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DATE: August 4, 2016
TO: State Board of Education
FROM: Tracy Horodyski, Michigan Teacher of the Year
SUBJECT: Report of Michigan Teacher of the Year

Serving as an ambassador for my fellow teachers and as an advocate for students is a privilege. With this privilege comes the responsibility of listening. I have listened carefully this past year as a teacher and instructional coach within my district and within local networks of educators such as Lake Michigan Writing Project and the Literacy Coaches Network. This summer I have expanded this network as a new member of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year, and as part of the LMF4PD community. I have continued to listen with a lens focused on: *What has helped this person experience success? What does this person hope for? What might be some next steps in order for this person to continue growing and achieving success?*

While continuously reflecting on the learning I've been engaged in and the conversations I've had with fellow educators, parents and students, it has become increasingly clear that if we want to foster empathy, innovation, and critical and creative thinking in systems that empower learners, I must champion *Shared Leadership*.

I have attempted to simplify the complex idea of sharing leadership. Stemming from experiences I had as part of the American Youth Foundation in high school, I recalled our cohort name, *Leaders Who Lead One Another Together* (Ayitonkin Kicioyacin). I also recalled the song *Ice Ice Baby* which started with the line "Alright, STOP. Collaborate and listen." ICE ICE BABY has taken on new meaning as I have identified critical concepts that need to be understood, influenced, challenged and practiced in order to develop shared leadership:

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Identity
Capacity
Empathy

Inquiry
Collaboration
Evaluation

In order to continue to

Be
A
Better
You

Ice is the state of matter that is cold and solid. Turning up the heat (challenging thinking as it relates to ICE ICE BABY) creates change as it transforms ice from solid to liquid. We can continue to turn up the heat, little by little until we reach 212 degrees: the point at which water boils, creates steam, and can power a locomotive (Anderson and Parker, 2005). Continuing to give that one extra degree of effort will result in attainment of goals and excellence in education.

Furthermore, Kevin Kruse defines shared leadership as "a process of social influence which maximizes the efforts of others toward the achievement of a goal."

If we are sharing leadership (system leaders, teachers, students, parents, community members), we each take on the *identity* as a leader. We understand that our goal is success for ALL learners. Therefore, we all take ownership in the learning and are adaptive to the needs of others. By thinking and acting as someone who believes in the collective intelligence of the group, we take care of the group, we continuously model what it means to be a self-directed learner, and we monitor our thoughts, words, and actions to determine if they are adding value to the collective efforts of the group.

We can develop our *capacity* as learners and leaders with frameworks that scaffold and support our ability to grow our thinking together in environments that suspend judgement.

Empathy is the tie that binds. We must 'know thyself' AND have an openness to new ideas. By listening to seek understanding, we work at making certain we have clarity about someone else's point of view and put ourselves in their shoes. While seeking clarity, we maintain a tension between having openness to new ideas as well as discerning if the reasoning for the other person's thinking is aligned with truth. These opportunities to negotiate meaning develop our ability to challenge thinking and to learn: create a permanent change in how we think or behave. Challenge brings change and change develops our character. And as educators, "learning is optimized when we see learning through the eyes of the learner." (Hattie and Yates, 2014) Education is empathic.

Inquiry helps us find the problems that need to be answered and pique our natural curiosity. Asking open questions is at the heart of learning! We need to be curious.

Collaboration is the social process which will allow us to share control, ideas, and decision making. With facilitation and protocols in place, we can truly maximize efforts and critical thinking that is necessary to solve problems in innovative ways.

Evaluation gives us the information we need to make decisions about how we choose to use our time with each other (in PLCs) and with our students. To assess is from the Latin root to "sit beside." If we are evaluating FOR learning we can employ strategies and tools that will help us to "sit beside" each other and our students to determine what success looks/sounds/feels like, and then identify what next steps we might take to achieve that success. Incremental successes with timely, meaningful feedback will empower learners. *Listening to the learning* will be a powerful way to make this evaluation process even more relevant.

If we share control, we find ourselves with more control. We want to celebrate and develop the unique gifts of each individual. We build on each other's strengths so we can each become the best version of ourselves . . . A learning culture in which leadership is shared and ALL achieve success.