

SUMMER 2025

LEGACY

TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION

**Lindsey McCaleb, Erica Price
and Nan Williams**



**Leading through Technology: Three Leaders Share
How AzTEA has Positively Impacted their Careers**



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Leading through Technology: Three Leaders Share How AzTEA has Positively Impacted their Careers

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The Arizona Technology in Education Association (AzTEA) is a state-wide non-profit organization that has served Arizona districts and schools for over 25 years, since 1998. Starting as an International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) affiliate, AzTEA has provided professional development and networking opportunities for teachers, instructional coaches, and leadership around educational technology. In the past few years, as the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) Chapter, AzTEA has expanded offerings and opportunities to better meet the needs of education IT professionals. Over the years, we have grown and evolved, continuously finding creative ways to meet the needs of our Arizona educators and remain champions of effective educational technology integration while collaborating with partners and organizations throughout the state. We are excited to share with you a bit of our history and evolution as an organization.

AzTEA's humble beginnings began as a parking lot conversation between 3 like-minded people from three different areas in educational technology (a district Technology Director, a Library Media Specialist, and University Professor). The three held separate technology meetings and this was the first time that they all came together. They recognized that they were all doing similar things with different groups of people and decided that they should do something together. They came together and in 1998 formed the Arizona Technology in Education Alliance Corporation. This Alliance consisted of members from Tucson, who formed the Tucson Area Council on Technology (TACT). TACT hosted a variety of monthly meetings and hosted a yearly Technology Conference in Tucson. Another group, consisting primarily of technology coordinators from around the state met on a regular, though informal, basis in Phoenix. There were four local chapters of this statewide organization. The original chapter, formed in Phoenix, divided to become the east and west side chapters. In 2000, the Tucson Area Council on Technology reorganized to become the Southern Arizona Chapter. The final chapter was formed in 2001 in northern Arizona and the organization explored ways to develop chapters that would help the rural parts of Arizona.

For many years, the Mesa school district sponsored a local, then regional, then state and nationally recognized technology conference in the summer. As this conference grew, AzTEA helped support the conference that provided a valuable resource for the educators interested in technology statewide. Simultaneously at Arizona State University a national conference, Microcomputers in Education Conference (MEC) attracted a national and international audience over the years, and in 2001 the conferences merged.

Historically, AzTEA offered three annual regional conferences, serving north, central, and southern Arizona. AzTEA in the Pines was held in Flagstaff in the fall. Starting in the 1990s, the Way Out West (WOW) Conference was held annually in the month of May. In 2002, the Southern Arizona chapter of AzTEA became one of the prime sponsors of what was the TACT conference in January, becoming a unifying force within the state.





Dr. Nan Williams began her affiliation with AzTEA through her involvement in Way out West. She worked in the central region as an EdTech Coach and was invited to be on the planning committee. Over the years, she has held a variety of leadership roles within AzTEA from Business Partner Liaison for the WOW Conference, Westside Chairperson, Professional Learning Chairperson, Committee Member, President-Elect, President (2 terms), and Past President. In 2018, when AzTEA needed a new Executive Director, Nan stepped up and shared the role of Interim Director with another long-time AzTEA member, Judith Romero. When it came time for the Board to choose a permanent Executive Director, both Nan and the organization knew that she was the perfect fit. As the third Executive Director for the organization, Nan now supports AzTEA on a daily basis and represents the organization at the state level and on the national stage.

As time went on, Title IID funds became non-existent and the regions dissolved. AzTEA began to focus more intentionally on bringing members together across the state, improving collaboration, allowing for districts near and far to learn from one another, and refocusing the work of our all-volunteer force.

These shifts coalesced into the Fall Conference; an annual event focused on empowering educators to integrate and utilize technology in their classrooms. There is always something for everyone, regardless of current technology use, from basic tips and tricks to creative and innovative applications of emerging technologies. Each year the conference evolves based on feedback from prior attendees, and for the fall of 2024, AzTEA recognized the need to support coaches and created a track specifically created to meet the needs of coaches. Leveraging our connections in Arizona alongside our pride in providing relevant, timely opportunities for educators has allowed us to bring in some big names in our education space to talk with our teachers. Our keynote speaker at our 2023 Fall Conference was the creator of the well-known TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework for tech integration, Dr. Punya Mishra. Our relationship with Dr. Mishra began both of our journeys of delving into the world of Artificial Intelligence. Six months later, when our Past-President, Lindsey McCaleb applied to ASU for the PHD program, Dr. Mishra was one of the faculty members in the program, and through the relationship that was started at the fall conference, he became her advisor.

With the Fall Conference cemented as the signature event for Arizona teachers, AzTEA added a spring conference in 2018, the Curriculum & Instruction & Information Technology Symposium, to support school and district leadership. Specifically, the CI & IT Symposium emerged from a recognized need for closer alignment and collaboration between curriculum and technology departments. During the Symposium, we bring district teams together and provide informational sessions and intentional spaces to address shared challenges. In recent years, the Symposium has shifted to include fewer presentations and a greater emphasis on structured collaborative time to address problems of practice, allowing teams to walk away with actionable strategies for practical implementation. Each year has a theme, ranging from “No Looking Back: Looking Forward” in 2021 to “AI: Charting Open Waters” in 2024. The CI & IT Symposium has proven highly effective in fostering collaboration between Curriculum and IT departments, focusing on how to address key challenges, implement solutions, and adapt to emerging technologies, empowering districts to drive meaningful change.



In 2019, AzTEA became one of nine ISTE Certified Educator providers. This prestigious certification is aligned with the ISTE Educator Standards. At the same time, we responded to an RFP from the Wyoming Department of Education to train 100 educators, and the following year, they added an additional 100 educators. Over the past five years, we have trained 252 educators and guided them through their portfolio development process. We are one of the last remaining partners, and with Arizona's recent adoption of EdTech Standards (which are based off of the ISTE Student Standards), the ability to offer such rigorous professional development continues to be of great importance for our educators.

While our conferences are well-attended, in 2021 we acknowledged a need for a program that could provide more regular professional development and eventually be able to provide specific training to districts. AzTEA applied for a Arizona STEM Acceleration Project grant to fund the creation of the AzTEA Ambassadors program. These grant funds allow for AzTEA to create a process for educators to apply to be an Ambassador or Ambassador-in-Training with us. Accepted applicants receive in-depth training on the Arizona EdTech Standards (AETS), which are aligned to the ISTE Standards for Students. They then work in collaboration with our Ambassador Trainer to create a

variety of professional development offerings, which have all been offered as interactive webinars and are currently being developed into asynchronous courses. While some of the offerings provide background and deep dives into the AETS, others focus fully on AETS integration into content areas, including Language Arts, Science, Math, and Social Studies. Our Ambassadors have also recently expanded session offerings to include special education and artificial intelligence. We are excited to continue to develop webinars and courses that can be offered synchronously and asynchronously, and hope to bring them directly to districts in the future.

AzTEA understands that we are more impactful together, and has held a long-standing partnership with other educational associations, creating the STEM Collaborative in 2013, composed of AzTEA, the Arizona Science Teachers Association (ASTA), and the Arizona Association of Teachers of Mathematics (AATM). The STEM Collaborative has hosted regular events together, such as a STEM Unconference (held annually for the past 10 years) and quarterly networking meetings. In 2022, the Collaborative applied for a grant that resulted in a shared Learning Management System for each organization to publish online course offerings. Each organization now employs someone part-time to oversee course creation from its inception to implementation.

Becoming our state's CoSN Chapter opened up new opportunities for professional development, this time specifically designed for IT education professionals. Prior to 2024, Arizona only had six professionals who were CETL (Certified Education Technology Leader) Certified. In the spring of 2024, AzTEA facilitated a three-month cohort to read "Certified EdTech Leadership" (Mike Daugherty) and engage in deeper learning to prepare for the CETL Certification Exam. Over 30 professionals participated, including a range of IT directors, IT staff, and EdTech instructional coaches and specialists, and by the summer of 2024, Arizona had 22 CETL Certified professionals.



and professional development, and engages in policy advocacy around AI. In this rapidly-evolving landscape of emerging technologies and generative AI, it is crucial that AzTEA contribute to providing guidance and learning in this area.

AzTEA has also ensured that major disruptions to our world and the field of education did not become disruptions to serving our members. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the STEM Collaborative came together to hold a series of virtual PD Webinars led by teachers and instructional coaches. The "Tech for the Times" offerings were developed in a collaboration between content educators paired with educational technology educators. This series was highly requested with over 745 sessions viewed over a month period. In the fall, the AzTEA conference was reformatted to be completely virtual, taking advantage of technology to maintain the spirit of networking and learning from others through the use of breakout rooms.

We also recognized that during emergency remote learning, educators needed more frequent outlets to share, connect, and collaborate. Thus we began regular "teacher talks," which were simply a virtual space to discuss challenges and find support and solutions. These "teacher talks" morphed into "Pandemic Problem-Solving" meetings were our regular Thursday evening hangout time to commiserate and support each other. Lindsey McCaleb was a new EdTech Coach who had only been in her position for 9 months when the pandemic started and everyone in her district was looking to her for guidance on how to move from in-person to online learning. She started coming to these sessions "first to find her tribe" and get support from others that were in the same and/or similar situation. Eventually, she grew her personal learning network and found that she was not alone and could call on a number of people to help bounce ideas off of, strategize, and generally just look for solutions that no one had thought of pre-pandemic. We also made efforts to connect educators through various social media platforms. Technology fatigue brought about by the pandemic influenced what we felt was a timely social media campaign in the summer of 2021, the Self-Care Summer Social Media Series. Our series asked educators to join our AzTEA leadership in taking a step back for themselves and participate in reflective personal practice activities.



While we have hundreds of members throughout the state, as with many non-profit organizations, our core team of volunteers that keep the wheels turning is small but mighty. We maximize our human capital by collaborating with other organizations to accomplish incredible things, and we learn from one another along the way. Over the years, AzTEA has joined forces and collaborated with a variety of educational groups to advocate for effective, safe, ethical, and impactful educational technology integration. We serve our educators state-wide through various levels. AzTEA supports everyone from classroom teachers to district leadership through tailored events, professional development, and recognition of impact awards. Each year we present awards to teachers, administrators, and even state-level leaders who support educational technology education with students. Through the organization's work with ISTE, AzTEA has also selected a yearly recipient of the prestigious "Making IT Happen" award to a nominated educator making a positive impact on educational technology beyond their own institution. AzTEA also celebrates the Ruth Catalano Award named after one of our founding members. This award recognizes individuals in the organization that embodies a volunteering spirit.



We view AzTEA as a place where we grow leaders. Erica Price has worked with the AZTEA Board since 2016, and is currently serving as the Professional Learning Committee Chair between terms on the board. Her journey began with AZTEA as many before her, when a long-time AZTEA Board member and colleague within her district invited her to get involved. Being part of something bigger than just her own district gave her a sense of community that quickly became a passion for the Arizona EdTech community. As she approaches a decade of service to the organization, she often reflects fondly on the confidence she gained through board involvement, the lifelong friends she has made, and the opportunities to meet edtech leaders from around the state and participate in workgroups and conferences as a representative of AZTEA. While AzTEA works locally, we think globally, to support our Arizona educators who are preparing all students for future success in innovative ways.

AzTEA leverages its position to connect our members to the best resources for their districts, sites, and students from our partners, sponsors, and professional networks. In our most recent initiative, we focus on bringing our professional knowledge and development to our members in an on-demand format through our adoption of Canvas for asynchronous and hybrid experiences. We foster interdepartmental and cross-district collaboration through events and special interest groups, we build capacity in future leaders through board leadership development, an EdTech coaches cohort, and the AzTEA Ambassadors and we keep our members and leaders aligned to industry standards.



Nan Williams has been the executive director for the Arizona Technology in Education Association (AzTEA) since January 2018. She is also an adjunct professor at the University of Arizona and an academic professional at Arizona State University. [in](#) [gt](#) [✉](#)

Lindsey McCaleb is the past president of the Arizona Technology in Education Association (AzTEA) and a current doctoral student at Arizona State university. She previously served as a school board member, ed tech coach and principal in the Creighton and Balsz Elementary School Districts. [in](#) [gt](#) [✉](#)

Erica Price serves on the board of the Arizona Technology in Education Association (AZTEA). And is Ph.D. Candidate at Arizona State University with an interest in digital humanities and digital history as a method for scholarly research and sharing her findings. [in](#) [gt](#) [✉](#)

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Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis from educators who are implementing new and innovative approaches in the classroom and at the building and district levels. Information on specifications and instructions to submit can be found online at theworthyeducator.com/journal.