



PARK RIDGE-NILES SCHOOL DISTRICT 64

164 South Prospect Avenue • Park Ridge, IL 60068 • (847) 318-4300 • F (847) 318-4351 • d64.org

Dr. Eric Olson, *Superintendent of Schools*

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year! I hope you and your family had a restful winter break, good holidays with family and friends, and have come back recharged for the second half of the school year. For me, it's been a great first half of the year, as I continue to learn all the great aspects of the D64 community. Everyone continues to be welcoming and warm, and I remain very thankful for the opportunity to serve the students, parents, and staff of our district.

And with a new year, and a new decade, talk surrounding New Year's resolutions has probably found its way into your life in one way or another.

Now, whether resolutions work well for you or not, it has reminded me again about the spirit of goal-setting and instilling this level of thinking in our children. My own kids are in middle school, and after each trimester, we review their report card and assessment results, and I ask them to set one goal for the next trimester. It could be to improve a grade in a class, study harder for science tests, spend more time with independent reading, checking over their work before turning in a math exam, and so on.

There are, however, some key parameters:

- The goal is chosen by my children, not me. That doesn't mean there isn't some suggesting from time-to-time, and having a goal of less homework, for instance, is not in the spirit of what this activity involves, but I've found they have greater ownership when it comes from them.
- My kids have to answer 3 questions about the goal at the time we set it:
 - What is the goal?
 - What will you do to accomplish the goal?
 - What evidence will you have that will show you completed the goal?
- Goals are not absolute. Sometimes we achieve them, and sometimes we don't. Either way, the process is as important as the outcome, and it provides

an opportunity for discussion. Was the goal set too high? Too low? Were the ideas of how to accomplish the goal not sound enough, or did they greatly help in the outcome? What have we learned to set our next goal?

- Sometimes we make the same goal the following trimester, sometimes we adjust it, and most times we choose something new.

Did my kids groan the first time I brought this up with them? Of course they did. I wish I would have started it earlier in their educational career, but after a couple of times, it just became part of the normal routine (although I do still hear a grumble on occasion).

And besides the actual objective of having my kids practice goal-setting, I've also seen the benefits of them being more involved in their own learning, surprising themselves as to what they're capable once they set their minds to a task, and overall, learning how to improve at something of which you've convinced yourself is not your strength.

This is one way in which I stay involved with my children's education. I encourage you to explore ideas in which you can stay involved in your own children's schooling. A strong education system ultimately relies on a strong family-school partnership.

I wish you and your family a great second half of the year, and I look forward to continuing to meet new faces at school functions and events.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric S. Olson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" and "O".

Dr. Eric Olson