

October 3, 2011

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...

We all know how important it is to gain knowledge and never quit learning, no matter what age we are. Although "A's" are of much importance to all students, it isn't the entire factor of success. Sometimes we depend on the success of the grade card in determining a child's fate and future. If a student tests very well and is successful in memorizing and retaining information, he or she is likely to do well in school. I believe it is somewhat important to get away from this concept due to many variables.

Homework is one great variable in determining the final outcome of grades and "school success". With homework, it can be done by the student alone, with a parent's help, by the parent while the student watches, or not done at all. Homework should be an assignment that is an extension of class that is practice on the concept(s) taught during the day. If a student attempts to complete the assignment alone, he or she will hopefully grasp the concept through repetition and practice on questions or problems. Some students will grasp the concept quickly and would only need to work a few problems or questions to complete, while others would need assistance and repetition to achieve it. Homework should NOT be just some busy work for the student to do at night so more grades can be collected.

If parents assist, it is important that they allow the student to attempt to complete and/or resolve the problems first. If parents become too involved and help with answers, the student may score very well on homework grades but will not conquer concepts needed to learn and progress later. I've heard many times from parents that their child is a poor test taker. This could be part of the problem. If the student isn't allowed to succeed or "fail" on their own, they will never know how failure feels until test time. I also understand that you may feel you need to make sure all answers are correct on homework assignments because "everybody else does this and they get better grades". But at some point, your child will hit a wall when it is time to advance on with a related assignment.

While we celebrate the highest achievers on the honor rolls and at graduations, not everyone can be "at the top". You ask and we ask that all students behave, learn, try hard, and do the best that they can. Our society wants to make us all "equal" and all winners. I'm thinking that resiliency and competitive may be of great importance when it comes to preparing to achieve once school is over. Failing doesn't feel good so we will do everything in our power to refrain from it. Sometimes experiencing failure and feeling it is the best motivation for a student to figure out how to succeed. Be careful with how much "assistance" is given as it will create failure at some point in school.

Another kind of variable that I highly believe in is "learning how to be a good person through the influence of others". Helping others is becoming extinct in our society. Teaching kids to be mannerly and how to think of others is a lost art. I usually don't commend students by name in articles because I know I will forget some or leave someone out. But what happened recently at the high school is worth telling. It was a typical school day and I happened to be on the Ag Building roof. Mr. Wattles had his P.E. class out playing golf and had set out a golf course all around the grounds. Up Route 45 came a funeral procession as the students were playing golf in front of the high school. Four students (Tim Smith, Trent Andruss, Levi Porter, and Jacob Sims) stopped and placed their equipment on the ground, and stood at attention while the entire funeral procession passed by. **THAT WAS AN AWESOME SIGHT**, and a sight that was obviously taught at home. That was a time where they could have continued to think of themselves and play their game, but in honor and respect for others they chose to do what they were taught as children.

I hope we are able to continue to teach and help children become "good people who help others". It's absent in our world for some reason. I will remember a child who is kind and mannerly, opens doors for others, lends a hand, etc. before I remember their GPA ten years from now. I would consider hiring a person who is of this type over a most intelligent but egotistical individual who thinks only of himself. For those of you continuing to teach and demand that your children act in this manner, thank you.