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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

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SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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
Seventh and Eighth Grade Classroom**

Over the last month, 7th grade students have been studying a variety of literature, pop culture and media that center around deciding whether we can really see things as they are. As a part of this thematic study, students are currently working to utilize their new knowledge of advertising strategies and techniques by selling an item that is virtually useless. Items range from an umbrella with a hole in it to an 8-track tape to a used gym sock. Their job is to apply the techniques we have learned to their own ad, concentrating also on what appeals to consumers. They will create this ad, and present it to the class and a group of outside judges in an attempt to win the ad campaign for their item. I have been able to use the knowledge I gained from working on the Michigan Lottery commercial to supplement and enrich the information I am using with the students and the experiences they are having through this course of study.

Students also participated in "Table Talk" about their independent reading books. This was a fun, interactive, very fast-paced book talk strategy that they enjoyed. While they were listening to each classmate, they made notes about books their classmates recommended so that when they went to the media center to select new books, everyone had an idea of a great next read.

Eighth graders are studying ancient Greece through the eyes of Odysseus, the adventure-some hero of Homer's *The Odyssey*. In addition to reading the poem, students are also considering Odysseus' motivations and flaws, and they are looking at how these modern themes can still apply to readers today. They each wrote their own metaphor for life's journey and we will be comparing these to the metaphor Homer sets up in extended form through his work.

We are moving toward the semester exam for this advanced group, so it will be their first experience with high school exams. We are also toying with our own poetry and working to creatively use language in a higher level fashion. Their first attempts were very much like

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Dr. Seuss poems, but as they read more poetry and work to imitate different styles of a variety of poets, their wording is becoming more intentional and they are adding depth of meaning to what they are writing, through poetry, but I am also noticing a carryover in their everyday work.

Across the school

We learned that we are on pace to see the Schools to Watch visiting team in February, as Baldwin Middle School continues to attract state and national attention for the great instruction and programs. Our Science Olympians began their work and Hoops for Heart will add to its over \$100,000 collection this month.

As MTOY

Most of January was spent getting ready to travel to Dallas for the National Teacher of the Year conference program, sponsored by CCSSO and ING. I was fortunate to arrive in Dallas before the ice storm and enjoyed a full program Tuesday through Saturday. It was very interesting to hear of the different arrangements for the state TOYS, ranging from full release to cars to wardrobe allowances to cash prizes to trips. Some of the TOYS are hired as employees of professional programs while they serve as the TOY; others are continuing to teach and trying to juggle all of the responsibilities efficiently.

The best part of the whole journey was meeting all of the other state TOYS, who are going through some of the same highs and lows I have experienced, and having the chance to network and collaborate with all of these fantastic educators. Our time together was filled with SMART board training, inspirational speakers, networking opportunities (like the one presented by Nancy Flanagan, 1992-92 Michigan Teacher of the Year and Secretary of the Network of Michigan Educators; and the Center for Teaching Quality), brainstorming sessions (like the one about teacher preparation programs), and delicious food. We traveled to the Women's Museum in Dallas for an evening out and received the chance to nominate one current high school senior for a full scholarship opportunity at the University of Phoenix.

In our one evening of free time, we organized a bus tour of Dealey Plaza and the Sixth Floor Museum, then headed to a Texan roadhouse for steak and some relaxing. The final day was capped off with media training (and I managed to stump the presenter when I didn't trip up on his questions) and a lovely banquet to honor the National TOY finalists. All in all, it was exhausting, energizing, inspiring, and life-changing, all at the same time. I am already looking forward to our meeting again in Washington DC in April.

In addition, my SMART board arrived in my classroom while I was away. It is set up, but we are waiting on a software download and some longer cables to accommodate the set-up of my room. The students are very excited to try it out.

I will be speaking at Hiptown in Hudsonville a program for kids about how to motivate and energize students and the adults who work with them.

I participated in a one-hour phone interview with Christy Johnson, formerly from Stanford University, but now living in Seattle, WA, about what makes phenomenal teachers. Her

goal is to speak with all the current state TOYS in an effort to publish a report of commonalities. She asked questions ranging from how I spend my professional development time to how open other professionals are to collaborating.

Because of the NGA conference in Kansas City and the NTOY program in Dallas, I am starting to consider how I can better use my voice to positively influence the face of education in Michigan. I especially would like to work to revise teacher compensation and traditional school days, but I am also interested in further work to balance out the state required curriculum to include more creative options for students in order to foster their imaginations and positively contribute to solving the problems of our world today and in the future. I have realized that this kind of work would be much more effective if the TOY were on full release. It is difficult to make the kinds of contacts necessary and give due attention to the issues at hand when juggling a classroom and full time job as a teacher.