

2021-2022: THE YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC

Invited Editorial: 2021 CSOTTE Conference Chair

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At the close of the 2021 CSOTTE conference, I had the opportunity to reflect upon what the experience meant to me. The fact that we were once again permitted to gather together--in the same room with Covid 19 social distancing preference color coordinated lanyards--was something marvelous I never in my wildest academic dreams ever thought would be something so treasured. It never dawned on me that people (especially educators) would not always be able to easily gather together to grow and learn. This is something that I will not take for granted again.

I spent a lot of time at this conference listening to the voices around me. Yes, I heard several “normal” concerns (there will always be those), but what I predominately heard was the unabashed joy that participants felt just by being together. It was so much more engaging than simply viewing a person (or their name--or their avatar---) within the confines of a techy black box. There was something very special about physically being in a room of colleagues; especially those who had similar ideals, goals, values and beliefs about the requirements needed to create an effective path for students to follow who wanted to become awesome teachers.

If you have ever been in a room with me for over 15 minutes, you most likely know I believe teaching is a graceful and noble calling. It is such an honor to stand next to students as they don the cap and gown...being prepared to teach in such a way that they truly change the world...one child at a time. Colleagues may chuckle at times, but most of us (at least deep down) are true-blue and believe in the power and impact of teachers on the lives of the students they serve. We realize that what good teachers do helps make the world a better place. In short, we know that no matter the circumstances the world throws at us... #Teachers Can.

#TeachersCan was initiated by Dr. Glenda Ballard as the theme of the 2020 CSOTTE Conference. I did not want to lose the energy generated by this campaign as throughout the Covid 19 journey, incredibly difficult

situations once again validated the exceptional things teachers do. In my mind, the impact #TeachersCan was not over, thus the theme for this year’s conference added an additional dimension to celebrate not only the outstanding things teachers accomplished academically with their students; but, in addition, to highlight the role social/emotional factors played within the profession.

The theme of the 2021 CSOTTE Conference, #Teachers Can: Passion, Positivity, and Perseverance focused on teachers as stabilizing forces in an educational world that was often perceived as a bit chaotic. It seemed important to add those last three words. Educators in school settings at all levels continued to do what they do best: teach. They forged ahead to campuses across the country and continued to be beacons of life in students’ constantly changing, non-stereotypical environments. In other words, teachers tried to recreate a sense of normalcy. Throughout this past year, educators have demonstrated, in a myriad of ways, the continued commitment to the classroom, learning, and most importantly, students; often when struggling in their personal lives.

The phrase #TeachersCan is not just a hashtag. I hope it stands as a deep seeded belief that continues to empower, inspire, and motivate us to do our best each day. I take this editorial opportunity to say thank you to you all for helping to make our world a better place through your efforts to develop the best teachers entrusted to our care. I am so proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you as we help them on their journey.