additional communication to state and national representatives must be made available.

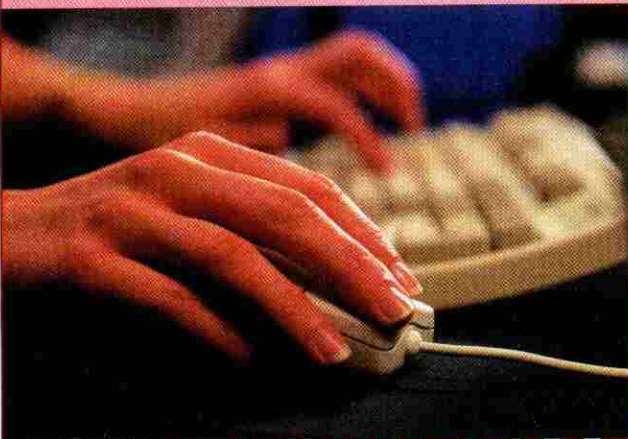
An informed and assertive membership builds strength within an organization and community. Organizations seek membership to determine community purpose. An organization's growth becomes a barometer of common purpose. Such information becomes a database upon which many decisions are affected.

Here is a typical agenda that might be associated with a technology educators' involvement at each level.

Local school committees typically serve either a school or district. Local committees often comprise faculty from all disciplines and may function to provide only school discussion or convene to discuss larger involvements of school districts or multiple campus programs. Discussion may result in recommendations to administrators regarding salaries, facility improvement, equipment replacement, bereavement issues, or other local needs. Local committee members typically serve for one year at a time.


State technology associations have elected officers and, possibly, standing committees. State associations receive membership dues and often comprise a president (three-year rotation—past president, president, and president-elect), secretary, financial officer, and newsletter publicist. State associations typically hold a state conference, publish a newsletter, endorse legislative issues, and generally function to represent their specific discipline with all state businesses. Larger states with greater numbers of teachers may have additional divisions for the purpose of equitably representing all factions. State association dues must pay for all of their operations.

National associations expand state functions, yet may claim lower membership than state associations. For example, a larger state may have 2,000 teachers join their state



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association, whereas only 700 may elect to pay additional dollars to register their membership with a national association. But the national agenda may be more rigorous than the state agenda, requiring additional dollars to conduct an ambitious program. Fortunately, national associations shelter some of the costs attributed to division operations by picking up such expenses as web pages, conferencing, ballot mailings, and others.

Fees paid to a state association may, for example, be \$35, whereas national membership dues may be \$65. If you decide to join both national groups the financial amounts increase, of course. Many teachers do join both national groups because they believe that technology educators need strong representation through all organizations.

Some school systems/districts offer payroll deduction for these professional choices, which can reduce the expenditure to just a few dollars each month. Whichever method you use, you have the opportunity to support your profession and strengthen your voice, as each of these organizations strives to preserve and enhance the profession.

### Succession

It would seem that organizations organized 20, 30, 50, or even 100 years ago would automatically sustain their stated purpose and achieve goals and objectives that are revised within their stated mission. In our day of fast and easy communication, succession would even more likely become a reality with the ease of committee interaction. This is only partially true. Even with electronic conveniences, we lack the personal or management skills to engage in these assignments. We still must work very hard to maintain our focus.

Seasoned veterans would testify that a fragile environment exists within our professional associations. To be sure, today's leadership work long and hard to ensure that both vision and stability are brought into all organizational operations. But there is a marked reduction in the number of professionals willing, capable, and dedicated to these lofty purposes. Over the years, attendance at local, state, and national conferences have diminished. The sustainability of any organization, therefore, depends upon vibrant, knowledgeable, energetic, well-rounded, and dynamic leadership to continue local, state, and national representation. We must work very hard to attend and participate in all meetings. We must be seen and heard.

One goal—to increase membership participation and reduce new member attrition—should serve to strengthen our numbers and embrace leadership roles for continued succession within technology education. Our awareness and understanding of the technology education profession will help all of us to promote our programs, develop community awareness, build and strengthen industry alliances, and enhance our reception within the academic community.

### Organizational Structure

**What new technology education professionals should know.** All new members should know about the organizations that represent their profession and how they can become productive members within the organizations.

Two national organizations represent and provide leadership for technology education through research, publications, annual conferences, and leadership that address academic issues and further enhance the focus, vision, and direction of the profession. In 1926, the Association for Career and Technical Education, Technology Education Division (formerly the American Vocational Association, Industrial Arts Divi-

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sion) was developed to nationally unite its membership. In 1939, the International Technology Education (formerly the American Industrial Arts Association) sprang from the leadership representing the profession of the time, focusing solely on technology education (industrial arts education). These two organizations are the national and international education associations dedicated to advancing technology education in the United States. *Their mission: to provide educational leadership in developing a competitive workforce and, more importantly, to instill the belief that technology literacy is essential for all to function as productive citizens of society.*

#### **What their guiding principles include:**

*Program involvement* to foster excellence in technology education.

*Professional development* to encourage career development, professional involvement, and leadership among members.

*Policy development* to advocate national public policy that benefits technology education.

*Marketing* to build mechanisms for promoting the goals of technology education and technological literacy for all.

### **The Associations' Membership**

The Association for Career and Technical Education's membership tops 38,000. Thirteen divisions comprise the organization, including administration, agricultural education, business education, employment and training, family and consumer science education, health occupations education, special needs, technical education, trade and industrial education, technology education, and new and related services. Its Technology Education Division represents over 1,500 members, including teachers, educational administrators, teacher educators, counselors, business and industry partners, students, and others.

The ACTE meets annually, in December, to conference. Student national competitions representing SkillsUSA meet separately in June.

The International Technology Education Association (ITEA) has a singular and dedicated purpose to technology education with membership of approximately 8,000. Since ITEA solely concerns technology, it has no division categories. ITEA meets annually, usually in March or April, to conference. During their conference, they host both the Technology Student Association (TSA) and Technology Education Collegiate Associate (TECA) student competitions.

Both organizations host websites; publish brochures, newsletters, and magazines; conduct lobbying efforts; offer insurance plans, values on vacations, and car rentals; and more. Furthermore, these organizations have geographical regional boundaries for the purpose of efficiently identifying membership and encouraging classroom teachers and administrators to join a committee group or run for an elected position. They clearly represent the ideals of a democracy. Take a minute to visit their websites at <http://acteonline.org> and <http://iteaawww.org>.

### **Where Do You Go from Here?**

Knowing about your profession is important, but belong-

## **Specific Goals of Organizations**

Promote professional unity and collaboration.

Provide activities and products for leadership development and program involvement.

Increase the flow of new technology teachers into the profession.

Provide effective advocacy for the profession.

Strengthen the operation and resource base for the division.

Identify and recognize exemplary programs and teachers of technology education at all levels.

Provide the profession with leadership development activities and products.

Increase the flow of new technology teachers into the profession.

Monitor and formulate recommendations on teacher certification and program accreditation procedures.

Provide effective advocacy for the profession.

Develop and implement public relations and outreach initiatives for the division and profession.

Provide a pro-active advocacy for legislative support of technology education.

Strengthen the operation and resource base for the division.

Provide the profession with the division's strategic plan.

Increase division membership by 50 percent.

Increase the involvement of classroom teachers in the division and in its activities.

Strengthen the division's operation and management as evidenced by effective committees and increased communication.

Develop strategies to enhance the division's financial resource base from outside sources.

ing to an organization that represents your interest is essential. Joining a professional organization can expand your interests, open your eyes to new and better mechanisms for enhancing teaching and learning, give you a sense of belonging to a larger community, provide networking opportunities and a chance to meet others, achieve more with high-level energy leaders, travel, and just do more.

Furthermore, it illustrates the national strength and size of your profession and shows that you are not alone. Many teachers have traveled to cities and states and even other countries to learn new techniques toward better teaching, to learn what is needed to help technology education raise academic achievement for our youth. Some have discovered through participation in student leadership organizations that a spark for teaching can even be rekindled. Ultimately, joining an association is personal. It will be your responsibility to discover how it might be important to you.

So, where do you go from here? Well, start by asking questions and seeking resources. There are many who are willing to help. Or, should you have questions, concerns, or are just interested in more details contact the association of your choice—association committee member email addresses and phone numbers are readily available.

We hope you will join us at one of our upcoming conferences and contribute to our profession. Both ACTE and ITEA look forward to meeting your needs and working with you in the future. ☺