

It's 'Hero' worship



Activision

Guitar game hits a high note

By Eric Herwatt
Honorable Mention,
Opinion Writing
Division: 5-6 Grade

I first heard about Guitar Hero III from my friends at school and soon learned that it was the newest craze. Not having ever played it, I wanted to be a part of the excitement, too.

After receiving the game for Christmas, I soon joined the ranks of the Guitar Hero believers. Still perfecting my skills, I now see why rocking out with Guitar Hero is so much fun for people of all ages.

Guitar Hero III may seem to be just another video game, but it is more than that. It can help improve eye-hand coordination at all levels of the game. For adults, it can reduce hand stress caused

by carpal tunnel syndrome. Also, the game can release stress and energy by playing and rocking out to the music. When you play Guitar Hero III, it is a good source of exercise for both the mind and body.

Although you will not master playing a real guitar by playing Guitar Hero III, the colorful buttons and on-screen indications are simple and fun for everybody to use. It is a great source of social interaction and a big hit at parties. The game encourages friendly competition and personal goals as everyone tries to out beat their scores.

In addition, exposure to music from different eras and styles is a big thumb's up. Prior to playing the game, I had never heard of artists from my parent's time such as The Who, Kiss, Alice Cooper,

Rolling Stones, and Aerosmith. Now when the songs play on the radio, I recognize them and have learned to appreciate the music from my parent's generation. When my dad plays Guitar Hero, he rocks out as if he was a teenager again. The music in the game appeals to everyone.

It takes months to learn how to play a real guitar but to master the skills used for Guitar Hero takes only days. The simple idea of the game is what makes Guitar Hero III so popular among gamers, giving them a similar experience of being a rock star.

Is Guitar Hero III a good thing? I think so! See you on the stage.

The author was a fifth-grader at Holy Spirit School in Fairfield when this was submitted in February 2008.

Firefighting runs in the family

By Sara Skeeters
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Division: 5-6 Grade

It's 1:55 a.m. and the emergency alarm sounds off in the firehouse.

My Uncle Warren jumps out of bed and into his shoes, he then puts on his fireproof coat and pants. He throws on his firefighting hat and slides down the pole to the floor below.

"Report the address," he yells, and then he quickly jumps into the driver seat of Engine 55. When the engine arrives at the location of the emergency, he says loudly, "Attack lines." This tells the firemen to start fighting the fire, or see what type of emergency it is at the scene. It could be a fire, a car accident, or someone who is hurt badly, or having a heart attack. This is a typical day in the life of my Uncle Warren.

In the firehouse, they all work as a team and treat one another like they were family. My uncle has to exercise a lot because he has to keep in good physical shape to do the work that he does. The firemen in my Uncle Warren's station work 24-hour shifts. They cook and eat their meals together, and

my Uncle Warren is a good cook.

My Uncle Warren told me he always wanted to be a fireman like his father and grandfather. His father was a San Francisco firefighter for 34 years, and his grandfather helped to start the San Francisco Fire Department when they used horses instead of engines. My Uncle Warren is very caring and giving and I can see why he wanted to be a firefighter like his father and grandfather. He always puts everyone's safety before his own. He is a very quick thinker and this helps when he has to make life or death decisions.

When I was younger, my uncle would take me to the firehouse and let me ring the bell and try on the firefighting equipment. Sometimes he would give me a ride around the block. Maybe one day I will decide to become a firefighter and carry on the tradition. My Uncle Warren would probably say, "That would be wonderful and I would be proud of you if you were the fourth-generation firefighter in the family.

The author was a sixth-grader at Holy Spirit School in Fairfield when this was submitted in February 2008.

Worrying about fashion is too distracting

By Ciara Hanna
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Are uniforms good for kids in schools? I agree that they are. Students spend so much time looking for something to wear! Uniforms can help students to be up and ready in the morning.

I have two brothers who are in high school, one is a sophomore and one is a senior and they don't have uniforms. Every morning they throw something on that might not even match! They don't look as neat as they could either!

I have another brother in fourth-grade who goes to Holy Spirit school with me; we have uniforms and it is so easy in the morning to just throw it on! We look neat and tidy!

Uniforms are also great because you don't have to worry about going out to shop for the new shirt

that's cool or the shoes that everyone has. Everyone looks the same! Kids and teens always want the best outfit they can get and don't realize how much money parents are really spending on them!

In my school, we have "free class days" which are about once every month, which I love! When it comes to the day, I'm pulling my room apart to find something to wear which is so stressful! When I finally find something, I remember I already wore it! Then I have to find a whole different outfit! "Free dress days" are fun, but can be nerve-racking too!

When I go to high school, I hope I have a uniform because I won't want to look for a new outfit every day for the rest of the school year! You have to keep up your grades and not worry about finding the perfect outfit!

The author was an eighth-grader at Holy Spirit School in Fairfield when this was submitted in February 2008.

Buckingham rises to the test challenge

By Briana Hester
Honorable Mention,
News Writing
Division: High School

On a sunny day in March, just a few days before spring break, hundreds of California teenagers will be sweating bullets. Sharp pencils at the ready, nerves will consume these students as they prepare to take the California High School Exit Exam, or CAHSEE.

According to the California Department of Education, in the 2006-07 school year, 30 percent of students who took the California High School Exam in English still hadn't passed.

Buckingham Charter Magnet High School in Vacaville has vowed to change the way people think about teenagers and their knowledge of everything, including English.

Not only are their test scores higher than any other school in Solano County, but their students are more confident about an important skill they use each day.

In the English department at Buckingham, everyone is well versed with tools to help them achieve perfection, such as the essay organizer.

This graphic organizer helps organize a student's thoughts when preparing to write an essay. Many students have found that a tool such as this has improved their writing and organizational skills immensely.

Another thing all English students use is a Web site called www.freerice.com, in which they learn vocabulary words and donate 20 grains of rice to people in need for every word they learn. This not only improves their vocabulary skills, but it also helps young teenagers to have a hand in fighting world hunger.

An avid user of www.freerice.com, Stephen Johnson, 15, said, "It seemed too easy and too good to be true."

Students in freshman and sophomores are also graded on and required to keep track of the books they've read and reach a goal of reading 1 million words in a year. Juniors and seniors are required to read 2 million words each year.

This goal encourages students to become better readers and be more educated on things that are going on in the world. In addition to the high level of education these kids are receiving, they

also have the satisfaction that they are learning from teachers at one of the best high schools in America, according to this year's U.S. News and World Report magazine.

When a few students were asked if they feel as if they learn a lot in their English classes, they responded quite positively.

Ava Spindt, a sophomore at Buckingham, stated, "I think every year we will just review, but I end up learning more than I expected." Another student felt she has seen English in a new light since coming to Buckingham.

Mariah Stone, 16, happily replied, "I used to hate English, but now that I've experienced a class here, I've learned more than I thought I would. Now I understand things and enjoy English more."

High school graduates from this school have received a benefit from the rigorous English program. One graduating student stated, "The world belongs to readers."

Buckingham students have experienced the options that are open to them from knowing how to read well. Teenagers have become advanced readers and writers and have learned how to maintain these skills throughout their lifetime.

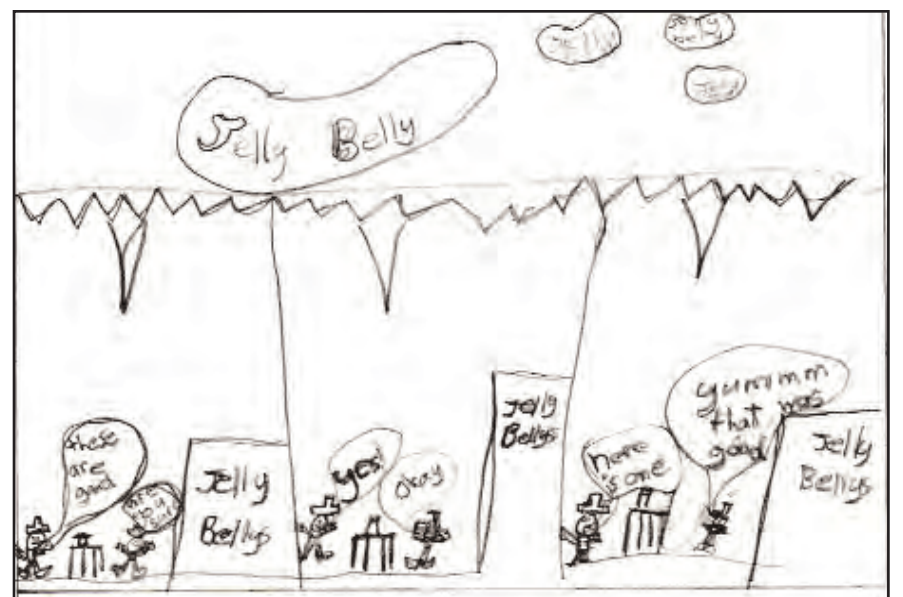
Many students have personally received the benefits from being pushed to their limit. Just this past year, Buckingham's STAR test scores were in the 800s, the highest scores of any high school in all of Solano County. Students that learn from these teachers are prepared to go out in the world and do their best.

When asked the most important thing teachers can do to prepare students for life after high school, Stephanie Oates, an English teacher at Buckingham, generously added, "I want to make sure my students can write and speak clearly and effectively. I also hope they learn the joy of reading and the power of the knowledge that comes from it."

English students at Buckingham agree that they have achieved more than they ever imagined.

The author was a sophomore at Buckingham Charter Magnet High School when this was submitted in February 2008.

Puzzles, Games, Comics winner



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This advertisement for Jelly Belly, designed by Trenton Oiland, earned the student an honorable mention in The Reporter's Design-an-Ad category of the Campus Star student journalism competition. Trenton was a third-grader in Laurie Brunke's classroom at Foxboro Elementary School in Vacaville when this was submitted into the competition in February 2008.