

Stories of Four “Beginnings”

1. KToT (Kindergarten Teachers of Texas)

(from Lizanne McDaniel - founder)

The reason KToT was established was simply put - a need. At the time, in 1983, there were not any organizations that served as a place for regular early childhood education teachers to meet and share. For several years Kindergarten Teachers of Texas met that need as the only place for classroom teachers in Texas to go.

Since that time, several other good organizations have been formed.

The internet now offers unbelievable avenues of blueprints, suggestions and models to follow. Most of my original things were handmade and typewritten and by today's standards very crude. I am amazed by the work product and time savers available now. Keep in mind, content should be king though, not fluff.

The single most important thing anyone stepping into a venture such as this is to have a true PASSION and VISION for the task. Surround yourself with like-minded people. The rest will come.

(from Penny Pillack - NKA and KToT Past President)

Brenda McDaniel and Liz McDaniel (no relation) were both teaching kindergarten in a small East Texas town in the early 1980's. They were also being assigned to attend campus/district staff development that had no relation to teaching 5 year olds.

So, Liz called Texas Education Agency asking if there were staff development offerings for 'just' K teachers. Of course, there were none.....she went on to inquire if it would be ok if she started a state organization geared to K interests....TEA replied that she could. She and Brenda began collecting names of friends teaching K, looking up addresses of all the public schools with a K teacher, and began sending out info about a new organization to be called "Kindergarten Teachers of Texas".....the first meeting was held in January 1983 in East Texas on a very cold, drizzly day.....membership was \$5.00.

Liz was elected president and Brenda was elected vice president. The officers began distributing a newsletter that was 'copied' on the 'old' mimeograph machines. They hand addressed all envelopes. As a membership would come in, they would purchase more stamps and

envelopes.

A constitution and bylaws were written and adopted....

I was teaching K at the time and received the first letter that was sent to all K teachers in the state. I am a charter member!

KToT has no paid employees. We do pay an accountant and have at times paid the newsletter editor. But, all conference plans, membership, web site, etc. are done by members of the board, past or present.

Brenda served as the 2nd president with the other 2 officers also becoming presidents of KToT.

2. AKC (Alabama Kindergarten Conference)

(from Lois Logan, K teacher, Principal, founder)

Over twenty years ago, Huntsville City Kindergarten teachers (with the permission of the Elementary Education Director for Huntsville City Schools) met once a month - after school - to share ideas and projects and help one another. We met for several years in different schools in the district.

Next, a group of dedicated teachers decided to offer county teachers the opportunity to present their ideas at our first special conference. We had no money to begin with, but many teachers were willing to present a session without expecting an honorarium, and the district let us use one of the high schools without a charge.

The Pocketbook People from California were kind enough to be our keynote attraction for free. Some kind person donated seed money to pay their airfare and hotel expenses.

We offered this conference for a minimal fee, and the money we collected was enough to start having conferences each year. We formed a non-profit group called The Alabama Kindergarten Conference and this past summer, had our 17th 2 day conference .

We are a 501-3c group.

Now our conferences pay for themselves (from registration fees) and from the kind donations from the Alabama Education Association and some state representatives.

To start a K Alliance in your area, you may want to start with a core group

of interested K teachers and work with your district Elementary School Director. Visit various schools in your district first and see who may be interested in reaching farther out in the area. Begin each meeting discussing certain topics that pertain to you all, like classroom management or discipline, curriculum, integrated learning, literacy centers, etc.

You could send flyers to all your Kindergarten teachers through school mail or you could e-mail them, too. You could then start branching out to surrounding towns, sending invitations to K teachers in various school to attend special presentations.

3. MKA (Minnesota Kindergarten Association)

(from Mary Bess Biegner - daughter of founding member Lucy Bullard)

This is what I remember my mom saying. She and some other teachers that had attended Mankato State College worked with a professor - Cathleen McCann. I know I am not spelling her name right at all. They used to tease that they were "McCanized". She was very influential in their education and encouraged the creation of the Minnesota Kindergarten Association. My mom (Lucy Bullard) was the first president in 1944-1946. Then there is a gap in my info until 1960. They established the board and plans for an annual conference that moved around the state and was hosted by varying schools. I know that I saw a complete list of those at one point, but cannot find it! That has remained the same for all these years.

MKA recently tweaked their bylaws to make them a better fit for non-profit laws, etc. I'm sure Jenny Larson...the current president would have information on this. I'm sorry that I am not more helpful, but I know the MKA board would be more than happy to help anyone that is interested in starting an Association. I think we helped North Dakota get going in the last years. Lenne has been involved for many more years than I have. She may be able to shed some light on the more recent happenings.

(from Lenne Holland , Past President)

Minnesota is divided into 8 regions. Each region has 1 rep who serves on the board. The reps are usually volunteers. You can serve 2 - 3 yr. terms. President, President Elect, Secretary, Treasurer are elected but the Membership, Newsletter, Public Relations, Scholarship & Grants are all volunteers. The conference is held either on one of the following: the last 2 Saturdays in April or the first 2 in May - which ever works best for the host district. The conference is on a volunteer basis and it is often hard to

find a volunteer!

4. Kindergarten Teachers of Central Florida

(from Tiffany Taylor, founder)

We started out as Kindergarten Teachers in our little district on the outskirts of Orlando. We met monthly (sort of) for several years to discuss items of common interest. Then we branched out to include kindergarten teachers in Orange County.

Then NKA came to call!

I was inspired and set to work organizing our group into a non-profit with the backing of the Early Childhood department of Orange County DOE.

Help is available on line for this as well as applying for an EIN from the IRS.

We are still in our infancy but are trying to grow. What any group like this needs is at least one really dedicated “mover and shaker!”