

I recently attended Kappa Delta Pi Convocation 2007 in Louisville, Kentucky. On Thursday, November 1, I presented in the presentation targeted for educators at the college level regarding how to raise their students' Praxis scores. I presented with Dr. Conway, Dr. Ray, and Dr. Sautter. Speaking from personal experience—I took and passed my Praxis exam last summer—I was able to offer advice and helpful tips in ways to effectively prepare for the Praxis exam.

We planned the presentation almost a month in advance. We met to discuss what we wanted to present and the best possible way to convey the information to our audience. After meeting to create a PowerPoint and handouts, we then met again to make sure everything was ready for Convocation. I felt that this planning experience was especially beneficial for me because in less than one year, I will be an elementary teacher. My job will require me to collaborate with other teachers, get my lessons ready before I teach them, make sure I have everything I will need, and then finally teach my lesson. I felt that my planning experience with my fellow presenters modeled my future routine as a teacher quite well, offering me valuable experience with such a process.

Sometimes I am teased by family and friends asking the question, "Why would you want to be a teacher?" As they say, "You won't make very much money. You'll have to try and teach children who don't know how to behave or listen. You'll have to plan lessons and grade papers at home when you should be spending time with my family and friends." However, after hearing the motivational speaker on Thursday evening and the National Teacher of the Year Saturday evening, I quickly remembered why I was choosing to be a teacher, a thought that brought pride and a smile to my face. The motivational speaker on Thursday made me think about my favorite teachers and the reasons they were my favorite teachers. The reason I came up with, which seemed to be quite popular among the other people in the room, was that we knew these teachers truly cared about us. One girl shared with the group that her favorite teacher sent her a birthday card. Another lady said her teacher in elementary school bought her clothes because her parents couldn't. Looking back I can't tell you specifically one thing any of my teachers taught me but I can tell you which ones I know cared about me and wanted me to succeed. The National Teacher of the Year discussed the things she thinks have made her a successful teacher and personal stories about how she is a role model to her students. She even said it was typical for years later for them to come back successful and thank her for all she did for them.

I was also able to attend other professional development sessions. I attended a session about helping children handle and cope with grief. The speakers went over the different kinds of grief children today are going through: divorce, death of a family member or even pet, a parent in Iraq, etc. They gave us a folder full of resources—articles, poems, songs and art activities—we can use to help children handle their grief. It really made me think about how everyone is handling some kind of grief almost everyday, including our children; however our children don't know how to handle it like adults do.

I also went to a session on first year teaching. We were given tips on applying for jobs, setting up a classroom, staying organized, remaining successful with our job and being the best teacher we can be throughout the rest of the year. I found this session to be extremely beneficial since I will begin searching for a teaching position in three months and will start my first year teaching in eight months.

Overall, I am so thankful for having this opportunity to attend a National teaching conference.