

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: A better way to communicate

By Stephen Somerville

A couple of weeks back, my son had his first day of school, entering high school as a Grade Nine student.

I could not believe it when my son informed that that he was joined by almost 400 other frosh at the school. His Devin's Drive graduating class had approximately 60 students.

How times have changed.

Back in my day, my two brothers and I were extremely excited when we each received a new pair of cougar or Sparks running shoes and (maybe) a new pair of pants and shirt for the first day of school.

Today, besides new pants and shirts, we needed to outfit the junior Somerville with a new computer and a cell phone.

Also, the orientation for the new Grade Nine students is quite a bit different than what I received.

When I entered high school back in September 1979 (yes, I know, that was some time ago) I simply walked to school. There was no grand gathering of the Grade Nines or assemblies or parents accompanying the students. I simply walked into my home room and sat down beside the other nervous frosh.

Today, Aurora High invites the parents of Grade Nine students to accompany their child on the first day. They get to hear about the school, the activities and meet all the teachers. The grade nines even get the run of the place for the first day as the older students don't even show up until the next day.

This is a much better approach than what I received, that's for sure.

And what is also different from my time in high school, and far better, is the level of communication and interaction between the school, parents and students.

To wit, I just received an e-mail newsletter from the school. It said:

?To keep you informed on all of the amazing, engaging student experiences at Aurora High School, we will continue to update the AHS SCHOOL WEBSITE with important dates to remember.?

There were a number of important items in the e-mail but the following caught my particular attention.

Attendance ? ?Prompt arrival and regular attendance in all classes is key to student success and achievement. We will be updating our call out system to advise parents period-by-period of lates and absences. Furthermore, a weekly update will be sent via email. Parents must verify all absences as soon as possible either by phone or email and notify the school of any anticipated absences and appointments in advance whenever possible.?

This is far better than looking at an interim report card a few months from now and noticing that little Johnny/Joanne has been late or missing a whole bunch of classes that a parent is unaware of.

My wife and I also received a nice (group) e-mail from my son's English teacher, introducing herself, and promising to keep us apprised of assignment due dates.

I think this a great use of technology.

Now, if only someone could produce a technology that gets students out of bed, fed and off to school in the morning without the usual admonishments from their parents!

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