**15228, Lori Gehrke**

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of us are excited to begin the new school year. You each have your teaching plans laid out, with plenty of room for change as situations arise. I know this because I know that all of you are the best teaching staff around and I am glad to have you on my staff.

As you finish your readiness plans for this school year, I’d like you to reflect on your teaching methods and your plans and consider the many different ways you can become more innovative in your instruction. We are in the second decade of the 21st Century. Think back to when we crossed over from the 20th Century to the 21st Century. There were a long list of changes that were predicted to happen in the world by the year 2015. How many of them actually occurred? How many happened that weren’t predicted?

Consider the teaching methods you were using at the turn of the 21st Century if you were teaching then, or the methods your teachers used, if you were still in school 15 years ago. Computers were a tool of the few, whereas now they are commonplace for nearly every student. Cell phones were in use, but they were still more for the financially secure then for every person walking down the street.

Knowledge and technology are changing more rapidly today than ever before. According to the U.S. Department of Education, “Innovation is the spark of insight that leads a scientist or inventor to investigate an issue or phenomenon.” <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oii/about/definition.html>. In that same article, it says, “There are innovations in instructional techniques or delivery systems, such as the use of new technologies in the classroom.”

Think about your own skills and talents and your own innovations that maybe you haven’t told anyone about yet. What new ideas have you been considering? What new technological skills have you learned over the summer? Did you learn a new way to present an old idea? Did you think up a new way to present information to your students who don’t learn in predictable ways?

Innovation has not been limited to the 21st Century. Mankind is the only creature that goes beyond their natural inclinations. We are the only creature that thinks and reasons so that it can move beyond the status quo and make life better. Every century has brought about new and challenging innovations.

How are you going to make a difference in the lives of your students this coming school year? What new ideas are you bringing to the table? How can you work with your fellow teachers to share those new innovations with other classes?

Each of you is uniquely gifted to teach. It’s not just your training to teach the courses you are assigned to teach. It’s the gift of teaching that drove you to become teaching. It’s a part of who you are to pass on the knowledge you have to others. I challenge each of you to stretch your boundaries this year and think of new ways to impart that knowledge to this new group of students. I have faith that you can do this and I am excited to see the new innovations you create and design in this latter half of the second decade of the 21st Century.

Thank you