

## Member Spotlight:

### 2017 Brian L. Talbot Award Winner

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#### *The Brian L. Talbott Award Winner:*

#### *Northeastern Regional Information Center Albany, New York*



This award was formally recognized at the 2017 Annual Conference, December 2017. Dale Breault, Director, NERIC, is featured center in this photo.

#### About the Award Winner:

It's no secret that success in education today hinges on harnessing technology. It's a moving target that takes an organization with nimble leadership.

This year's Brian L. Talbot Award, given to an individual or organization for excellence in technological innovation and support, was given to the Northeastern Regional Information Center based in Albany, New York. NERIC serves more than 130 school districts from New York's Capital Region to the Canadian border.

"Technology is ever-changing," said Dale Breault, NERIC's director. "We really try to push the envelope in leadership."

NERIC is a technology cooperative on steroids. It not only provides cooperative purchasing, it provides services including financial systems support, student systems support, internet connectivity, help-desk

services, property tax billing services, instructional support and learning management systems, teacher evaluation and professional development services, and many other services.

In addition to providing service on a macro scale, NERIC also works one-on-one with people in each district to enhance their technology footprint.

NERIC offers instructional teams that work with staff to provide innovative technology support. They offer leadership sessions, instructional technology events and professional development tailored to each school's needs. They have the ability to not only solve specific problems but can use the large size of the BOCES to connect districts to help each other solve problems. If a district runs into a problem previously solved by another district, there's no reason to reinvent the wheel – Breault's teams can put one district in contact with another to see how they worked through problems.

Promoting instructional technology in the classroom is an important goal for NERIC. Its Model Schools program creates workshops where educators share their knowledge in subjects like coding and robots, makerspaces and Google apps.

The Model Schools program is offered both in-person and via a series of different eLearning technologies.

NERIC also offers the Active Learning Spaces program which pairs technology to furniture and the learning environment. As Breault says, businesses don't look like they did 10 years ago, why should schools? How students and teachers interact with technology and each other is fluid and this program helps schools stay on top of new educational possibilities.

NERIC also provides a Distance Learning program. The classes run the gamut from accounting, nanotechnology, calculus, veterinary science, Japanese, agricultural business, creative writing, American Sign Language and architectural drawing. The Distance Learning program supports a network of about 3,000 students in 75 classrooms in about 60 districts with about 150 classes daily.

The Distance Learning team launches the courses and troubleshoots technical issues. The team also hosts video and web conferencing services through the established DL network and WebEx for school administrators, teachers and staff.

NERIC has also hosted the Regional Technology Awareness Day. The event showcases educational technology and discusses how schools can use the technology to enhance instruction and streamline school district operations.

Last year, more than 700 people representing 28 districts attended Tech A-Day, with more than 40 student presenters who spoke on topics such as makerspaces, the connected physical education classroom, early learning literacy, coding and more.

As Breault notes, you can give students laptops, but if they don't have internet connectivity, then they're only using a portion of the computer's capability. That's why NERIC offers an extended classroom program which puts the internet on school buses where rural students spend hours each day.

NERIC also offers mobile hotspots. If they don't have internet at home but have cell service, they can check out a hotspot from the school library and access the web at home.

NERIC is currently exploring ways in which it can create programs to utilize its video network to support telemedicine, especially for mental health services which are hard to come by, especially in rural areas.

NERIC instructional teams collaborate and use resources with the New York State Education Department, the New York State Association for Computers and Technology in Education and local universities.

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Do you know an ESA or individual ESA employee who deserves recognition? AESA Award nominations open in April. Find out more on the website at <http://www.aesa.us/about/aesa-awards.cfm>