



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

September 29, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Ms. Jennifer Haberling, 2008-2009 Michigan Teacher of the Year

SUBJECT: Teacher of the Year Report

In Hudsonville

Between fire drills and tornado drills, this month I have been busy reviewing for the ELA portion of the MEAP test, which will begin on October 13th with coding of information, and on October 14th the students will begin math testing. Teachers are relieved that the dates are pre-set by the state, but finding a schedule that works best is a challenge. There are a number of glitches to work out no matter what the configuration.

Part of our review in seventh grade involves writing a personal narrative, which fits nicely in the unit of study with the essential questions: Who Am I? How Can I Contribute Positively to My Society? Students are practicing on working to use concrete details; identifying a key emotion and writing so the reader can infer that emotion; showing not telling; and using first person voice. We also continue to work on cross-text connections between the reading and other texts (songs, movies, poems), and actually all of the language arts teachers are interested to see what the new cross-text format looks like on the MEAP. We learned through data analysis last spring that our students struggle with responding to their peers, so we have added direct instruction in this and have given the students plenty of practice, which will continue through writing the narrative. They will have played a Where's Waldo game and Presto-Change-o Game-o to work on Revision, which they always struggle to understand and implement.

In eighth grade, students are working on their first thesis statements. I am always amazed to hear their creative, insightful ideas! Since this is their first attempt at writing a thesis, they are unsure what they have to say, and once they are inspired, they struggle with how to effectively word their main idea. We are toying with organization, learning about block vs. point-by-point comparisons. As their writing develops, we will also work on filling their writing toolbox with a variety of creative opening strategies, and also learn about grounds, claims and warrants to beef up their arguments. This group of high-flyers is starting to gel as a community of learners, which is always fun to be a part of.

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 • CASANDRA E. ULBRICH

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

We are planning to attend GVSU's Shakespeare Festival to see a special matinee of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This timing is just perfect to lead into *Romeo and Juliet*, which we are tackling in October. Seeing a stage production will help the students better understand drama and Shakespeare. Both plays fit well in our thematic unit that focuses on what makes a healthy relationship.

Our school improvement team (SIT) continues to work on the grading policy that we implemented this fall. The staff seems most concerned with the "no zeros" guideline, so the SIT group is troubleshooting. The lifeskills rubric has been a nice addition in that it puts the onus for appropriate behavior on students and helps us to effectively use the rubric to correct inappropriate behavior before it becomes habit. We have put in place a protocol for dealing with students on these issues that is pro-active and such an improvement over our past practice of giving a comment at the end of a term. We are now going to also tackle the issue of students who do not seem inclined to "get it" by exploring our pyramid of intervention and brainstorming alternative solutions.

As MTOY

- A special group of people from MEEMIC and Grand Pontiac delivered my MTOY vehicle to Baldwin Street Middle School on September 19! What a wonderful benefit. The 2009 Red Pontiac Vibe is much more comfortable (and fuel efficient!) than my big Red Silverado. (Now I have big red and little red!) A group of about 25 students, decked out in their Eagle Pride attire, joined the presentation.
- I presented the information I learned at the September SBE meeting about Verizon's Thinkfinity website to a select group at Baldwin; they were enthusiastic to know about this valuable teaching tool. I will be exploring ways to better communicate some of these kinds of great resources to a broader audience of educators throughout Michigan.
- Staff at Daybreak Church in Hudsonville invited me to meet with them and address the differences between a good teacher and a great teacher.
- On October 3, I will be attending the Michigan Council of Teachers of English fall conference entitled *Art As Invitation: Writing In Response to Music, Drama, Literature And Life*. While there, I will have the chance to meet Barry Lane and other great minds in the English community. I will be taking along a few colleagues.
- I have been busy working on my National Teacher of the Year application with the help of staff at MDE.
- I have been invited to work with Linda Thompson at Fredrick Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids on a new exhibit. She and I will meet in October to discuss an arts and letters exhibit geared toward middle school students. The hope is that when the exhibit is finished, my classes can be one of the first groups to experience this new feature!