



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING



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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Mr. Robert Stephenson, 2009-2010 Michigan Teacher of the Year

SUBJECT: Teacher of the Year Report

In Okemos

Okemos Public Schools has committed itself to investing in technology to enhance student learning. As a result, two years ago the district proposed a transportation and technology bond to local taxpayers which passed. The first issue that we had to address was infrastructure, which included updated cabling, bandwidth, and electrical supply for the classrooms. Although everyone was eager to purchase hardware right away, our media and technology director held to his implementation timeline. His patience and desire to stretch the funds as far as possible enabled him to get better quotes from suppliers this past spring. This summer marked the first wave of hardware installations in the classrooms, with each elementary room receiving an interactive SMART Board to use with our digital projectors, as well as a document camera. One of my responsibilities in the district is to serve as an instructional technology representative. In essence, I conduct trainings throughout the year for staff in my building on the integration of technology into daily curriculum. In addition, I serve as the first tier to respond to troubleshooting technology problems at the building level. As one of six instructional technology representatives in the district, we expect to offer additional professional development experiences to staff in order to maximize the use and effectiveness of this wonderful new technology.

At Wardcliff

Because the 2009-2010 school year is Wardcliff's final year of operation as a K-5 elementary building, each experience, meeting, and school event holds a greater level of significance. As a result, we are planning many school-wide functions to celebrate our time together and ensure that this year of transition is a positive one. I have been incredibly fortunate to work with such a supportive, collegial, group of professionals, yet the sense of family that is so pervasive among our Wardcliff community is what makes teaching at Wardcliff a life-changing experience. The belief "that it takes a village to raise a child" so well defines our practice and will

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guide us through this time of change. Our staff is eager to begin this memorable year and ensure that each of our Wardcliff All-Stars will shine as brightly as ever.

Within Room 110's Door to Discovery

I have another wonderful group of 24 students and they have already begun to discover the joys of immersed learning. We currently are involved in our first book club experience of the year revolving around Patricia MacLachlan's book *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. The students have begun to learn how to interpret literature on a much deeper level. After reading each day, they conduct analyses in their reader response logs. Thus far, they have written critiques, reflected on author's purpose, made predictions, drawn inferences, extracted figurative language, conducted character analysis, and researched and explored the setting of the story. To that end, we have constructed a life-sized covered wagon in the classroom and may yet make a wooden windmill. Such explorations bring content to life and generate memorable life-long understanding.

As MTOY

I have continued to meet with MDE staff to discuss how I may best serve the department's efforts. These include meetings with Bruce Umpstead, Mary Alice Galloway, Jacque Thompson, Mark Coscarella, Jeannene Hurley, Eileen Hamilton, Renee DeMars-Johnson, and a follow-up meeting with Lisa Hansknecht to discuss Early Childhood legislative bills. I have also met with the Network of Michigan Educators leadership to plan the December conference which will be held in conjunction with the School Improvement Conference.

I volunteered for the Great Start Collaboratives "Capitol Moves" event on the Capitol lawn celebrating Lansing's sesquicentennial. In addition to the variety of performances on the steps of the Capitol, Great Start had many activities for the children in attendance. It was a pleasure to help make the day so enjoyable for so many children.

I participated in the three day Michigan Teaching For Learning Institute "Igniting the Sparks of Genius." The educational strand I selected to explore during those work sessions was a "Practical Approach to Using Data to Improve Student Achievement." I believe that data analysis is the most efficient way for monitoring student progress; therefore, I am always searching for more efficient methods of data collection and universal screening tools.

Recently, I served as the keynote speaker at Baker College Auburn Hills and presented "Promoting Innovation in the 21st Century Classroom." The audience consisted of education students, student teachers and their cooperating teachers, recent graduates from the teacher preparation program, and Baker College staff. I so enjoy speaking to young teachers to share my passion for the profession and enthusiasm for teaching. In addition, I met with Stan Kogut, the Ingham Intermediate School District Superintendent and his Director of Public Instruction, as they have asked me to serve as their keynote speaker at their Celebration of Public Instruction in November.

My National Teacher of the Year application is ready. Teachers by nature are highly reflective as we constantly strive to improve each lesson, educational experience, and pedagogical approach. Consequently, I found it a joy to write about my teaching philosophy, practice, and perceptions of education. However, it was, and is, especially intriguing to view the issues through a national lens, and relate them to what happens in my own classroom. I am incredibly optimistic about the direction of education in the coming years, and I am confident that educational professionals and advocates will continue to collaborate for the benefit of all children.