

February 4, 2019

CEC (Council for Exceptional Children) Convention Abstract  
Indianapolis, Indiana

Dear Dr. Hicks, Mrs. Overholt, The TEPS Committee, CTA Website (Mike Thomas):

First of all, I'd like to thank Dr. Hick and the TEPS committee for allowing me the opportunity to attend this extremely valuable conference. The 4 days were filled with an abundance of valuable information that I will be able to implement into my teaching, curriculum planning and IEP writing. The sessions I attended included information on transitioning students with disabilities into a variety of post-secondary programs, incorporating mindfulness into your classroom to aid students and teachers, employment opportunities for our ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) students, how to use free Microsoft tools to improve reading and writing in students with disabilities, and a professional development process for improving secondary teachers' literacy instruction.

Although all the sessions were informative, the three that will impact my instruction immediately are as follows:

Higher Education for Students with Intellectual Disability: Profiles of Effective Practice:

Students with intellectual disabilities are accessing higher education, but what does it look like? This session presented national data on access to higher education by students with intellectual disabilities and shared examples and strategies on access to inclusive college coursework, paid employment, and campus residential options. We were presented information about Think College. This program has 33 institutions in New York (several in the Buffalo/Rochester area) that provide inclusive college programming to students with disabilities. These programs are something I will be sure to share with my upperclassmen students and special education colleagues as well.

Assessing Inclusive Instructional Practices Using AISSEND Observation Tool:

This session discussed which instructional strategies should be present in a co-teaching environment and how to assess if your classroom has them. The presenter evaluated and discussed the importance of 7 domains in which the research shows to make a co-taught classroom most effective. The domains included: Instructional materials, Physical Environment, Teacher Activities, Student Engagement, Instructional Strategies, Culturally Responsive Strategies and Classroom Management. All of these should be observable in varying degrees with an inclusive co-taught class. I will be sharing this information with my co-teachers in the hopes that we will be able to improve on our effectiveness in the classroom.

Keynote Speaker

Carla Tantillo Philibert is a recognized expert on social-emotional learning (SEL), mindfulness, and yoga practices in the school setting. With more than 15 years of experience in education, professional development and SEL services, Carla is a sought-after speaker who empowers and excites audiences on the importance and benefits of including SEL and movement in the classroom. Her mantra: "Relaxed teachers teach better. Relaxed students learn better." Carla spoke about Mindfulness and also offered attendees a 6-week free trial of her program "Class Catalyst" which I plan on implementing in my classroom. Class Catalyst uses live and long-term data to help inform self-awareness, improve self-regulation and better connect students with teachers. Overall, Class Catalyst is designed to give students and teachers a way to raise awareness of their emotional needs and the tools to get themselves ready-to-learn.