

January 2024

TEPS Committee:

Thank you for funding my attendance at the Get Your Teach On Regional Conference in Las Vegas last month.

The conference began with an inspiring keynote presentation by Brandon P. Fleming based on his memoir, *Miseducated*. His story of resilience, overcoming adversity and preconceived expectations, and transforming himself from a drug-dealing delinquent to an assistant debate coach and award-winning Harvard professor was captivating.

Day one of mini-sessions began with a keynote address by co-founders of Get Your Teach On, Hope and Wade King, along with a Q&A session with Courtney & Mario Lopez, and Kevin Jonas. They focused on fostering relationships with students, their families, and the community. They spoke on the importance of music, engagement, rigor, and discipline in the classroom. Another key point they drove home was teaching with authenticity. Our first session, Platinum Planning off the Charts, was led by Hope King. She introduced thought-provoking ways to look at the standards and break them down into actionable goals. From there she talked about aligning engaging tasks to get maximum 'buy in' from students. Her steps for differentiation were also something I will take into consideration as I look for ways to improve my own lessons. The second session of the day, Now That's What I Call Data, was led by Chris Pombonyo. He focused more on immediate data collection. He spoke of purposeful, specific-to-the-task data collection strategies that can be used in the moment. He offered several unique strategies that can be incorporated into the classroom with ease. The next session, Greatest Hits: Mini Lesson Edition, was led by Amelia Capotosta. The focus of this session was to strategically plan engaging mini-lessons to kick start instruction. Her session centered around effective hooks, timing, providing clear student directions, differentiating during instruction to make data-based small groups, and having an effective independent practice framework. She also introduced a highly engaging review game that I definitely plan to use with my students. I was really looking forward to the last session of day one by Joanne Miller since I follow her online group. Her session was called Level Up Your Learners. While she did present several engaging instructional activities, I was disappointed in her presentation. She definitely didn't follow best practices as her delivery was very scattered. Despite the unorganized presentation, there were several ideas that I was able to take away and will incorporate into my lessons throughout the remainder of the year.

Day two started out with another keynote presentation; this time Titus O'Neal started us out by talking about his book, *There's No Such Things As A Bad Kid*. He spoke of the people who invested in him even though they had nothing to gain and how he has now made it his mission

to make change for others in need. The rest of the keynote this day was more of a 'sell' session, encouraging attendance at their other conferences and inviting them into your school districts. Session one was one of particular interest to me since I teach 6th grade reading. Juan Gonzales Jr. presented Reading Life vs. Academic Reading. He spoke to how creating individual reading identities with your students can lead to academic success. He believes getting to know your students' knowledge of genres and reading habits will grow a love of reading. His session left me thinking about how to incorporate more student choice in my class and how to more successfully meet my readers where they are. Wade King's session on Arts Integration and More was one of the more engaging sessions. It quickly became obvious that he is a master of his craft. He talked about how including music can create an uplifting, positive classroom community, set tone, and outline expectations in an engaging way. Wade shared several ideas for using music for quick and easy transitions, alleviating dead air, and revving up energy. Finally, he shared ideas about how to use music to teach difficult material. His session was jam-packed with engaging ideas! The third session of the day was A Writer's Process by Lanesha Tabb. She walked us through a solid, foundational writing process. Her step-by-step action plan was accompanied by student checklists for each step of the process. It is easy to see how following her process will lead students to becoming independent writers. The final session of the conference was Word Problems and the Search for Success, led by Staci Erickson. While I don't currently teach math, I enjoyed learning her "Define, Explore, Solve" approach. She encourages students to realize there is more than one way to solve a problem and to become flexible, independent math thinkers.

While it was a busy and long couple of days, I returned from the conference energized and full of engaging ideas to bring back to my classroom and colleagues. I am grateful for the opportunity to attend this conference. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,
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