

November 19, 2024
TEPS Abstract
Katie Lavey
Math and Science Day at RCA!
November 14-15, 2024

Thank you TEPS Committee and Dr. Frahm for giving me the opportunity to attend the Math and Science Day at The Ron Clark Academy in Atlanta, Georgia. The Ron Clark Academy (RCA) is a nonprofit middle school (Grades 4-8) known for its innovative and dynamic approach to education. What I saw over the course of two days was nothing short of amazing. I was able to tour a school with infectious energy and watch lessons being taught by educators Ron Clark, Dr. Valerie Camille Jones, Carrie-Jo Wallace, Daniel Thompson and Cer'Princeton Harden. I learned engaging ways to teach mathematics through interactive workshops, classroom observations and lesson sharing. I left with meaningful strategies, creative takeaways and a renewed enthusiasm for teaching.

Upon entering RCA, I was blown away by the welcome from uniformed students and the Harry Potter-inspired "Great Hall." Students lined the hallways waving excitedly to us, making small talk and walked us through "Dungeon Alley" where the RCA band (lead by students) sang their own version of Alicia Key's "Empire State of Mind" replacing the words "New York" with "RCA." After several songs, we were brought to their auditorium where students danced for us on stage before Ron Clark made his introduction and shared his welcome message to the group.

This enthusiasm and energy stayed consistent throughout the two days. When observing lessons, teachers were energetic, creative and engaging. Students were well-spoken, respectful and encouraging towards their peers. The classrooms were all visually appealing with every square inch covered in art painted by local artists which had ranging themes of Harry Potter and superheroes to an ELA vocab factory. Their classrooms are designed for movement and participation. Here, it's not uncommon to find teachers walking on top of student tables and desks while using hand gestures and music to reinforce their lessons.

It was evident that RCA does not just prioritize academic excellence but also leadership, teamwork and strong character development. Students are taught essential life skills such as public speaking, etiquette and the value of hard work and respect. It takes one conversation with any of their students to witness how well-spoken they are.

All students and staff have a sense of belonging at The Ron Clark Academy. They have developed a house system which is divided by unique colors, symbols and values. Each house has their own name (Altruismo, Amistand, Isibindi, and Rêveur) and their own chant which fosters camaraderie and a sense of belonging. Additionally, RCA uses a point system where students are celebrated for their efforts that helps build character, empower academic excellence, fosters school spirit, enhances relationships and promotes a culture of belonging for all. House Points are displayed throughout the

school on multiple screens along with animations of students who have gained the most points for the week.

I cannot express my gratitude enough for this opportunity that was awarded to me. The whole experience from start to finish was absolutely incredible and inspiring. I walked away having a new vision for myself and my students. I hope to have the chance again to visit The Ron Clark Academy in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

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