



National Middle School Association's

37th Annual Conference & Exhibit

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The Insider

www.nmsa.org

A students' look inside the National Middle School Association conference

Proudly

Technology and Motivation at the Conference

By: Courtney Hohn

"Technology is all around us, and our knowledge of it is always growing."

Traci Curry, a science teacher at Drake Middle School in Auburn, Alabama says she comes to NMSA conferences to relate to her students. Kids nowadays are always on YouTube and Facebook, so I'm trying to learn more to connect with them where their interest is."

We caught Ms. Curry going into 'One Teacher Does an Audience Make' class taught by Stephanie Reid, a language arts teacher in River Falls school district in Wisconsin. The class

taught a group of teachers how to make class assignments more interesting by incorporating technological advances into the classroom.

Ms. Reid encouraged flip cameras to record such things as book reports. She also showed everyone how easy it is to use a flip camera – just point, click, and record. The class was moving and everyone seemed like they really learned a lot from it.

Technology is motivating to students to make learning fun!

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A Teachers' Point of View

By: John Ossing

At the 37th Annual National Middle School Association conference, attended by 7,000 teachers from the different parts of The United States and 12 foreign countries, you're bound to find someone with stories about teaching in a unique situation, and thinking differently in order to motivate their students.

You might meet someone like Marybeth Whitehouse, a Special Education instructor from Intermediate School 190, in New York. At the convention, she visited a session about writing, which she found quite useful. To motivate her students to do their best, she gives her students fun games and prizes such as candy, class money (which is used to earn candy and more prizes), and even a chance for a night to dinner or bowling.

Calvin, a teacher from Hawaii also decided to join many other teachers who came to the convention center this weekend. Calvin teaches the school called Ka Waihona O Ka Na Ahao. He has gone to many sessions and has decided that he wanted to now incorporate video (slideshows) into his class. To motivate his students he tries to have fun projects for the students. He is looking forward to bringing the knowledge he received at this year's convention home to his diverse group of 7th and 8th graders.

Chris Davenport teaches at the Chesapeake Bay Middle School also came to the convention this year. He was able to learn more about social skills for his students which he thought would be very helpful to his school, where he

teaches art to emotionally disturbed kids, kids that are absolutely normal except for the one social experience that gave the some uncontrollable emotion. He quotes "To motivate my students I try to pick projects that are more current, more relative to their lives".

As you can see, many teachers have adapted to their class, so the class performs as best they can.

Inspiration: Do You Feel Motivated

By: LeAnn Tyler and Natalie Croom

Engaging the Students

“Don’t we all want to be the teacher to show our kids the light?” Jane Feber asked a standing room only crowd of teachers gathered from across the nation to discuss the challenges of engaging today’s youth. According to Feber’s presentation, “Strategies to Engage Struggling and Not-So-Struggling Students,” there is one key ingredient missing in school lessons. Our teachers still make their lessons based on the idea of a general student, when in reality we remember 10% of what we read, 20% of what we see, 30% of what we hear, and 95% of what we teach to others. Mrs. Feber made it clear that students don’t remember everything they are taught, in

spite of the expectations some teachers may have for them.

Teachers came into this session with their own struggles on how to motivate their students. We were able to ask Ms. Biskup from Meade Middle School what challenges she faced when trying to motivate her students. Ms. Biskup answered that sometimes her students didn’t like the books that they were given to read, and stressed how important it was to find a reading that speaks to the students. Ms. Biskup told us that she also faces struggles with trying to build student confidence, which isn’t something that could just happen overnight. It takes a long time to show a student that it is ok to speak your mind.

One other session that she attended was

about differentiation. One of the key points that we got from her about the session was that “differentiation is a way of engaging different students with different skills or different ways of learning so that it is easier to teach them.” Ms. Biskup went to a session about different genders. How some guys learn differently than others. And girls and guys both have different appeals so the teachers have to find different ways to engage each student.

The key ingredient of inspiration was one that many teachers came looking for at the NMSA Conference, and though there is never one answer, conference sessions such as those on differentiation showed that teachers can come a long way by looking at the individual students in their classrooms.

Exhibit Hall

By: Jake Bredeck and Jesse Hom

As I walked into Exhibit Hall today, after a bus ride through downtown Baltimore city, I was filled with an uplifting feeling of exhilaration, and a great urge to be educated. Lights, chatter, and a great red carpet gave off waves of interest, inspiration, and innovation. I was awed by many signs of modern creation, all in the Exhibit Hall of the National Middle School Association’s 37th annual convention. I looked around, seeing free samples on every table: pens, pencils, candy, coupons, and tons of other small items were being handed out. I noticed a friendly face behind every table, and I found countless amounts of information readily presented concerning such a range of topics as animals, interactive computer screens, and various other educational programs that would be perfect for a teacher to utilize.

The first thing I noticed was an interesting Interactive White Board software package, by Interactive Digital Lessons. The software enabled students to navigate the heart and circulatory system. The program works on any interactive whiteboard, and visitors are free to try it. I made sure to try it, and was fascinated by the detailed pictures, and the user’s ability to move and rearrange the labels of each piece of the heart.

After several minutes of strolling around, allowing my eyes to absorb every interesting exhibit, I found myself engaged in conversation with Charlotte Orient, a representative from the California University of Pennsylvania. “We are the #1 online college in the country,” She says. Sure enough, according to www.guidetoonlineschools.com, they are. Charlotte continued, “Our school offers 14 masters degrees.”

After my conversation with Charlotte, I continued on. I was captured in the realm of imagination brought upon by the NASA and the International museum exhibit. The idea of upcoming space-flight, and high tech spy gadgets kept my mind occupied. Also there was the teacher discount that gave teachers access to the Spy Museum for free.

With so much to do, so much to learn, and a vast area of friendly people the exhibit hall is an ideal place to visit between the enriching class sessions offered by the NMSA conference.

Global Awareness

By: Princess Appau and Taylor Craig

Teachers around the world ask, "Do I have time to learn and understand every single child's culture?"

Teachers gathered at the Baltimore Convention Center on November 5th, 2010, to converse about various educational strategies and approaches. The group we observed analyzed the ongoing subject of Student Cultural Awareness.

When a new student begins to attend a new school, there are many things to learn from his or her unique background. Culture-grams have been used by many schools to provide the teacher

an opportunity to culturally connect with their local and international students. A culture-gram is a card that provides information on cultural specifics such as appearance, home environment, eating practices, and religion.

The discussion at our particular conference session displayed the diversity of experiences teachers had to share at the NMSA Conference. Some teachers pointed out that a culture gram can lead to a stereotypical view of a student. Teachers then spoke up with ideas for improving the culture gram, such as sharing prior culture grams with new students, and allowing creative ways for

students to present their culture grams. Teachers create and innovate old ideas such as the culture gram into better and improved new ones. It is critical that teachers come together to inspire one another to innovate their approaches to cultural awareness in an increasingly diverse society.

Global Awareness

As time goes on, things change. So does our potential and reliability of certain things and methods. A good example is technology in a classroom. Back in the YE OLDE DAYS kids had to write papers, speak about papers, or use various other means of communication to express ideas or projects. Now, we have computers, videos, cameras and other forms of technology to help us accomplish our educational goals.

This topic was covered by Stephanie Reid at the NMSA on November 5, 2010. The two themes of her program: audience, and necessity. Both of these themes come into play when it comes to the evolution of technology. First, Reid addressed the potentials of the necessity of technology in the growing and evolving classroom. She gave some examples, most of which being her students. Her students were bored with the fact that they had to write out their projects. Reid acknowledged it, and by taken a suggestion from one of her students, she added a video presentation to the project. Suddenly, the whole class had taken a liking to the idea and were not only paying attention, but enjoying themselves.

The odd thing remains that a couple of teachers from me and my partner's school came to the convention to address

the same topic. And I've noticed more computer assignments and technological work given to us this year. It just goes to show how wide spread this topic is.

I and my partner were whisked away before Reid was finished so sadly, we didn't get a comment. We did however; snag a bystander on the way out. The viewer, who's named Traci Curry, was a teacher at Drake middle school in Auburn Alabama. She had taken interest in the presentation so she could relate more to her students. In this case, upgrade her technology so she could make class more enjoyable.

Thank You!

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The 2010 Conference Insider is completely written by middle grades students from Maryland. We appreciate the work you have done to help spread the word about the hard-working teachers and administrators that come to this conference to better serve you.