

John Augustine

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### MO-CASE Newsletter

My name is John Augustine. I am originally from Farmington, Missouri (a small town 60 miles south of St. Louis) and I currently reside in Springfield, Missouri where I have recently graduated with my Bachelors of Science in Special Education from Missouri State University (MSU). I am now in graduate school at MSU studying Special Education with an emphasis in Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) where I am assisting in research studies, a graduate assistant and also taking courses. I believe to understand how I got here and my great experience at the MO-CASE Collaborative Conference, I need to provide some background information.

My father, Richard Augustine, was a Special Education teacher and later became a Principal at the at-risk school within the Farmington R-7 School District. I grew up being around teachers and administrators my whole life and saw the passion they had for teaching students. My father is my greatest inspiration because of how well he interacted with students and bringing the positive aspect out of every situation. Obviously, I have not been around the Farmington School District for awhile due to attending MSU, so I was it was a surreal moment when attending the MO-CASE Conference, that I saw some individuals who work in the field of Special Education attending from Farmington who used to work with my father.

I was first able to re-connect with Dr. Ashley Krause, who is currently the Associate Superintendent and District Foster Liaison at Farmington R-7. Dr. Krause is a person I grew up around and I was elated to share my interest and love for Special Education with her. Later, I was overjoyed when I was able to present a previous research study of mine that I conducted at a

school in rural southwest Missouri to Dr. Krause and other members of the MO-CASE. It was great to also connect with current Special Education teachers at different grade levels from Farmington and discuss evidence-based strategies that are used in their classrooms. There were also many other professionals I was able to connect with from other school districts in Missouri.

Student teaching is a requirement to graduate with a degree in Special Education and I was lucky enough to student teach at Ozark R-6 School District. During my time at Ozark, I was able to be introduced to multiple Administrators, Process Coordinators and teachers. I was able to collaborate with Process Coordinator, Ms. Alex Beckman, where I conducted my student teaching, where I would attend meetings, propose ideas, and discuss best practices for subjects. Also, while at my student teaching placement, I conducted a research study that Ms. Beckman participated in. It was great to re-connect with Ms. Beckman at the MO-CASE Collaborative Conference and attend breakout sessions with her. While attending breakout sessions at MO-CASE, Ms. Beckman and I were able to discuss best practices in the classroom and new research being presented. I am thankful to attend MO-CASE so that I was able to discuss information with current professionals in the field that I collaborated with, previously. During my time at the MO-CASE Collaborative Conference, I was also able to meet individuals, whom I have never met, working in the field of Special Education.

While attending the conference in between sessions, I was able to meet April Phillips, who is a Process Coordinator for an elementary school in Missouri. As stated previously, I conducted a research study during my student teaching experience, where I implemented a class-wide intervention. I was introduced to Mrs. Phillips because she was implementing the

same intervention in her classrooms. I am grateful that the MO-CASE conference was able to introduce me to new professionals and discuss current research in the field.

The MO-CASE Collaborative Conference was also able to give students, like myself, a platform to present research that has been conducted at their work or university setting. Through the MO-CASE conference, I was able to connect with other college students and learn about the research they are conducting. Other students who attend MSU and I were able to walk around the student presentations and learn about student's research and talk about their experience in Special Education. It was fascinating to witness and be a part of an environment where students were able to collaborate and share ideas within the field of Special Education. Thankfully, the MO-CASE conference was able to give me an experience I will never forget while presenting my research.

I conducted my research study in a middle school located in southwest Missouri. The purpose of the study was to increase a student's on-task behavior during their English Language Arts class, while implementing a multi-component intervention. I felt a great sense of pride while presenting my research to individuals who attended the conference and being able to share my results. I enjoyed answering any questions they had or discussing the recommendations for future research. An incredible moment at the conference which I experienced was when the parent of the student who participated in the study visited my poster while I was presenting. They were euphoric with the results their child made and expressed how much it meant to them I was presenting their child's data. "I am so blessed that this happened, thanks for all that you do," they stated again after student presentations had concluded. Not only was I able to present in front of

educators and other students, but I was able to create relationships I did not think would occur because of the MO-CASE Conference and I am forever grateful.

During the student presentations, I had the honor to meet Dr. Tim Lewis, from the University of Missouri-Columbia. While pursuing my undergraduate degree, and continued into my graduate degree, I have learned a lot because of the research by Dr. Lewis. From his work in functional behavior assessments to schoolwide positive behavior support, I have gained a lot of knowledge from his research, as he was a reference in my research study. It was great to meet and talk to someone one-on-one, who has had such a huge impact on my learning in the field of Special Education.

The MO-CASE Collaborative Conference was a great experience and I was more than ecstatic to attend. The conference allowed me to re-connect with educators from my home district, talk to educators and professionals in the Springfield area and meet new educators who work in the field of Special Education. Being able to attend this conference is something I will always remember. I learned new strategies, interventions and evidence-based practices that will assist me in being a future Special Education teacher. I had a tremendous time attending the 2020 MO-CASE Collaborative Conference and I am looking forward to attending next years.