

Bill O'Reilly has a new book coming entitled "Old School". You might suspect it is a lamentable view of days gone by in the one room school house. While it is more general in nature, we all look back at the good old days and wonder why things changed and why we *did* not go back. After 5 years on the school board and some 65+ years of living, I have come to the conclusion as much as I would like, we are where we are. And "kids" are where they are. Uniformity and conformity are of days gone past. So we need to go where the students are and where we need them for the future.

In previous columns we spoke to the technological advances in the classroom with significantly increasing the number of computers. That effort has stabilized but it was about much more than spending money to replace chalkboards. Allow me to update you on where we are as that effort was only the first step of what is a giant step forward in student development. Our hybrid learning model, where teachers are able to address and track individual performance, is far beyond the 3rd and 5th graders. Teachers across GASD are using this instructional approach to drive curriculum and instruction. To implement, teachers needed to review and adjust their list of lesson plans, goals, teaching approaches and skill sets. Technology integrated classes where the students follow a designated path to achieving goals are now augmented with locally developed on-line courses. Soon teachers will be able to administer distance learning classes. Soon, students on vacation, on district approved trips, absent for sickness and even snow days will be able to stay classroom current.

And it is more than that. Remember the days when you were bored and day dreaming while the teacher presented a "one size fits all" lesson plan? With digital curriculum that continuously challenges each student to proceed at their comfortable pace, the teacher can allow students that need acceleration to proceed while they provide individual and small group instruction for those who need additional attention. Teachers can now review each student's performance more frequently and adjust future instruction to meet student needs. Teachers can also involve and advise the parent more frequently. No more waiting for grades to find out how your child is doing.

Where are we headed short term? GASD just received their mid-year evaluation of student participating in the hybrid classrooms performance. 81% of one grade has already successfully completed the entire year's growth goal of in math! And most students are ahead of pace in reading. These accomplishments require teachers to be significantly more flexible. Some students are receiving instruction in the next grade's content. We are demanding much more from teachers than in the past but they have responded and are driving change. It is certainly exciting but as a board member I suspect it is much more stressful for teachers. Rather than teacher-centered classes, the teachers manage a student-centered environment. Teachers are much more than they were in the "good old days." Now they are more like orchestra maestros having to meld together a flow of harmonic individuals into a cohesive symphony.

Where are we headed long term? I do not know *but* we have a great team in place.

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