



STATE OF MICHIGAN
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LANSING



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MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

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

SUBJECT: Teacher of the Year Report

In Okemos

One of the challenges resulting from the closure of two elementary buildings and the reconfiguration of our 5th -8th grades is restaffing. I have been asked to join three other educators in the district to represent the needs of the personnel and work with four administrative representatives to develop an equitable process to reassign our employees for the 2010-2011 school year. Because our district eliminated an elementary building in 2003, we had already developed a procedure for reassigning displaced staff, but it was quickly apparent that our previous contract language was not applicable to the breadth of this change. Many factors must be taken into account: the projected student enrollment, the number of retirees, the number of required classroom teachers to accommodate reasonable class sizes, and the Okemos Education Association Seniority list. We are hopeful that we can move through this part of the process in a timely manner to reduce the level of stress and uncertainty that the staff members are currently facing. This also means that we will be encouraging veteran staff who are considering retirement to divulge their intent before the historical March 15th deadline so we can more clearly define the number of available positions. Speaking as one who will be displaced, the sooner we have a definite assignment, the better we can prepare for the next phase of the transition.

At Wardcliff

Wardcliff continues to invest in Response to Intervention (RTI) training and have been working closely with our stimulus-funded Intervention Specialists. We have adopted the Aimesweb Universal Screening device to gather reading and math data in our K-2 students, and use the results to help define appropriate intervention strategies for our elementary students. Wardcliff has a history of wonderful community support, as well as an active group of "graduates" who volunteer in the

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building. Once again, we have Okemos High School students who run a weekly Mentoring program for our at-risk students. The mentors meet weekly one-on-one with the elementary students after school for tutoring. It is a powerful and highly rewarding learning time for everyone involved.

Within Room 110's Door to Discovery

The students in my science classes have just finished their second investigative unit on static electricity. In addition to all of the daily hands-on experiments, I also brought out my Van de Graaf generator, which we took apart to discover how it works. We then completed a number of experiments with the generator including the famous Leyden Jar experiment to demonstrate how a static charge can be stored—a capacitor. In addition, I gathered student prior knowledge data about the fields of engineering using my SMART student response system. This marks the beginning of my formal Engineering program. The students have taken on their first challenge—a Transportation Engineer challenge to design and build a Zipline carrier that can travel as quickly as possible carrying a passenger. I have begun an extended integrated social studies and language arts investigation on Native Americans. As a result, we have been building life-sized dwellings in the classroom. So far, we have a wigwam and longhouse, as well as a cozy “fire pit” that we can huddle around while honoring the oral tradition of hearing Native American legends.

As MTOY

Since my last written report, I have had a number of speaking engagements for educators. I had three presentations at the Marquette-Alger Fall Conference to K-12 teachers and administrators “Promoting Innovation in the 21st Century Classroom” (2 presentations) and “Creativity in the Classroom—Imagine the Possibilities.” I was asked to conduct two presentations of my “Creativity in the Classroom” at the MANS General Education Conference in Detroit. In Okemos, I also spoke to veteran teachers about the “Inclusion of Book Club Strategies to Foster Implicit Comprehension.”

I continue to support novice teachers as often as I can, and find the investment so rewarding. I was asked by Cheryl Poole to speak at the Eaton County Novice Teacher Program on “The Importance of Maintaining a Personal and Professional Balance.” Similarly, I spoke to a small group of MSU education interns about their transition to assume lead teaching.

Because of my interest in Early Childhood Education, I joined the Great Parents Great Start Parent Coalition and have been helping them to develop a strategic plan for this fiscal year. I also assisted the Early Childhood Literacy Coalition and designed a presentation for preschoolers and their families. I presented “Magneto Man and the Alphabet Team” four times in two days at both the Lansing Mall and the Meridian Mall in Okemos. That was a true delight and I even had my own two children assist as characters in the presentation!

The honor of MTOY has enabled me to give input on other endeavors as well. I was invited to participate in the selection process for "Superintendent of the Year" for the American Association of School Administrators. I was asked to endorse a book by educator/author Stacey A. Lundgren. Finally, I have given input to the Network of Michigan Educators in preparation for the December conference. Each opportunity is a constant reminder of the significant number of people who are truly advocating to positively impact today's learners and tomorrow's leaders.