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Conference Highlights

Mid-Western Educational Research Association 1997 Conference

Thomas S. Parish, Program Chair
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Well, the 1997 MWERA Convention is now a part of history. The task that remains is for the highlights of the meeting to be shared in this short article. Sounds simple, but it really isn't. You see, the 1997 MWERA Meeting was very, very special to me because of the opportunity I had to work closely with so many of you, and for that reason I would like to share some of my thoughts with you regarding what I saw, heard, and felt.

To begin with, each of the division chairs worked diligently in order to set up their respective portions of the program. I cannot say enough about their devotion to seeing their tasks through to completion, and how well they worked with me to bring the convention program together. I was so positively impressed with their combined efforts that I dedicated the 1997 MWERA Book of Abstracts to them in an attempt to recognize them and their endeavors toward making the annual meeting a great success.

Others, too, made great efforts to make our annual meeting successful. First, and foremost, was Jean Pierce, the Executive Officer. How fortunate we are to have someone like her who is so personable, patient, and poised. Throughout the months of preparation for the meeting, and during the meeting itself, she continually maintained a friendly and kind demeanor. Truly, she deserves to be thanked for her endless good deeds on everyone's behalf.

Unfortunately, space will not permit me to acknowledge everyone's gracious contributions, but I must say that the annual meeting's success could not have been possible without the efforts of Sharon McNeely, Adria Karl-Weiss, Kim Metcalf, and Linda Bakkan. Each of these individuals went well beyond their call of duty when it came to helping organize and coordinate our annual meeting that was once again held at the Holiday Inn at the Mart Plaza in Chicago, Illinois.

The 1997 Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Educational Research Association deserves many accolades, and for many reasons. First of all, it had some really wonderful invited speakers. For instance, three noted educational scholars shared their respective insights with those in attendance at this year's meeting. Dr. Robert Shoop provided helpful hints regarding how to prevent sexual harassment and things we can do in order to avoid being sexually harassed, while Dr. Jack Levin discussed the growing concern over violence in every segment of our society, including our schools. Dr. James Boyer then shared his view of our nation's demographic future, and how research efforts need to be adjusted so that they will more likely correspond with the changes occurring in our society. All three invited speakers were very well received, and all three speakers indicated to me that they were equally well pleased with the members' receptivity to their remarks.

Besides the Association's invited speakers, many of the divisions invited speakers too. Division A, for instance, had two invited speakers. Dr. Theodore Kowalski spoke on the need for enhancing communication skills in the context of school reform, while Dr. Paul Baker discussed the leadership challenge associated with various school reform issues. Regarding other divisions' invited speakers, Division J had Molly Baker examine the technology currently in use in higher education, while Division E had Gloria Smith discuss ways to foster more multi cultural perspectives within education today. Finally, Division D had Dr. James Impara describe ways to set standards through using Angoff's method. Though each of these presentations were generally directed at specific divisional foci, it certainly seemed that all who attended these sessions came away with what they wanted, whether or not they were members of the respective divisions.

In addition to various notable invited speakers, the 1997 MWERA's annual conference offered various special sessions that the membership could also attend. For instance, Dr. Jean Pierce pulled together two highly revered professional panels in order to consider two key issues in education today, i.e., (1) the effects of educational policies upon the motivation of teachers and students, and (2) ways of forming collaborative partnerships among teachers and researchers. In addition, other special sessions offered various options ranging from meeting with the editors of the *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* to ways that playing cards could be used in the teaching of statistics.

MWERA's 1997 Annual Conference was further benefitted by other features too. For instance, the round table presentations seemed to be very well attended, and certainly provided researchers with ample opportunities to explain

their findings to interested individuals via this highly interactive format. Furthermore, there were certain intangibles that must be cited too. Specifically, it seemed as though everyone really enjoyed the sessions they attended, and also enjoyed being with one another. In fact, it seemed to me that this was more like a family reunion in some respects because of the pleasantness that seemed to prevail among those who were in attendance at the meeting. Having been to meetings that were highly critical and seemed to detract from its presenters, I was greatly pleased that this was not the case at our conference. Yes, everyone seemed to help or share with one another, and that was an incredible plus for me. So much so, that I will never forget how much I enjoyed being at this meeting, and I am already eager to attend the next one in 1998.

Incidentally, be sure that you make your reservations at the Holiday Inn-Mart Plaza before the deadline next year since many members are bringing their families and friends with them (in order to attend our meeting and/or enjoy the sights associated with Chicago's loop). Consequently, space may once again be very difficult to find once the allotted rooms are assigned. So start planning now to join us, and don't be late, because our meeting is sure to be great in '98. The bottom line, of course, is that "U" are very important to US. In fact, we can't even be S_CCESSF_L without "U". So contact Dr. Jeffrey B. Hecht at Campus Box 5900, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois 61790-5900, if you would like to be involved in any way with next year's exciting MWERA Conference. Jeff is the new Vice President of the association, and will personally direct the development of next year's program.