

# 2015 Changing the Odds Testimonials

Thank you for making me feel as if we were having a conversation rather than a lecture. I was drawn in by the depth of knowledge displayed as well as the scope of passion. I tried to absorb as much of the intellectual offering as was humanly possible.

Never, ever STOP doing this work! A big thanks for our friends in Red Pants for their generous support.

I love the upbeat hopeful messages. I love being around others who ask the hard questions and do not look at the work as black and white.

I actually made attending this conference a condition in my 2015-2016 school contract. It never disappoints. The speakers are always so relevant and the staff makes you feel as though you are part of the family. This conference fills me up and makes me feel better prepared to change the world.

You once again did an awesome job getting people to teach me and inspire me. Some days can be hard when you work daily with people who are really hurting. This was my chance to see what it's all for and go home with a renewed energy.

In my 18 years in the education field, I have spent hundreds of hours at conferences and in professional development. I have never had my brain so filled and my heart so inspired. The power of connection is the most important lesson in my field. It took 18 years for a conference to get it right!

My school team has really focused on the trauma that our children face every day and enveloping them with the support that they need to be learners despite their challenges. Our after school staff has started a team building club using Momentous Institute materials and our Guidance and Social/Behavioral staff has been teaching our students Mindfulness techniques. In addition, we've offered mini sessions on Yoga and relaxation. Each classroom in our building will be receiving and "calming basket" for their class for Valentine's Day this year as well!

After attending the Changing the Odds Conference, I am more patient with my students. Instead of focusing solely on TEKS and test scores, I now see the whole student. This has led to a shift in my classroom from high performing test scores and no "love" in the classroom, to a classroom full of learning, AND love. I also have incorporated more "play time" in my middle school classroom as a result of Kevin Carroll. When students get to middle school, its like we forget that they are still kids and love to play. I bought a Cranium "brain breaks" game that has quick 1 minute activities for students to complete in cooperative groups. It has completely revolutionized my classroom. Allowing for just one minute of time to have some "play time" and a brain break helps refocus my students and gets them back on task. Thank you so much Changing the Odds conference for helping me fall even more in love with my profession... because of this conference both my personal and professional life are so much better and full of love! You guys are seriously the BEST! :) Here's hoping I can attend in 2016!!

Dave Isay – The presentation from StoryCorps was incredibly inspiring. It makes me stop and think beyond my own agenda when I work with families. It makes me stop and listen to what my families want to tell me. What stories they have to share! What is important to them! And how can I be a part of their story, how can I help create a better future for their story.

Kevin Carroll – This presentation was amazing! I work to tell parents that so much learning happens during play! How play impacts all areas of development! I always encourage my families to play and interact with their children!

I now also follow Momentous on Instagram and am always inspired by the good work that they are doing on a daily basis; from events and trainings to posting an inspiring and advocating quote!

My practice and parenting both changed. In my preschool class, I now have a scribe who draws during circle time, much as your artists drew during our presentations. For both my preschool students and my own children, I have tried to allow time and space for failure and learning. Instead of always zipping up my students' coats, I insist that they try first. For my own children (who are 8 and 13), I am allowing them to cook and trying my best to keep my mouth shut as they destroy the kitchen in the process.

Simply put...I'm learning to recognize there could be:

- trauma behind the tantrum
- anxiety beneath the attention problem
- a story beyond the shyness

Allowing children to talk it out is what their brains need in order to make sense of their world. Thank you for teaching me about toxic stress and how to help kids deal with the world in which they live!