I sit at my keyboard and try to convey to you the impact of attending a national conference to truly immerse yourself in professional development of the highest caliber. It is certainly researched that professional development has an essential role in educational reform that is thriving (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). It should be understood that professional development connects prospective to experienced educators. It allows teachers to go from where they are to where they want to be in their profession. It allows them to be prepared for the demands that we all face in today’s educational arena.

As a twice retired and still working educator, I am fully aware of the personal, professional development opportunities offered by the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT). I have managed to attend the annual conferences since 1995. I’ve experienced current research, issues in science education, networking with outstanding colleagues, and just talking with folks who are innovative and exemplary leaders in their fields. I am able to share my work, the problems I experience, and receive sage advice from my peers. The collaboration opportunities are endless.

I am certainly cognizant of the cost of attending a national conference. But, one never gets something for nothing and the “gets” from this conference are well worth the investment. Many of us save for a year to vacation in a warm and sunny climate. This year we will meet in Memphis, Tennessee. Why not bring back a lasting vacation souvenir: a new colleague, a new unit of study, a new book, a new challenge to submit a proposal for next year’s conference?

Certainly our most important role as educators is to be lifelong learners. We must expect to be observed as modeling the behaviors that we want our students to acquire in their educational journeys. True professional development places us in the learner category and brings confusion, uneasiness, and experiences that make us remember what it feels like to be students in our classroom. Lest we forget – we must strive for the excellence that we ask from our students, the mastery of the...