



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Matinga Ragatz, 2010-2011 Michigan Teacher of the Year

SUBJECT: Teacher of the Year Report

Many Michigan educators spend their summers improving their lessons, going to workshops and participating in activities that help them better their craft. This summer, I have been fortunate enough to work alongside and compare notes with educators who are making the most of their summer break. I want to share their experiences in a 10-12 minute vodcast (video podcast). It is posted on my blog at matinga.com

This report is accompanied by a video that showcases the way in which 21st century students can easily produce sophisticated audio/visual projects by using relatively inexpensive gadgets found in their backpacks and/or pockets. So to make this video, I used a Flip Video Camera to film face to face interviews, my smart phone for still photos and some video, my webcam to record virtual meetings and my laptop to edit and produce the video.

I interviewed educators from Michigan, the United States, and around the world to highlight the type of work and activities they do during the summer to benefit students during the school year.

I talked with Justin Heany, a Civics teacher who ran in the recent primary election for State Representative as an independent candidate. I also spoke with Jeff Seguin, a new teacher looking for his first teaching position, and Amy Lago, a 5th year teacher just beginning to use technology in her classroom.

Using video conferencing tools has not only revolutionized collaboration opportunities in the classroom but has also opened the gates for teachers. Online mentoring, Skype.com staff meetings, and online data sharing tools have begun to encourage more and more educators to practice the collaborative philosophy of today's most successful companies.

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Affordable portable technology has completely changed the way teachers can deliver instruction and the way students can access and disseminate their learning. By simply watching how students interact with these gadgets, teachers can evolve their teaching platforms to exploit these inexpensive mini computers and provide their students an instant connection to unprecedented amounts of information and access their networks to process that information.

The National Trends

In July, I traveled to Washington, DC to meet innovative teachers from all over the country at this year's Microsoft US Innovative Teacher competition. In this forum, teachers displayed their innovative teaching techniques, lessons, and ideas. The winning team will represent the United States, joining the most innovative teachers from more than 90 different countries at the Annual International Innovative Teachers Forum in Cape Town, South Africa. In 2008, I was fortunate enough to be selected as the USA representative and traveled to Hong Kong, China. This year, I attended the competition as a judge.

My report from Washington, DC focuses on innovations teachers are making in their classroom and the various technologies they use as they redefine learning in the 21st century. It is encouraging to see the level of collaboration among teachers from all over the nation.

I was able to observe many phenomenal and innovative ideas that were simply awe inspiring. I interviewed a first grade teacher from rural America who through ePals.com found first grade teachers from Lebanon. Through online collaboration, their students shared a year of cultures and created friendships for the students and teachers. This was as the result of two teachers meeting for the first time at an airport one day before the Microsoft forum.

Another team of teachers from California taught girls computer programming and mathematics by teaching them to program games for their Zunes and to create applications for their iPods. Many of their students started teen programming businesses, worked as interns in local programming firms and got accepted in engineering and mathematics programs at major universities around the country.

It was overwhelming to be among teachers who took their work so seriously and spent so much of their own time creating phenomenal ways in which students can learn. Indeed, most of conversations that took place were about how students learn, and how teachers learn to teach in a way students can learn.

I propose that Michigan consider initiating an annual forum to display teaching excellence and innovation.

MTOY Role

The official start of my year as MTOY is in the month of August, but already I have had a chance to do and experience amazing wonders with this new hat of awesomeness. I met with many Michigan Department of Education innovators and I was able to get a snapshot of the exciting projects and concepts going on at MDE. It is exciting to know that this year, I have an MDE back stage pass. I hope to get involved in a project or two.

Although the MTOY role has been a huge adjustment, I am looking forward to talking with teachers from all over Michigan. I have already had the privilege of speaking with several, and to my surprise, I have met many who suddenly feel compelled to tell me their stories. I hope to do an MTOY report featuring these teachers.

Summer School: an Audio/Visual Report 2 Part Report

(right click on link and select open hyperlink)

Part 1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdJVyD5yTQ0>

Part 2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxHxhxiScdY>