

Some of you know that my grandmother passed away this past week. She was 94. I didn't make it to the funeral, but the funeral director sent me a picture of her at her school desk in 1926. That's her on the screen.

Of course the picture of her in the desk caused me to reflect and think about how throughout the years children have anxiously awaited the beginning of their academic journey.

Just like tomorrow, children will enter your classrooms; some will enter school for the very first time and others will be beginning the end of their K-12 journey as the Senior Class of 2012.

Some children will enter the doors ready to learn, filled with anticipation and excitement and others will be scared...afraid of what lies ahead. Some children will come to you tomorrow with stressors that you and I could never imagine, but they will be here none the less. They will be on the buses, in our classrooms and cafeterias and they will be depending on you. Just like every other child throughout history who has ever walked the halls of a school and depended on his or her teachers.

Solomon was right when he said, not much is new under the sun...so let's go back to the Mississippi Curriculum of 1926. It really looked very much like our curriculum today. There were references to building and grounds, maintenance...even heating, lighting and ventilation. There were suggestions for classroom management, record keeping and scheduling. Teachers taught reading, writing and arithmetic...even art, P.E. and music.

But who knew that the curriculum of 1926 covered such topics now seen as oh so 21st Century...such as teamwork, collaboration, student engagement and even Response to Intervention? Of course, it wasn't called that, back then, but it was clearly outlined in their framework.

Teachers were to Post Plans on the Blackboard...We call it posting your objective; sometimes it is on a Whiteboard and sometimes it is still on the blackboard

Transitions were to be quick, orderly and quiet...classroom management

Errors were to be corrected quickly...immediate feedback a best practice then and a best practice now!

Students were to be tested twice, preferably three times a year in reading to discover weaknesses and remedy them in order to show what children can do in comparison to other groups; Encourage pupils to keep graphs showing improvement

In fact...to quote from the State Department of Education, “the results of the tests should be interpreted and followed up by remedial measures”.

Sound familiar? It should. It is our RTI process...

So, do you think back then that maybe they left out such important subjects as Career and Technical Education? Not hardly, an entire course of study was dedicated not to “arithmetic or English composition, but rather a correlation of the two subjects and its application of the two; the practical affairs of everyday life. Committees of pupils were appointed to visit the businesses and professional communities who were “concerned with the subject of school affairs”.

Even then, the curriculum was designed not to leave children behind as teachers were challenged to “push the work vigorously, to have extra work for brighter pupils (better known now as enrichment) and to hold children to a standard of neatness and good form.

Curriculums weren't perfect then, nor are they perfect now...and it's the same with systems, the educational system was far from faultless and the bitter truth is sometimes the system failed. Sometimes it still does.

We are at a critical point with respect to our district. Academic Watch is not something we can be proud of. Nor should we. Of course, we can blame the system, or the parents, or the teachers who had the children. We can blame the State Department or the Federal Government. We can even blame global warming and simply make excuses or...

We can choose to accept the challenges before us.

We can accept that children haven't really changed, but their childhoods certainly have.

We can accept that more and more communities are going to hold us accountable for student growth and achievement.

We can accept the fact there will be long and challenging days throughout the year.

And we can know that without a doubt, we will **because we are teachers** have opportunities like no other.

We will have opportunities to learn together, grow together and lead together.

Our goals for the year are simple, effective communication, consistency in purpose and leading for learning.

With those thoughts in mind; I challenge each of you, no matter what role you play, to make the same commitment as your administrators and I did over the summer. Our pledge to you is this:

We will not be complacent in our jobs.

We will not be selfish in our jobs.

We will not use excuses, but rather seek solutions.

We will not let our egos get in the way of doing our jobs.

We will not work in isolation, but rather together.

We will not gossip, but rather support one another.

We will not criticize or complain, but rather remember we are all working together toward the same goal.

We will hold each other accountable.

We will commit to ***Leading for Learning...***

Won't you join us?

*Harriet Tubman said that every great dream begins with a dreamer.
Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and
the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.*

**Thank you for what you do and what you will do for the boys and girls of the
Brookhaven School District.**

My best to you for a successful school year as we continue to

Reach for the Stars every day!