

Dear TEPS Committee:

I would like to thank the TEPS Committee and Dr. Frahm for allowing me to attend the Get Your Teach On conference in Las Vegas. The entire goal of the conference was to inspire and recognize teachers all while giving them strategies to do the same with their students. In addition, we were encouraged to be our authentic selves.

The opening keynote was delivered by Brandon Fleming. His main message was to instill in us the need to see the human and not just the student who causes trouble. He shared that an interaction with one teacher in college drove him to be better because she cared enough to ask the questions that were about him and not just discuss his academic problems. We were also treated to music by Gavin DeGraw to get everyone pumped about what was to come.

The sessions were broken up into grade levels to ensure each participant was getting what was appropriate for them. The first session, Platinum Planning off the Charts, focused on using the taxonomy level to differentiate based on the standard being addressed. The message was that we shouldn't just go slower for students who struggle, nor should we be giving advanced students more work. We broke apart a few standards and collaborated to create activities to move the work up or down the taxonomy pyramid. The next session focused on practical ways to collect and use data in real time. The session further reinforced the need to do this when creating groups for future lessons. We moved on to creating quick and effective mini lessons. The final session of this day focused on leveling up our learners. We were given strategies and activities to use with our students to help them learn with games and activities. The day ended with a "Sneaker Ball." We were treated to dancing and entertainment. The guest entertainers were Boyz II Men.

The following day's sessions continued the theme of empowering teachers to do better. We started with a session on demonstrating for kids the difference between their reading life and academic reading. We were introduced to strategies to develop students' understanding of how to approach both types of reading. The next session was probably my favorite. Wade King focused on arts integration in the classroom. He shared how he used songs during transitions, to learn a topic, and use students' creativity for good. We moved on to the writing process in the next session. The presenter hit on the different acronyms used in classrooms and how confusing and overwhelming they can be to students. Instead, she shared how she focused on students' understanding of the writing process to keep them working. Her message was that it didn't matter what acronym they were using as long as they knew what steps to follow. The final session of the day had a math focus. The goal was to give us strategies to use with students when breaking down word problems since half the problem students tend to have is reading and decoding what they are being asked to do.

In the end, I came home with multiple strategies to grow critical and independent thinkers. This PD was one of the most beneficial and teacher friendly conferences I've been to.

With my sincerest gratitude,

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CMS