Dear Future Fifth Grade Parents:

As I'm sure you know, fifth grade is the year that students have the wonderful opportunity to start a band instrument. Since the year is winding down, we thought we'd send out a letter to inform you of when and how we start band. There's always so much excitement to start band that we get many questions this time of year and over the summer. We actually will not begin any fifth grade band related activities until the fall but we talked to the students this week and showed them the instruments so they can be thinking about it over the summer. We encouraged them to find YouTube videos of the instruments they are interested in and do some listening.

5th Grade Calendar
September
Parent Meeting
Middle School – 7:00pm

February
Concert with MS HS Auditorium – 7:00pm

March
FUNdJam - Mass Band
SLHS Gym – afternoon

May
Spring Concert
HS Auditorium – 6:30pm

At the beginning of the next school year, we will help students find an instrument with which they will find enjoyment and success. We hope to be done with the "fitting" process in a couple weeks. After which, we will develop a band list of all the students and the instruments they will be playing. Just about everyone will get their first instrument choice, but some students may need to play a second choice if it is a better fit for them.

After the fittings are done is where you come in - each student needs to get an instrument to play. The best choice is to rent an instrument from a reputable dealer. Information will be available at our fifth grade parent meeting. If you are purchasing or borrowing a used instrument, please have it checked at a reputable shop to make sure it is a quality instrument and in good working condition. We would like all the trumpet students to start on a trumpet, not a cornet if possible. Also, please do not be tempted by the inexpensive instruments OR reeds that are popping up at Sam's Club, Wal-Mart, Meijer or Amazon.. They will not play well or last long and are nearly impossible to repair. Your student will also need the book, "Sound Innovations". Information about that will also be at the meeting.

The parent meeting will take place at the Middle School in September. Please be in attendance so we can discuss all that your fifth grader will be learning and make sure they are ready to begin this new year. We'd love for all the fifth graders to take part in band – it's such a great experience! We do want all band students to make at least a one-year commitment to the program and give it a solid effort during that year. Like anything worth doing, it does take some work and effort. Please encourage your child to be a part of the band. We will always have the latest and most up to date information at www.springlakebands.org If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us anytime. We're looking forward to a GREAT year!

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Mr. Grevengoed and Mr. Truszkowski

Hopefully your child will begin a musical instrument at Spring Lake. If so, when they bring home their instrument for the first time, it is more than just an exciting day…

…It is an opportunity…

…Perhaps one of the greatest opportunities in your child's life thus far.

If you are like me, you want your kid(s) to complete their K-12 education with far more than factual knowledge and an ability to score well on tests. You don't believe that your child's success in life depends primarily on cognitive skills – the type of intelligence that is measured on IQ tests and such. You don't believe that school should be primarily focused on stuffing kids' brains with as much factual knowledge as possible, but instead is focused on growing *skills and mindsets* that will last a lifetime. Psychological traits that include the patience to persist at a tough task, the ability to delay gratification and the curiosity and grit to problem solve to name just a few.

And the musical instrument in your child's hand could be the key to learning those skills.
You see, your child didn't receive an instrument with the expectation that they would become a professional musician, just as they did not receive a math book with the expectation of them becoming a mathematician. But, unlike any other subject, your child has the opportunity to develop some of the most important life skills through learning to play an instrument, and you need to let them know this is the case.

Here are three things parents need to know and be able to express to their child as soon as they begin learning to play a musical instrument:

> "You are allowed to fail, and you will become better because of your failures." There are no red pen marks for missed notes in music the way there are on tests – there is nothing to feel bad about when you play something "wrong" in music. To become skilled at a musical instrument – and to become great at *anything* – one needs to struggle a little. In your child's case, they need to sound bad before they sound good; they need to work on things *just beyond* what they are capable of in order to get better and smarter, and that means they need to make mistakes. There is a small gap between what we all are able to do and where we want to be, and focusing on that gap makes us better learners and better people. Learning a musical instrument allows us to grow from our mistakes.
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> "Hard works beats talent every single time." Practicing a skill over and over, the right way, fires circuits in our brains that solidify that skill. Sure, some people find some skills easier at first than others, but the people who practice that skill daily in order to "burn it" into their brain will always far surpass people who don't practice enough. Practicing a musical instrument helps children learn the universal truth that hard work beats talent.
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> "This is a long-term commitment, and we are going to stick with it." Studies have shown that students who identified that they would play their instrument for longer than one year outperformed students who only committed to one year of playing by up to 400% – *practicing the same amount of time if not less!* The ideas and mindsets students bring to their musical instrument study have a direct effect on their success, and it's the parents' role to set the tone on the first day by not giving their child an "easy out" to quit. Make the decision to invest in your child's music education for at least a few years of their schooling and you will see results.

There are not many subjects taught in school that have the potential to give our children the life skills they need to be successful beyond their school lives. Our children can learn how to have grit, motivation, problem-solving skills, flexibility, and *character* during and after their K-12 schooling – and music is the vehicle to teach these skills.

What if we as parents treated music like any other core subject and expected our children to study it for at least 4 or 5 years? What does "success in school" mean to you and your child?