



Teachers Stand Ready To Advance Science Education

BY CYNTHIA D. MILLER

President Obama's announcement of the "Educate to Innovate" campaign in November has reinvigorated a decades-long movement to enhance our country's decline in motivating students to excel in science, engineering and math.

The president announced that the \$4 billion campaign will focus on increasing STEM literacy so all students can become critical and analytical thinkers. It also has a goal of moving U.S. students from the middle of the global STEM pack to the top in the next 10 years, and expanding education and career opportunities for underrepresented groups including women and girls.

But when the fanfare is over, who is actually going to excite students to answer the administration's call? Teachers. And who is going to excite the teachers? Organizations such as the National Science Teachers Association.

Founded in 1944, NSTA focuses on the professional development of more than 60,000 members. Its mission "to promote excellence and innovation in science teaching and learning for all" spans several platforms to include awards and competitions, conferences, journals and publications, e-learning and learning centers, a leadership institute and a legislative agenda. It is dedicated to connecting and working with the teachers themselves to create meaningful programs and to accurately represent their voice on Capitol Hill.

"We are thrilled with the 'Educate to Innovate' campaign," said Jodi Peterson, NSTA's assistant executive director for legislative and public affairs. "Not only are we getting renewed support from the corporate and government sectors, but it's simply made science cool again," she said.

Cool enough, perhaps, to enable NSTA to build the John Glenn Center for Science Education on a property adjacent to its headquarters in Arlington, Va. Embraced as a continuation of the 1999 Glenn Commission's report, "Before It's Too Late," which described the infrastructure

and activities needed to create and sustain first-rate science and math teachers, NSTA wants the new center to create a national community of educators committed to supporting succeeding generations of teachers as they enter the profession.

The \$43 million effort will fund a body of progressive programs and initiatives that promote leadership, learning, and advocacy in science education. The center itself will consist of a certified green building that will house NSTA's teacher-focused programs. The NSTA Learning Center, a professional development internet portal; and the NSTA Leadership Institute — offering workshops, seminars and speaker series — will round out its on-campus teacher education platform.

The center will also be home to NSTA's Science Matters program which focuses on national STEM advocacy, a state science standards program named Science Anchors, and the New Science Teacher Academy aimed at providing mentoring and continuing education services to keep science teachers in the profession.

In addition to reaching teachers in their own schools or on the proposed new campus, NSTA also offers regional and national

conferences with learning strands of programs created at the request of its teacher members. Attracting tens of thousands of attendees, members serve on NSTA's mentoring program, position paper and student competition committees.

In response to President Obama's quest to "encourage young people to be makers of things, not just consumers of things," NSTA sponsors the ExploraVision science competition co-sponsored by Toshiba, and promotes National Lab Day, part of Educate to Innovate's quest for exciting, hands-on classroom projects and experiments, which will be presented and celebrated nationally the first week of May each year.

"Our organization is teacher led and teacher driven," said Peterson. "But in the end, we're all in this for the kids."

For more information about the National Science Teachers Association, go to: www.nsta.org.

Cynthia D. Miller is president of Miller.Omni.Media, Inc., a woman-owned small business specializing in strategic communications, marketing and media production. She can be reached at milleromnimedia@comcast.net.

