

Amazing, fascinating, and incredible are just a few of the words that come to mind when I think about the 2018 CEC convention. At first I was nervous about traveling across the country to attend a conference, not sure if the time away from family and students would be worth the trip. I talked with my professors at CSUB and they informed me that this was one of the best conventions for the special education profession and that I would be missing out on a great opportunity if I did not attend. Now that I am back home and I have had a chance to process the vast amount of information from the convention, I have to agree with my professors that this convention is well worth the time and cost to attend.

The sessions had a wide range of topics and were led by many of the best in the field. One feature of the convention that stood out for a new teacher like myself was that the convention website had the sessions broken into topic areas that made it easier to navigate what sessions I was going to attend. I could pick a specific topic and then look at all the sessions that were related to that topic. I did not have to search around through sessions that were not of interest to me, I could focus on a few specific ones that I wanted to attend. There were many sessions that provided information on new strategies being developed by university researchers as well as sessions presented on by educators working in the field every day. Many of the subdivisions of CEC held sessions that provided beneficial information on what those groups were doing in their fields of special education.

Another great part of the convention was the expo and student poster sections. The expo provided many opportunities to speak with professionals that provide different services in the special education field. There were vendors selling professional development to manipulatives, universities providing information on extended learning opportunities, and publishers with the newest books throughout the field. There were also university students there that were presenting their results from their course studies. These students had completed research and/or a project and had an opportunity to present their results. The nice thing about the poster sessions was that you could have a conversation with the students about their findings without the students being nervous standing up in front of a large group. There was a wide range of topics covered in the poster sessions with a lot of great information for the attendees.

Overall, I must say that one of the best features of the convention was meeting and speaking with fellow educators in the field of special education. Everyone was having a great time and was willing to share ideas and practices that they used in their practices. I had the opportunity to speak with fellow students who were interns, teachers who have been in the classroom for many years, administrators, and university personal. Everyone had strategies and routines that they shared with each other as we went from session to session. Information that will be invaluable as we continue through our careers.

I would like thank the CEC division of California for this opportunity to attend the convention. It is an experience that I will never forget.

Sincerely,
Charles Heard