



San Diego, California



Keynote speaker Erik Wahl



Keynote speaker David Jakes

2009 San Diego Conference a Success

By Andrea Bennett

This year's conference attendees were rewarded with informative sessions, amazing networking opportunities, great food and the best weather California can offer. Set in beautiful San Diego, the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center is an outdoor campus that let the nearly 500 attendees sit outside between sessions to reflect on and organize the valuable information received in the last breakout session. Everywhere you looked, people were smiling. In true CETPA spirit, attendees shared information with each other at every opportunity, enhancing the valuable experience even more.

It has been a challenging year in so many ways. As we planned for this year's conference and watched California's financial situation crumble, the CETPA Board and I looked for ways to help our members get to the conference. Offering unique and essential sessions filled with relevant information has been a norm for us, thanks to the many speakers who volunteer their time and resources. But we knew we had to do more so we offered one-day registrations, negotiated a room rate that was lower than last year's rate and added sessions to Tuesday morning.

Tuesday began with a continued round of discussions on digital learning. State Secretary of Education Glen Thomas was among those discussing the current and future of digital learning in our schools. Educators, technologists, publishers and vendors sat down together to discuss strategy and other possibilities for enhancing the use of technology in the classroom. We also had David Jakes give a keynote entitled "Beyond the Web 2.0 Hype: Focusing on What Really Matters." Jakes gave the audience a lot to think about regarding disruptive technologies and their use in education. The day ended with our opening reception and vendor hospitalities that continued the valuable networking—and was fun too!

Wednesday was a full day of breakout sessions and the CTO Mentor Program commencement ceremony where 19 candidates were honored for completing the program. Another keynote was Erik Wahl, a motivational speaker who paints amazing pictures during his speech. A painting of Bono was given to a lucky attendee. Others of Tiger Woods and Abraham Lincoln were

donated to the CETPA silent auction that helped raise money for CETPA's Bridge to the Future Scholarship program. Wednesday evening was our traditional President's Reception, which had great food and music and gave attendees a chance to unwind after the long day of learning.

The hands-on labs were standing-room only and the Technology Pavilion was set up with mock classrooms, a tech talk area and two gaming systems so attendees could do, um, research on the effectiveness of gaming in the curriculum. Yeah, that's it, research.

The exhibitor's show was packed with vendors who do business in K12, all eager to provide the latest information on hardware, software and services for schools. With more than 200 booths and 500 booth staff, there was plenty of information being shared and I'm sure attendees headed back to their organizations with new ideas and plans for the future. Many exhibitors were also sponsors who made the quality of this year's conference exceptional. More vendor hospitalities were held this evening that kept attendees busy into the night. Friday's sessions and business meeting were followed by another "Best Ever" Golf Tournament at the River Walk Golf Course that gave those who attended not only a perfect day for golf but another chance to network.

We hope that this year's conference gave attendees the tools to provide "Leadership When It Counts" as we know that it will be needed in the foreseeable future. We would also like to thank the many volunteers and sponsors who helped us make this conference a success. We know we can't do it alone and your contributions are very much appreciated.

We have already begun the plans for next year's conference. This is our 50th conference! Held in Monterey at the Portola Hotel, Marriott Hotel and Monterey Convention Center, it will be special. With your help, we will again provide essential professional development, great vendor resources and have a great time at the President's Reception, which will be held at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. If you were there last time, you know it cannot be missed! ■