

A Word from the Program Chair on this Year's Conference

Highly Qualified. No Child Left Behind. HOUSSE. TVAAS. No matter how each of us feels about these terms, we are all having to deal with them. TSTA has existed for over 25 years to help Tennessee's science teachers get the professional development they need and want. That goal has not changed, but it does require changes. As you look at the pre-registration form you will notice that TSTA is offering several full day workshops on Thursday this year. As I have talked to teachers from all across the state this summer, it has come to my attention that not every school system interprets the professional development aspect of NCLB in the same way. Some "powers that be" interpret NCLB regulations to mean that the professional development must be six hours in length in order to qualify for professional development. Others interpret it to mean that the professional development must be ongoing and last for more than one day. Still other systems seem to believe that TSTA's format of the past is meeting the professional development requirements of NCLB. For this reason we are trying to accommodate all of these different interpretations. The pre-registration only Thursday sessions will focus on teaching content above what the teacher teaches in the classroom. These sessions will be led by college professors. For those who need more than a one-day format, they can continue to learn by attending concurrent sessions on Friday in the content area that they chose to attend on Thursday. As an example, suppose a teacher feels weak in the area of Physical Science. That teacher could pre-register to attend the Thursday workshop. Then on Friday, that same teacher could go to concurrent sessions dealing with Physical Science topics. In this way, they have received two days of professional development in the area of Physical Science. For those who do not need the above format, they can go to the sessions of their choice on Friday. TSTA will also have Saturday morning concurrent sessions.

A word of caution: I don't know of any school system that does not require that professional development has to be part of the School Improvement Plan in order for a teacher to receive at least partial funding and permission to attend any kind of professional development workshop. If your school's SIP does not include professional development for teachers, it is unlikely that you will be able to attend TSTA or any other professional development conference. This ruling applies to all subject areas--not just science.

Last year several attendees said they were unable to secure a room at the Cool Springs Marriott. Please try to make your reservations at least a month in advance if possible. The number there is 615-261-6100. Be sure to ask for the Tennessee Science Teachers Association conference rate. The directions to the Cool Springs Marriott are as follows: *From the Nashville airport, travel West on Interstate 40, then merge left onto I-24 East; merge right immediately onto I-440 West; exit onto I-65 South; travel 10 miles and exit at Cool Springs Blvd, East #68-A; the hotel is on the left.*