

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

District Leaders Handbook

An Introduction to Being a District Leader

Thank you for volunteering. This is a brief introduction to becoming an effective District Leader.

District Leaders are the key to our organizational success. When District Leaders communicate with the people they represent, offer local professional development opportunities, and bring local concerns to the Executive Council, IATE becomes an organization by which English teachers unite and create change in our classrooms throughout Illinois.

The IATE Constitution has specific guidelines for District Leaders. To view a full draft of the IATE Constitution, please go to www.iateonline.org and click on the link.

Specifically, our Constitution states the following concerning District Leaders:

Article VII Duties of District Leaders

Section 1 The duties of the District Leaders shall be the following:

- a. To keep their respective members informed of the activities of IATE
- b. To report to the Executive Council at its meetings the needs and desires of English/Language Arts teachers throughout the state
- c. To organize their districts into workable units
- d. To call, if possible, an annual meeting of teachers within their districts
- e. To cooperate, if possible, with the schools and colleges in their areas in sponsoring an annual district meeting of teachers of English
- f. To appoint an alternate with full rights and responsibilities to represent them when they are unable to attend the fall or spring meetings of the Executive Council

Section 2 There may be up to two leaders per district.

Section 3 Tenure of District Leaders is contingent upon effective performance of duties and upon regular attendance at the annual Fall Conference and at the annual spring meeting of the Executive Council.

Section 4 A District Leader Coordinator shall be elected by the District Leaders from within the District Leader Group. This person shall serve as the main spokesperson for the District Leaders, coordinate, in conjunction with the First Vice President, the meetings and activities of the District Leaders, and maintain and update a District Leader Handbook.

Getting Started as a District Leader

Sometimes getting started can be the hardest part. What should you do? Who should you ask? This is a quick-start checklist, but please be sure to talk to other members of the Executive Council, including the President, First Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Executive Secretary. All of these officers are here to help you, and each one knows the importance of your role as a District Leader.

Organizing

- Obtain any existing records from the previous district leader. Additional information may be available from the First Vice President and the Executive Secretary. This should include a current district membership list, and IATE membership information. All of this information will be shared with you electronically by the District Leader Coordinator. Please be sure to use the IATE Logo on any materials you send out in an official IATE capacity.
- Establish contact with regional and/or county school superintendents for lists of all schools (or school districts) K-College, public and private, that lie within your boundaries. Please keep a record of this information.
- If no district organization exists, form a district committee with yourself as chair. You may begin appointing other officers or district representatives to form a committee that organizes district activities. Having district representatives allows people to begin leadership roles in IATE and helps grow the organization. (You could have building representatives or school district representatives—organize this as it makes sense in your area. This allows teachers to make a stronger case to their administration when asking to attend the IATE Conference and other events.)

Financing

- At present, IATE is working on recouping our finances and increasing membership. We strongly encourage you to produce cost-effective activities so that our district activities can be contributing factors rather than financial liabilities. Because many schools, libraries, bookstores and government institutions will often give us meeting space free of charge, we encourage you to charge a nominal fee for District conferences so that people will commit to come and expenses will be covered.
- Contact regional and/or county school superintendents, as they will often subsidize local IATE activities.
- Contact local colleges and/or area schools for possible financial assistance. Often these institutions will share or bear the cost of hosting meetings, of circulating publicity, and of providing speakers or materials.

- If you collect funds for an IATE District Meeting, have checks made out directly to IATE and send them to the IATE Treasurer, Michelle Ryan. If you collect cash or other payments, keep a record of these payments and send a check or money order with this record to the IATE Treasurer. If you collect online payments, send payment via check or money order to Michelle Ryan after the account has been reconciled. You may also contact Angelo Bonadonna to set up online payments through the IATE portal if your school does not have the ability to create a pass through account for you.
- Requests for reimbursements for District expenses should be sent to the IATE Treasurer with appropriate receipts and/or documentation.
- If additional funds are needed for a district meeting, you may request a reasonable amount in a letter to Michelle Ryan, Treasurer. Your request should discuss your plans for use of these funds. If your meeting does not use the full amount, the excess amount should be returned to the Treasurer.

Publicity and Communication to Local Districts

- Request IATE Logos from the IATE Office Secretary and/or President. It is essential that IATE Logos are used on all IATE publications, mailings, conferences programs, websites, etc. These will be shared electronically with you.
- If possible, establish a regular district digital newsletter to be distributed at least once a year. (The months of November and December are excellent since no regular state level mailings go out at this time.) A newsletter is a great “goodwill ambassador” and should be emailed to all English departments, school district coordinators, and elementary building principals as well as IATE members in your district. If your school will help you print and mail a hard copy, you may consider this as well.
- Consider utilizing online venues such as wikis, websites, Facebook, Ning, and other discussion boards.
- Report to local membership on major issues and ideas presented and discussed at the annual state Fall Conference and the spring Executive Council meeting.
- Seek contributions for the Illinois English Bulletin and IATE Newsletter from local membership.
- Solicit program ideas and presentations for the state Fall Conference from local membership. Consider successful presentations at district meetings as possible proposals.
- Publicize the annual state Fall Conference. Highlight the participation of local members as presenters, session chairs and recorders, and award recipients.
- Publicize the annual research grant available from the Paul Jacobs Memorial Fund.
- Publicize and promote the IATE Minority Scholarship Award

- Promote membership in both IATE and NCTE and advertise that any first-time/first-year member of IATE receives a FREE membership

Communications with the State Organization

- Inform the Executive Council of district activities and teacher concerns when attending Executive Council meetings at the state Fall Conference and in the spring.
- Maintain communication with all other district leaders and the First Vice President concerning your district's events and activities. (Those names should be a part of your regular emailing list.)
- Recommend to the First Vice President possible successors for yourself as district leader. These names should emerge naturally from the district organization mentioned earlier in this handbook. If you currently do not have a co-chair, consider inviting a trusted colleague to join you in this great adventure.
- Turn over all district records to the new district leader when your tenure ends.

Meetings

- As stated in the IATE Constitution, at least one annual meeting should be called. The exact format of the district meeting varies according to what works in a particular district. Some districts have late afternoon meetings during the week, followed by a dinner with a speaker. Other districts with schools farther apart geographically have Saturday morning meetings, followed by a luncheon with a speaker. A few have continued small group meetings after lunch. A few have only dinner meetings during the week with a speaker. Whatever works best in your district is what should be done. The Executive Council, however, urges innovation and experimentation.
- Consider the following program suggestions. On planning, be sure to encourage participation of teachers from all grade levels of instruction, K-College.
 - Talks or panels on specific problems (i.e., censorship, state mandates, testing, etc.)
Use local teachers as presenters
 - “How To” sessions by successful district teachers (i.e., students winning writing contests, teaching poetry, new approaches to the classics, etc.)
 - Presentations by IATE or NCTE officers or staff members. Consult IATE's Speaker's Bureau for information on affordable speakers for your event.
 - Ask local presenters from the state Fall Conference to repeat their sessions in your district.

- Connect with a local bookstore or library that is hosting an author visit and arrange for IATE Members to meet up at this event. The library or bookstore may even give you some VIP treatment if you contact them prior to the event.
- At your district meetings, try to display materials such as copies of the Illinois English Bulletin and the IATE Newsletter. Membership applications for both IATE and NCTE should also be available.
- The following agenda may be useful for a district meeting:
 - Registration with name badges provided. A folder with notepaper, a letter of greeting, and pertinent handouts is always welcome.
 - Introduction of those present, if the group is small.
 - Introduction of head table guests if there is a luncheon or dinner. Certainly the district executive committee should be introduced.
 - Encouragement of IATE and NCTE memberships and announcement of IATE and NCTE meetings.
 - Reports from IATE Executive Council and IATE activities.
 - Discussions of problems, projects, and procedures of interest to the group. (Those of concern to IATE as a whole should be reported to the First Vice President.)
 - Suggestions for future meetings: district, IATE, or NCTE.

Fiscal Guidelines

District Leaders should be familiar with the financial operating procedures of IATE as a whole. This knowledge provides for better financial decisions to be made at Executive Council meetings, and it allows the District Leaders to make sound financial decisions for their own districts.

Administration

1. That dues money is used for the publication of the Illinois English Bulletin and the IATE Newsletter, for approved administrative expenses, and for the operation of Advisory Cabinet and Executive Council meetings.
2. That all bank statements are mailed directly to the Treasurer.
3. That the Treasurer be authorized to invest in certificates of deposit.
4. That IATE budget \$500 for district operating expenses so that each district have a minimum of \$150 plus \$1.00 per member over fifty in a district.
5. That an additional \$250.00 be budgeted for district/area meetings with money being allocated on application of a district leader with approval of the Executive Secretary.

6. That expenditure for clerical labor be authorized and approved at either the Advisory Cabinet or Executive Council meetings.
7. That expenditures be authorized for honorary awards and for gifts for distinguished service as voted by the Executive Council.
8. That lodging allowance be granted all Executive Council and Program Committee members at a common rate voted by the Executive Council.
9. That there be no reimbursement or complimentary accommodations for members whose expenses are paid by their schools or other outside agencies, for example, ISBE.
10. That the IATE Office Secretary be reimbursed for travel to meetings at the same rate as that approved for Executive Council members by the Executive Council.
11. That a lodging allowance be granted the IATE Office Secretary at the same rate as that voted for Executive Council members.
12. That a meal allowance for Executive Council meetings be granted the IATE Office Secretary in recompense for the service she performs for the organization.
13. That the Executive Secretary or President be authorized to contract facilities necessary for the meeting of the Executive Council.
14. That the Executive Secretary be authorized to provide at IATE expense coffee and rolls at any morning session of the Executive Council.

Annual Conference

1. That the annual Conference be self-sustaining from the revenue derived from the registration fees and from the rental of the display tables.
2. That there be a differential between pre- and on-site conference registration fees.
3. That for the operation of each such annual conference, the Budget Committee recommend a budget amount.
4. That the Program Chairperson be authorized to determine the costs of the banquet and luncheon.
5. That from this budget figure the Program Chairperson and the Local Arrangements Chairperson make appropriate allocations at their discretion for the following conference expenses:
 - a. Honoraria, lodging, travel expenses and other expenses for the conference speakers.
 - b. Lodging, if necessary, for Honorary Award recipients.

- c. Complimentary luncheon or banquet tickets for those invited to be part of the program.
- d. Cost of the Past Presidents' Breakfast.
- e. Flowers, decorations, banquet, and luncheon favors.
- f. Publicity and local printing.
- g. Local mailing and telephone expenses.