

Information Technology Alert: Beneficial Changes Coming this Fall

In previous letters, my colleagues and I have stressed how different are the schools of today from those of even 10 years ago. One of the obvious ways in which teaching and learning will be different in our new high school from that experienced by earlier generations will be through information technology.

Information technology is not simply having abundant computers able to connect students to sources of reliable information. Information technology is also about creating a culture of learning in the classroom that will prepare our students for the information economy outside of it. The intelligent use of information technology in turn requires new approaches to research, writing, and learning.

Here is a short list of some of the changes we can anticipate this fall when our students walk through the doors of our new North Mason High School.

Teachers:

- Teacher resources will be electronic, centrally located and easily accessible for each teacher to modify.
- The resources of each teacher will be available to his or her colleagues to encourage collaborative learning. For example, an individual teacher at Belfair Elementary can also share ideas and material with a colleague at Sand Hill or from another district.
- The resources of teachers will also be available to principals and teaching mentors to use in coaching and evaluation.
- Rather than teaching from a hard bound book, our teachers will have a web-based text that will always be up to date.
- Teachers will evaluate and return student work electronically.

Students:

- Course texts will be web-based and regularly updated. Students will no longer have dated hardbound history books in which Bill Clinton is still identified as President of the United States.

- Science books will similarly be electronically updated to reflect current research.
- Students will complete all coursework electronically and submit their work to the teacher electronically.
- Browsing specific approved web-sites will broaden and deepen each student's experience of discovery and research.
- Documentation will be much easier to accomplish, raising expectations for students to consistently improve the quality of their work and turn it in on time.
- In the course of learning web-based research, the student will master many of the advanced research skills previously expected of college students—or even of librarians.
- Because of the emphasis on and accessibility of research, the student's ability to ask productive questions will also gain new emphasis.
- The student will have electronic resources to aid in spelling, punctuation and grammar and learn to identify and correct mistakes before submitting assignments to the teacher.

While these changes and others that will emerge are important and lasting, there are still some things in education that will not change. At the heart of education are well-prepared teachers. Without these teachers and the students' motivation to learn, all this electronic technology is but expensive hardware and unused programs.

Talented motivated teachers will make electronic technology come alive. As students realize the new horizons they might reach, and the creative ways new technology enables them to collaborate, they will be grateful to their community for providing them a state-of-the-art education that is liberal, relevant and worth having.