

Become a Better Teacher Through Summer Travel



In just a few more weeks, finals will be a memory and summer fun is finally within reach. Many times, students say that the reason they want to teach is because of the three-month summer vacation. Don't be misled, however. Those open months simply give you time away from teaching. More importantly, if you want to be the teacher who "gets it right," that time away can give you the perfect opportunity to get great ideas for your fall classroom. One of the ways that you can do this is through learning while you travel.

Traveling IS educational, whether we want to think about it that way or not. That doesn't mean that hiking, surfing, and enjoying the night life are off-limits; quite the contrary. We all need time to

decompress and focus on something other than work. Yet finding ways to see the sights of a city can lead us to uncovering information that could engage our students when school begins again in the fall.

Many of them may not have ventured more than twenty-five miles from home, let alone into another state or across the country. They can read about zoos, parks, and mountains, but when you bring back real pictures or DVDs of places you've just been, those suddenly come to life for your students. Vocabulary building, for example, takes on a whole new perspective when the word "tower" is accompanied by pictures of the unique CN Tower that you saw during your trip to Toronto or the Space Needle in Seattle. Showing pictures of the ornate organ pavilion in San Diego's Balboa Park provides a great contrast to what students see when they visit John Ball Park here in Grand Rapids. Other tourist locations

that can provide teachable moments are museums, planetariums, aquariums, botanical gardens, national parks, monuments, and unique architectural structures such as buildings, bridges, and towers. Usually these places have free brochures and other written materials that you can collect for your "teaching ideas portfolio." It's also a good idea to be sure that you are in the pictures you take so that students see you in that environment.

What we want to remember is that everything we experience can enhance what we teach our students. When they see that we love learning, learning becomes for more meaningful for them.

Enjoy your summer and we look forward to seeing you in the fall.

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"TEACHABLE" TRAVEL STOPS

- Museums
- Planetariums
- Aquariums
- Botanical Gardens
- National Parks
- Monuments
- Unique Architectural Structures (bridges, buildings, towers)

Your Community Needs Your Help: **VOLUNTEER!**

We here in Teacher Education encourage you to take advantage of different settings around the city that could use your help and your interest in working with children and young people. If you begin during the summer with some of these, they could probably continue into the next school year. Keep in mind that when looking for a teaching position, your resume should reflect more than just classes that you took. Prospective school district employers will also want to see how connected you have been to the community.

GREAAT Schools, Inc. – This is a tuition free, after-school program at Kingdom Square Campus, 600 Burton Street, SE. Students attend Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays during their fall and winter semesters, 4-7 p.m. Students receive hot meals from 4-5 p.m. Each professional tutor is a certified teacher, but you can be trained as a tutor assistant, specializing in a variety of academic or art classes. For more information, email Ms. Guyton, gguyton863@gmail.com or Ms. Howell, samantha.howell@amway.com

Grand Rapids Children's Museum – A fun and creative place to work with children! For information and an application, go to the website at grcm.org and click on the "Join Us" link.

Grand Rapids Public Library – Love being around books? Helping people

locate information? Perhaps this location is for you. You can contact Ms. Sutherlin at ksutherl@grpl.org for more information.

Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan – If you're an aspiring science teacher, here's a really unique opportunity. This organization helps families with environmental hazards in the home. Lead, carbon monoxide, pests, and other triggers can make children sick (and that affects their school attendance). Volunteer positions are based on interest. You can be a volunteer mentor for just two hours a week to support, encourage, and coach families to maintain a healthy home. You can be trained to inspect homes for pest evidence and structural issues and help families with young children eliminate pests using safe and environmentally-friendly methods. Lastly, you can volunteer to go into families' homes and install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms, as well as share important fire and carbon monoxide safety information with residents. If you have a special skill to share, call (616) 241-3300 and ask for Betsy or Brittany. The organization indicates that being bilingual is a definite asset.

Girl Scouts of Michigan – Do you have young relatives who sell Girl Scout cookies? Did YOU sell them? Whether you were involved in the Girl Scouts or not, they need your help now. Girl Scouts of

Michigan Shore to Shore is looking for volunteers anytime. Please call Ms. Newton at (616) 784-3341 ext. 168, for further information if you would like to work with these young ladies and enjoy scouting adventures with them.

Kids' Food Basket – This organization continues to serve children during the summer months and they are in need of drivers, starting in June, to deliver sack suppers to parks. Please contact Austin at Austin@kidsfoodbasket.org for more details on how you can help attack childhood hunger in the summer. They have other volunteer opportunities as well. Find out more at KidsFoodBasket.org or call (616) 235-4532.

Grand Rapids Creative Youth Center – This is a relatively young nonprofit organization that offers after-school tutoring in all academic subjects and programming in creative and expository writing for student ages 6-18. They are currently looking for volunteers in all subjects, including Spanish. As a tutor, you would also volunteer to be part of their collaboration with the mentorship program at the Baxter Community Center, thus giving you the chance to gain experience working in an under-served area of the community. For more information, please contact katie.caralis@creativeyouthcenter.org.



Thoughts from Volunteers

Learning from my Amazing Students

Volunteering at Martin Luther King Leadership Academy provided me the opportunity to get hands-on experience in a classroom and that was the most rewarding factor! The students at MLK are loving and determined; when given the opportunity to learn more, they always take it. There are so many things that I thought I understood about being in the classroom because of my previous school volunteering. However, I have learned so much more through my time at MLK. The students and staff have taught me so much about having patience with children so that they can have the opportunity to grow as individuals. They also taught me not to be too quick to give up on the student who acts out during class, because I don't know what is going on in that student's life outside of school.

In order to be an educator, I must understand diversity, since every classroom will be diverse in many ways, not just with race or socioeconomics. I hope that I have contributed a welcoming heart and mind into the lives of the MLK student body and they have earned a place in my heart as my first entirely hands-on classroom experience. My advice to YOU as a future volunteer is to go out there and do it! Volunteer in as many places as time will allow, because every school will teach you something new about love, patience, education, and learning. Some people believe that you stop learning once you finish your degree, but I am already observing that as a future teacher, I will learn something new every day from my amazing students. I am ready for my bright future!

– Kaelee Macklin

Teachers are Never Truly "Off"

As I look back on what I most enjoyed, it would be seeing the progress of the students as they reached a new goal or gained a new skill. I had no idea that I would become so excited about seeing the students' achievement that I often volunteered on non-scheduled days.

One thing that I underestimated was the need for a teacher to wear all kinds of hats during the day. When I left the classroom and headed home, I couldn't help but realize that I was still on duty. Whether the students you teach are around you or not, there are always watchful eyes looking for a role model or someone to help guide them. When students who belonged in classes I had not even worked in began to engage me outside of class or somewhere in the community, I realized that I needed to maintain the same positive attitude of guiding them as I had when I was in the building. Even as recently as Spring Break, I volunteered to be an elementary school transporter, going to schools and providing rides to and from the school for families with educational needs. All this taught me that teachers are never truly "off"; they are simply heading to another work location while preparing for the students.

Although there are some things that are learned in our classrooms during lectures or by reading our textbooks, being an effective teacher is learned best by doing what is most appropriate for the students in the setting where things constantly change, and we sacrifice to accommodate those changes.

– Rodney Cobbins



teacher EDUCATION

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Future Teachers, Participate in “Speak Up 2012”!

Participate in the “Speak Up 2012 Survey for America’s Future Teachers” and share your ideas about teaching with the nation!

Project Tomorrow, a national education nonprofit organization, is facilitating a special online survey for college students in teacher preparation programs to collect and report on the views of the next generation of teachers about the use of technology within instruction.

Participation is open to all students in teacher preparation programs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as career changers in special programs. Colleges, universities, and programs that promote the surveys to their students will receive a free online report with the national data findings as well as institutional results.

About Speak Up 2012 for America’s Future Teachers

- Online surveys will be open for input from March 12 through May 11, 2012.
- All information is 100% confidential. The surveys take less than 20 minutes to complete.
- Why participate? This is a unique opportunity for America’s next generation of teachers to “speak up” about their views on their career choice and share their ideas about how to leverage technology within learning. Have a voice in national and state policies for education by participating in Speak Up 2012 for Future Teachers!
- A national report on the survey findings will be released in Fall 2012 in a special Congressional

Briefing in Washington, DC. Results will be shared with policymakers, academic research organizations, and media.

Go to www.speakup4highered.org/speakup2012 to take the survey and share your ideas to improve American education.

To learn more about how your institution can promote Speak Up 2012 for Future Teachers, please contact Jenny Hostert at (949) 609-4660 x12 or jhostert@tomorrow.org.



Since 2003, over 2.6 million K-12 education stakeholders have participated in the annual Speak Up National Research Project, which collects and reports on the authentic, unfiltered views and opinions of students, parents, and educators on critical 21st century education issues including the use of technology within learning and STEM education.

The Speak Up findings are regularly used to inform federal, state, and local policies around education programs and funding. The Speak Up for America’s Future Teachers is an extension of the acclaimed Speak Up Project and will provide new insights about the aspirations of these future teachers for using technology to drive student achievement and teacher productivity.