

To the Council of Exceptional Children's Scholarship Committee,

I learned many strategies and ideas from attending the Council for Exceptional Children's Annual Convention and Expo 2018 in Tampa Bay, Florida. This convention hosted hundreds of workshops so each choice in workshop had to be a conscious decision of how I can best benefit as an educator in my current development. I primarily focused on assessments and co-teaching workshops but I also experienced workshops that focused on issues such as cell phone use, students lead IEP meetings, and digital writing communities. However, aside from the professional development, I was able to reflect about the larger community of Special Educators that pursued this convention. As a male minority teacher, I stood out as much as an African American minority in the Silicon Valley. I believe this is not of any fault of the CEC's outreach committee or Special Education in general, but I believe it does speak to the availability and resources for some schools across the nation that can send representatives from their communities to gather resources and training for Special education while other areas may not have the same opportunities to leave their schools for several days to receive additional training and exposure.

I feel very appreciative and lucky to be awarded a scholarship to help pay for the expenses of traveling to Tampa Bay for this conference. I am married without children so these possibilities are still accessible; however, I understand how difficult it is for others to arrange their schedules to commit to an event like this. Had I not received this scholarship it would not have been feasible for me to pursue this conference, I want to once again thank the committee for awarding me this scholarship to make this experience possible.

Some of the larger take-aways that I will use from this conference to help my professional development is using a project introduced by Regina Smith's "Creating Student Run IEP Meetings." If I utilize nothing else from the conference, I feel like success in this project will have lasting positive effects on how my school approaches IEP meetings. I found this workshop to be my most rewarding hour of the conference due to the earnest approach in empowering students to become the conductors of their own IEP experience. I am new to Special Education so until that workshop I was focused primarily on ensuring paperwork and meetings are done correctly and that student goals and services are developed from the IEP team, I had not considered the process of teaching students to develop their own IEP's through months of guided instruction and reflection. This workshop made me feel like the IEP process completed in that manner will yield the best results in empowering IEP students to self-advocate and become the leaders in their own education. I plan on working with a para-educator in adapting Smith's program into our school model by first targeting the Freshman on my IEP Caseload. The para-educator and myself will spend time setting up the Learning Profile binders for each student and work with our Freshman to develop their profiles using assessments, surveys, reflections, and some of their work samples. This will be a project that spans across the year and throughout their high school experience. If we can decode the legal words and processes of the IEP to our students that actually have the IEP, we can empower them to make choices and pursue goals and services that will best benefit their ability to learn and access the material. If a student can reflect upon their own strengths and areas of growth, they are more likely to succeed because they seek help in their areas of growth while taking pride in excelling in their strengths. As support providers, we can more clearly engage in strategies to support our students' areas of growth and advocate those strategies to our students' other teachers so they can have the tools to effectively engage our students with learning disabilities. I am excited to build this project with my para-

educator and if we find that there is a lot of success in our students advocating and leading their IEP meetings our school may seek to use that model school-wide to teach hundreds of our students how to take control of their rights as an IEP student.

Lastly, I want to thank the CEC for introducing me to the Keynote speaker, Marcia Tate. Her ability to connect with her audience and teach people through multiple strategies was incredible. As a co-teacher of science, Marcia opened up new doorways for me to re-think how to make science accessible and engaging for my students. She introduced 20 strategies to make learning engaging that I have printed out and posted her strategies on my wall as a reminder of how I can avoid falling into the trap of giving constant worksheets. She also introduced me to Warren Phillips, a science teacher that uses common song melodies to teach vocabulary and scientific processes. These alternative resources will help my students break down complex scientific process through engaging and fun activities.

I hope I have more opportunities to attend CEC's annual Convention, as a new Special Educator there are so many myths and misconceptions I am overcoming. I appreciated having the opportunity to experience and learn from professionals around the United States on how to improve my ability to effectively support students. I will continue to network with professionals I was fortunate enough to meet at the conference as we all try to constructively improve special education.

Thank you for your support and generosity,

-Dominic Issac Campos