

New Agenda item:

Information regarding the outcomes of two students who switched to integrated programs in Sept. 2011.

Many of you know that Bev and I were concerned about no longer being able to represent Mountain parents on the ARC as our Mountain children decided to change to composite schools. We believe it's important that you have an update on how they are doing. Their transition to the schools of their choice was very actively supported by board staff and we are grateful for their input.

I was very reluctant to allow my son to transfer as the school he wanted to go to did not have a history of serving students with MID within the mainstream although they do have a separate class for kids with more severe issues than his. However, this was very important to him so I followed through with the initial meeting.

The first meeting I had in the spring of 2011 was with one guidance counsellor and one member of administration. The member of administration was not particularly welcoming. In fact, it was said to me that:

- many of the changes that needed to be made when the board integrated all MID students did not have to be made for two years;
- despite the fact my son has been a drummer in an orchestra for three years, he could not join the music class as he does not read music;
- surely I didn't expect the school to be the ones to inform my child he wouldn't be able to go on to university;
- the Ontario Literacy course (which was his one compulsory) would be presented in Alter Ed through booklets so my child, who has great difficulty reading, could teach himself. The school would not provide an EA to help him with the reading. It was an independent study course.

I placed a bunch of phone calls that summer as well as e-mails - cc'd to various people in the board. I also made sure that my son was registered for a co-op that summer so he would have fewer stresses

during the school year. I also arranged for him to be granted a Prior Learning Equivalency for his music experience.

Not until the end of the summer, was I able to arrange another meeting, this time with the new principal and some of my son's future teachers. At that meeting, I was very discouraged from pushing for an EA. Nevertheless, during the course of the meeting, I could tell that things had really changed. The Literacy teacher had constructed a course that was interactive and allowed students to show their skills verbally. In that, my child could succeed. The Learning Resource department was there and we made sure that my son had scheduled a learning resource period for support for his after school work. Perhaps the greatest bonus of all was the new principal of the school. She knows MID students well and has advocated for them. This principal had done her homework; she was very aware of my son's profile and was able to tell me all about his strengths and needs even though she had never met him. She showed she was excited to have him at the school. I left the meeting much more hopeful that my son's needs would be addressed.

As of this point, there has only been one issue at the school regarding his programming (and connected to that, emotional safety) which was handled deftly by the principal. So I must say that my son's first term has been a huge success. I am extremely grateful to the staff and administration at this school for keeping my son in their radar. It has taken an extra commitment on their part and they have done it.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that my son has an easy year; he only needs four credits and he has the year to get them. He finished his compulsories but one by the end of grade 11, so he is able to take classes that might not be so rigid with their expectations. I arranged his co-op placement with people who I was sure would understand and embrace him. He has parents who have been very proactive in advocating him.

On top of that, and maybe most importantly, my son's personality has helped him to succeed. He is seen as a polite and kind student who wants to please. He always obeys rules. He is always on time. Social skills are his forte. He takes his frustrations out at home, not at school, so I am able to be aware of them and support him.

In conclusion, I would like to say thank-you to all those who have made his experience successful so far. I do think it's important to acknowledge that if my son did not have a proactive parent, the year would have been more difficult for him. As well, if he had tried to join a school with an administration that was not ready for him, the outcome would also have been different.