



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

JEREMY M. HUGHES, PH.D.  
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT  
OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

May 31, 2005

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Mrs. Heidi Capraro, 2004-2005 Michigan Teacher of the Year

**SUBJECT:** Report on Teacher of the Year Activities for May 2005

**May Activities**

- Challenge Day, Northville Public Schools  
Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP), Michigan Policy Seminar,  
State Capitol
- Environmental Discovery Center, Indian Springs Metropark
- Individuals with Disabilities Act Partnership meeting  
2005-2006 Michigan Teacher of the Year Notification, Dan Schab,  
Williamston High School
- Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching  
(PAEMST), science selection panel  
State Board of Education Meeting  
State Board Interviews of Superintendent of Public Instruction finalists  
Upper Peninsula visitations to Gwinn and Marquette districts (6/1/05)

**Reflections**

I was honored to have had the opportunity of sitting at the State Board table during the interviews for the position of state superintendent. The State Board was given a difficult challenge in making this important decision.

**Challenging You to Be the Change:** This was the theme of a powerful experience I shared with seventh grade students, faculty, parents, and community members at Hillside Middle School, in Northville Public Schools. "The goal of the program is to increase personal power and self-esteem, to shift dangerous peer pressure to positive peer support, and to eliminate the acceptance of teasing, oppression and all forms of violence." This program was presented to help Hillside students understand better that Caring is Fashionable, one of the goals at Hillside.

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

KATHLEEN N. STRAUS – PRESIDENT • JOHN C. AUSTIN – VICE PRESIDENT  
CAROLYN L. CURTIN – SECRETARY • MARIANNE YARED MCGUIRE – TREASURER  
NANCY DANHOF – NASBE DELEGATE • ELIZABETH W. BAUER  
REGINALD M. TURNER • EILEEN LAPPIN WEISER

608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909  
[www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) • (517) 373-3324

I was invited to tour the new Environmental Discovery Center at Indian Springs Metropark. This phenomenal facility is an education center that will engage learners of all ages. The most impressive part of my visit was speaking with the on-site educators who facilitate four major themed lessons in the state-of-the-art biology lab. The programs are aligned to the Michigan Curriculum Framework Science Benchmarks. The correlated themes of study at the center include interrelationships in nature, biodiversity, water resources, native ecosystem restoration and management, and changes over time and sustainability. Educators and students can expect a different kind of field trip at this biology lab. All activities incorporate high tech equipment for data collection and synthesis from outdoor experiences to the laboratory classroom. The planners at Indian Springs Metropark have designed a one-of-a-kind facility with programs to support teacher training and student learning.

Recognizing the achievements of Michigan educators and the creativity and dedication they bring to their classrooms has been a wonderful part of my experiences this year. As a former recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Teaching, I was elated to be asked to serve on this year's science selection panel. Although the final selections for the national award are to be made in Washington D.C. later this year, I had the pleasure of reviewing the many fine applications and taped lessons submitted by Michigan's talented science teachers. I also attended the announcement of the 2005-2006 Michigan Teacher of the Year. Students at Williamston High School cheered as their cherished teacher, Dan Schab, was formally recognized in a surprise school assembly by Dr. Jeremy Hughes and State Board President, Kathleen Straus.

As my experiences with Michigan science teachers draw to an end, I am aware of a situation in some school districts regarding eighth grade science curriculum. The national science standards are written for middle level grades 6-8. The Michigan Curriculum Framework (MCF) aligns middle school benchmarks according to grades 5-7. The dilemma here is that many districts, whose middle schools include grade eight, are not aligning the science curriculum in their districts to the MCF. After speaking to teachers all over the state, I have learned that many teachers and the curriculums they use are not adjusted at the eighth grade level to teaching high school science content. Depending on how individual districts structure their high school science programs, students may be missing required learning by not including the eighth grade year in planning the high school scope and sequence.

This will be my last report as Michigan Teacher of the Year. I am grateful to the State Board of Education, the staff at the Michigan Department of Education, and all the great teachers of Michigan. Most of all I give thanks to our children who motivate us to care, educate, and guide them to become positive citizens for Michigan's future.