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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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**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  
School Wide**

Students rejoiced as the last day of school before Christmas vacation ended up being a snow day! Because of this, we did not get to enjoy our Christmas assembly of choir, band and orchestra concerts and a student lipsync.

**In 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Students presented their research projects with Keynote slide shows just before vacation. We are moving to a new unit of study called *Illusions: Can we see things as they really are? Should we?* As a part of this, we will examine advertising strategies, read a novel called *Tangerine* by Edward Bloor and work to determine how we are influenced by other people, events and ideas.

**In 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

Eighth graders had a blast presenting their missing scenes from Romeo and Juliet, complete with wonderful costumes and imaginative set design. We are beginning a new unit of study focusing on the journey of life and the challenges we encounter. Our main piece of literature is *The Odyssey* by Homer.

**As MTOY**

It's been anything but a quiet month! Between Thanksgiving break and Christmas vacation, I was present in my classroom for a total of six class days.

The Network of Michigan Educators conference was an amazing time to connect with other fantastic educators. We heard from Mike Schmidt from Ford Motor Company, Phil Power from the Center for Michigan, and our very own Superintendent, Mike Flanagan. All of the information seemed to work together so

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well; education needs an innovative revision. I would like to see a focused group of educators learn about the innovation tool box Mike Schmidt presented, then work to solve a focused set of educational problems, like some of those Mike Flanagan presented, by utilizing a format similar to the community conversations from Phil Power's group. I was also thrilled to learn of the fantastic package of technology that will be outfitting my classroom from the SMARTer Kids Foundation. Wow!

The Michigan Lottery Commercial taping was quite an experience -- one full day turned to three days. Our wake-up call was 5:00 a.m. -- we arrived back home at 1:00 a.m. the following day. We filmed 13 different sets, each taking between one and two hours, ranging from a cafeteria scene to painting banners in the hallway, to students re-enacting *Romeo and Juliet* in a classroom. The 10 hours of film the director captured will be boiled down to 30 seconds and will begin airing across Michigan in January. In addition, I was photographed for a print ad that will also run in newspapers and magazines.

The National Governors Association Policy Forum on Teacher Effectiveness in Kansas City, Missouri, was a fascinating peek at policy-making. I was the only currently practicing K-12 teacher in the room! Also representing Michigan was Niya Hardin (Gov. Granholm's office), Bonnie Rockafellow (MDE), and Iris Salters (MEA). Most of the sessions focused on alternative teacher pay, which many states are toying with. The research was compelling to support modifying the current practices in Michigan. It was interesting to hear what the model states or programs are doing, as well as gain a glimpse at the other states' practices regarding teacher compensation, professional development, mentoring programs and teacher effectiveness. The bottom line of all of this focused on student performance.

In preparation for the National Teacher of the Year conference in Dallas, Texas, at the end of January, I contacted Biggby Coffee and the Detroit Pistons for donations to take as give-aways to the other teachers there. Both are willing to come along with me through their generous donations of Biggby coffee mugs and Pistons souvenirs. Through my contact with the Pistons, I pitched an idea that would involve a "visit the Pistons" curricular unit. The folks there are working to make this a reality, planning standards-based interactives with the varied staff at the Palace and through the Pistons organization. The day would include cross-curricular connections to math, science, social studies and English.