



Halton Region Public Works employee Rick Barker is suitably dressed to endure the cold while working on a waterline on Delrex Boulevard Monday. (Right) Lesley Allen of Georgetown found it easier to walk on the street than the snow-filled sidewalk on Prince Charles Drive.

Photos by Ted Brown

Baby, it's cold outside



Christ the King Grade 12 students (from left) Lauren Hulme, Sheana Stevenson, Melanie Simmons and Shannon Lewko, brave the cold blasts of wind on Guelph Street as they walk to school Monday while (left) a pedestrian traverses the trough-like sidewalk on Mountainview Road North Monday afternoon.

Boards support Ministry policy on late school assignments

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The letter from Director of Education Wayne Joudrie and Assistant Director Ruth Peden, said the Ministry requires all school boards to evaluate two aspects of student learning— student achievement of curriculum expectations, and learning skills (which includes work habits and not meeting deadlines).

In the letter it was stated “the board will continue to support the Ministry policy by aligning their classroom practices to improved student learning,” and in bold letters said, “Be assured that teachers in Halton District School Board can deduct marks for late and missed assignments, but this practice is done only as a last resort.”

At the board meeting tonight (Wednesday) at the J.W. Singleton Centre on Guelph Line in Burlington there is to be a staff report regarding the supports offered to students who face challenges with learning skills.

Miller doesn't agree with the argument raised by some that the Ministry policy is unfair to conscientious students because he said, “not everybody knows everybody's circumstances” and it implies that students who aren't handing in their work on time are not conscientious.

“That may not be true,” said Miller stressing there can be several mitigating circumstances students are facing.

“I think the policy is only reflecting what the very good teachers have done

(all along),” said Miller.

Being new to Georgetown, he said he couldn't speak directly on how the policy has worked at the high school but he said at his previous school— Blakelock High School in Oakville— he heard from a student there who said the policy has helped him greatly.

On the other hand, he said some students probably have taken advantage of it, but in the end that's not always worked to their advantage as the assignments pile up.

“The students are learning there are natural consequences— the piling up of work,” said Miller.

Some critics say the approach doesn't prepare kids for the real world. Miller disagrees, saying, “this is their real world.”

“I don't think it's that far from the real world, people miss deadlines all the time,” he said.

He pointed to the example of a defence lawyer going to court unprepared, asking for a remand and getting it, or a patient having to wait six months for surgery until the doctor is available.

“Getting things in on time, that's one element. But ultimately we want to learn what the students are learning,” he said.

‘I don't think it's that far from the real world, people miss deadlines all the time.’



STUART MILLER

He added, “ultimately, there are students who are going to fail.”

HDSB superintendent of education for Halton Hills and Milton, Yaw Obeng, said the goal of the policy is to improve student learning, and “at the end of the day we want the students to learn the curriculum.”

“You can't give a student an evaluation if you can't see the work,” said Obeng.

He said the challenge is meeting the balance between the kids who meet timelines and the other students who in the past haven't and who become disengaged from school, and could eventually give up and drop out.

Acton High School principal Bert O'Hearn said the approach has “been difficult for lots of people to get their heads around,” and teachers “struggle with it.”

“Some feel it doesn't benefit kids,” said O'Hearn.

“I think it may be giving a more accurate picture of what the student has learned according to the learning outcomes identified in the curriculum, but the issue for some parents and teachers is it doesn't provide a way to reward the students who are good at the learning skills piece.”

Christ the King principal David De

Santis said the policy “is nothing new” and has been at place at the school for at least a couple of years.

He said the emphasis now is for learning as opposed to the way it used to be— of learning.

He agrees with the policy. “Because assessment should never be done in a punitive way,” said De Santis.

He conceded the policy isn't fair to students who get their assignments in on time but added, “they're establishing a very strong work ethic and when they go to university or college that will not become an issue for them.”

Support for the policy was unanimous amongst five Georgetown District High School students polled by this newspaper Tuesday afternoon, all who have handed assignments in past the due date.

“It's good because if you have other commitments or work or something you have more time to do it,” said Grade 10 student Janelle Kuchmash.

Grade 11 student Paul Parker called the policy “awesome” and said he often hands in assignments a week late.

“Sometimes teachers give you a lot of assignments at once and you don't have enough time to finish it so the work isn't done as well as you would have liked. But now you have more time,” said Britney Ballantyne, a Grade 10 student.

To the students who complain the policy isn't fair to those who always hand their work in on time, Grade 10 student Christine Logan said, “I think they have too much time on their hands.”

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