



**Schoolcraft Community
Schools**

Administration Building
269-488-7390

Schoolcraft Early Elementary
269-488-7200

Schoolcraft Upper Elementary
269-488-7250

Schoolcraft Middle School
269-488-7300

Schoolcraft High School
269-488-7350

September 25, 2011

Greetings Parents,

My wife thinks I need a hobby. Or at least she thinks I need something to distract me from my work once in a while. She's right. In some research I read over the summer, it was cited that people are more creative in their work when they are able to take a break from their endeavors from time to time. In contemplating these thoughts, I thought about the guitar I bought 25 years ago. I have wanted to be able to play well for half of my life. Although there have been spurts of involvement and investment, I have never gotten very good and seem forever locked into mediocrity (a generous description) despite a desire for more. When I think of my sporadic practice rituals, though, it is little wonder why my progress has been stunted. In fact, I have developed some pretty poor playing habits over the quarter of a century. Without knowledgeable coaching and teaching, I quickly went past the pages in the book on scales, fingering exercises, and motor-memory techniques and right to the songs. Quite frankly, the songs were more fun. The bottom line, however, is that no one ever got proficient by skipping over the skills and only going after the fun stuff or just doing the work just to "git er done." Being skilled takes purposeful, diligent practice. The good news is that the fun comes down the road as a direct result of the practice (see attached article) and I can attest to the validity of this notion from other aspects of my life.

So why am I sharing all of this? I feel like we (staff, parents, and community alike) often view schoolwork as a "git er done" endeavor and not an opportunity for building the skills and learning that will result in lasting enjoyment and fulfillment. There is a common American belief by students that if they just get most of the work done, they deserve a good grade. Lost in that belief, is the importance of the learning that could be happening when doing the work. Be it on the playing field, on the stage, in the classroom, or in the community, we need to focus on important skills and commit to quality pursuit. In school, we are in the process of figuring out what is busy work and what is important. Teachers are asked repeatedly to make the important learning targets and the path to achieve them clear to themselves and to their students. Every observation I do in classrooms looks for these two features. We are making progress.

Would you please help us in our efforts to improve? When looking over your child's work or helping them with their homework, ask them what the important learning of doing that work might be. If your child does not know, have them ask the teacher and then report back to you. Expect and encourage purposeful practice (practice that is intentional in its desire to improve). Your child is learning important skills that will be critical in life: making sense of data, understanding complex text, writing well and persuasively, grasping what it means to live in a global society, critically analyzing facts and opinions, and

so much more. None of these are learned well by doing them once or by just getting them done. It will take repeated, purposeful practice.

Thanks so much for entrusting us with your children. It is our honor and privilege to do so. I best go and practice my finger exercises on the guitar now. Have a great week!

Sincerely,
John

P.S.

Please don't forget the important upcoming events and dates. This week is spirit week leading up to homecoming. The high school just made us aware of a contest versus Vicksburg to "stuff a bus" with groceries for needy families in south county. A flyer is attached that gives you information on how to participate. We will be collecting the food in the office.

Also, the 2nd annual Fund Walk will be held on October 14th. Please see the attached flyer regarding that essential event.

Eighth grade camp is next week (October 6th and 7th).

Finally, MEAP testing starts on Tuesday, October 11th and lasts for two weeks. Please have your child here, rested, and well nourished. We will have our first dance on the 15th to break up the testing time with something fun. Stay tuned for details.