

Chalkboard

By

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I want to express my appreciation to those of you who stop me in various places, church, the grocery store, ballgames, and such, and tell me that you enjoy reading the *Chalkboard*. Your quantitative number does not qualify as a teeming horde, but your qualitative level is exceptional.

The *Chalkboard*'s sole purpose has always been to communicate with you about school issues. I confess that on occasion the tone can sound a "little chatty" rather than professional. Not surprising, some of the "chatty" articles have been well received according to some of your feedback. But some pieces, which I personally considered to be dry tomes, were equally well received by others of you.

That different readers relate to different styles should be of no surprise to anyone. Ask any classroom instructor if all children learn best in the same manner. Equally instructive, ask that same question to parents of more than one child. Or, just ask your spouse.

One downside of the *Chalkboard* as a means of communication to you parents and patrons is the frequency of which it occurs. Imagine speaking to your best friend, your spouse, your children, your business associates, and so forth once a week and then only then by a typed message.

Another downside is that the *Chalkboard* is one-way communication. While I have already expressed my appreciation to you who have identified yourselves as readers, I note that it is a rare occasion when a reader wants to discuss the contents of an article.

Some would say that both of the above are upsides. In reality, they are neither, but rather only aspects of this particular form of communication.

Technology has radically changed how we communicate with each other. Cellular phones have cut the umbilical cord and the *Jetson's* are not looking like a cartoon anymore. Soon *Dick Tracy's* two-way wristwatch will be on the shelf at Bever's hardware. When that happens I guess the days of the *Chalkboard* will be over. I see my new form of communication to you playing out something like this.

I see a news report on television about Gentry Schools that I think is biased, misinformed, or just simply not detailed enough. I pull out my cellular /walkie talkie/instant messenger/video streaming messenger/text messenger/electric toothbrush phone and with one push of a button every

telephone in the Gentry School District, land line or wireless, rings. It will not matter whether you answer or not because your phone will be blocked from outgoing communication until you hear my message. Not only will my message be on your phone, it will also be a pop-up message on your computer and simultaneously displayed as a “crawler” on the bottom of your television set. Imagine just how wonderful this would be. Any time I wanted to talk to all of you instantly I could. Notifying you about cancellations for inclement weather would be a breeze. Those times when a basketball game had the starting time moved from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 would no longer be an inconvenience to you because I would have pushed that button and informed the world. Writing on the bathroom wall? No problem, I could send you a .jpeg copy by video on your phone, computer, and television.

Too tired or too busy to come to a Pioneer Athletic or Activity event? No problem. For a small fee to the Athletic Booster club, the event will be simulcast into your living room or videophone. Don’t like how the coach managed the last two minutes; just click one of the response keys at the bottom of your screen and participate in an instant “public approval poll”.

Enough tongue-in-cheek? Seriously, there are times when I wish you could instantly be provided some key piece of information about school happenings. The closest we have to that now is our school website at <http://www.gentrypioneers.com/> and e-mail. My e-mail address is drbarrett@gentry2.nwsc.k12.ar.us if you ever feel the need to communicate in that manner.

Meanwhile, until Gentry School’s communiqués catch up with the future, or until every family in the district has a computer connected to the internet, expect to get those campus newsletters in the mail, look for messages on the schools’ marquees, search your elementary child’s back pack for messages from the teacher, answer your telephone, listen to the radio, watch television, and read the newspaper.

And...if you really want to know what is going on...talk to your children each day.... even if you have to text message them.