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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Bobbi Jo Kenyon, 2012-2013 Michigan Teacher of the Year

SUBJECT: Teacher of the Year Report

In Grand Rapids

Ottawa Hills High School

- Our Instructional Leadership Team presented our School Improvement Grant (SIG) professional learning around the American College Test (ACT) again. At the last meeting, we had teachers look at the Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) data for our school as they related to low scoring areas in each subject, such as graphical representations in science. To start this professional development (PD), we had teachers write down what they thought students need to know to do well on the ACT and show they are "Career and College Ready." The brainstormed list was charted. We then passed out a retired ACT booklet and had all teachers take the test in their subject area (timed). When the teachers were done, there was a lot of dialogue! Most had not taken the test since high school, and yet we have been asking them to prepare their students for high-stakes tests such as this. After taking the tests themselves, a lot of eyes were opened. They looked at our previous charted lists and had much more to add. For example, my science team saw how important it was for students to be able to interpret, synthesize, and gather information from charts and graphs. All departments then formulated a plan to help their students do better in their subject test. We had great feedback from the staff around this PD and everyone left with a better understanding of the next steps needed to help students be more successful. I would highly recommend every school having its teachers take tests such as the ACT to open their eyes on how to better prepare students. The next week, each department met in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) where they were given binders with retired ACTs, ACT test taking skills to teach students, and web resources.

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- We had a representative from Cambridge come to our school to train administrators on the use of the Danielson rubric in teacher evaluations. I participated in this training by doing a pre-observation interview with an administrator, having him observe my classroom lesson, and then conducting a post-observation interview. I believe it is extremely important for schools using evaluation systems such as Danielson's to be trained well. More weight is being placed on teacher evaluations and often the evaluators do not have enough experience with the rubric being used. The process that I went through with the pre- and post-interviews really allows teachers to explain their lessons, give rationale for what strategies they use, and allows for constructive dialogue between the evaluator and teacher. The emphasis of the evaluation was to help teachers grow professionally by focusing on their strengths as well as areas to improve on. I think this process is one that should be used by content coaches, department chairs, and Instructional Leadership teams with teachers throughout the year as a way to improve teaching and learning, not just during formal administrator evaluations.

Our district

- Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) Superintendent, Teresa Weatherall Neal, has been honored as a 2013 Giants Award Recipient. This award is given by the Grand Rapids Community College to honor influential leaders in the African-American community. After receiving the award, Superintendent Neal stated, "If you want to do good in your community, you have to listen to what other people's needs are because being a good leader is not about doing what you want, it's about doing what others want you to do. You need to listen to people." Educators and parents in GRPS have witnessed this quality in Ms. Neal, and it has definitely allowed the teachers in the district to feel more empowered and appreciated as professionals.
- Our district had its "family of schools" PLC meeting for each department this month. For our science PLC, I was asked to be videotaped for an example of how a lesson observation protocol worked. I was first taped doing a pre-conference where I described the lesson I would be teaching, the learning goals I had for my students, my personal learning goals, and a focus question for the people observing my lesson. I was then filmed presenting my lesson to my 4th hour class. During the district meeting day, teachers watched my pre-conference interview to understand what the lesson was about and where it fit in my arc of lessons. Next, they watched me teaching the lesson while writing down "noticings" and "wonderings" as they related to the focus question (mine was using "accountable talk" and "socializing intelligence" to deepen student understanding of the concepts in the lesson). After the video, each teacher took turns stating something he/she noticed and then something he/she wondered about (the process is meant to be non-evaluative and we were trained in how to form our statements as such). I had an opportunity to talk about each and explain my thinking behind the teaching strategies chosen and how I implemented them. It was a great learning process to push the thinking of all involved. This process will be replicated by three other teachers during the second half of this school year. I believe there is great benefit for teachers to

open up their classrooms and share what they do in ways such as this and for educators to work as a PLC to analyze and strengthen their practice.

- This month GRPS will host its second district-wide PD day with a variety of sessions for teachers to choose from. This was a huge success at the fall PD and really allows teachers to grow in the areas that they need, allow for differentiated learning, and make PD days relevant for every teacher. Many sessions are again being presented by staff, and they are on topics related to our district Academic Plan.

In my classroom

- A teacher from another school in our district visited my classroom for a day. I had an opportunity to share with her different strategies and practices that I have found successful. I truly believe that more teachers should take opportunities to visit other classrooms and share and learn from one another. Our district actually promotes this type of learning by allowing each teacher to take two days a year to visit other classrooms.
- Our building has received many new technologies from our SIG grant: laptops available for each student, Turning Technologies student response system (clickers), interactive whiteboards, and document cameras. In the past, I have not had this technology readily available to me, so I have been excited to incorporate it into my lessons this year and have made this one of my professional goals. I have been using technology for my students to do online biological simulations, to research content and current issues, to do inquiry-based activities, to communicate with one another, and to take formative assessments to show their learning – such as using clickers, Google forms, or Web 2.0 tools like Socrative or Quizlet.

There are many difficult concepts in biology. I have seen students struggle with topics we cover, such as evolution, cell biology, ecology, and homeostasis of the body systems. By having this technology, I am able to 1) differentiate instruction so students can learn content in multiple modalities, 2) support inquiry and reflection, 3) gather student data from formative assessments which can be used to adjust my instruction, 4) promote student engagement (students love to use tech), 5) build on academic vocabulary, 6) support disciplinary literacy by having students work as scientists, and 7) prepare students for Career and College Readiness. I am so grateful for grants that have allowed schools such as ours that would otherwise not have these technologies, to be able to enhance student learning through technology to better prepare them for the 21st century.

As Michigan Teacher of the Year

- I am working with the Office of Education Improvement and Innovation, Curriculum and Instruction Unit, to make a series of videos around the new Common Core – Career and College Readiness (CC-CCR) standards. This month we did the first webinar about what the CC-CCR standards are and their purpose. The video will be available for any teacher or administrator to become more familiar with these new standards. It is extremely important to have all

educators on the same page as we transition to the Common Core and webinars such as these are a great way to distribute information.

- I continue to receive emails through my website, www.bobbijokenyon.com , asking for more details about some of my practices, such as how I do my formative assessment cycle or utilize web 2.0 tools. It is always exciting to hear from other teachers and see how they want to grow professionally by trying new ideas. I also continue to utilize my network that I follow on blogs and twitter to grow as well. It is essential as educators entrusted with preparing our youth for their future, to push ourselves, try new strategies in our classrooms or school, and set professional goals.
- This month I had the awesome opportunity to meet with the other 2013 State Teachers of the Year for the first time in Scottsdale, Arizona. During the weeklong conference, I attended many professional development sessions and had time to network with other educators. The week was so memorable, and I look forward to the next time we meet in Washington, D.C., in the spring. This group of teachers is truly amazing, and I am honored to be part of this family!