

Points of View

FROM THE EDITOR

More mojo

For the second straight week, a story about the Dobbs Ferry School District occupies the lead spot on the Enterprise's front page. The timing is a coincidence. Dobbs Ferry happened to launch one newsworthy initiative -- handing out Chromebooks to students -- at the same it hosted a worthwhile program -- Building Bridges.

The Chromebooks distribution is interesting, especially from the perspective of someone who was in grade school when the first computer labs were installed in schools. To those of us who attended Sacred Heart Elementary School in Hartsdale, the original Macintosh computers that occupied half the library in the 1980s were engaging marvels of engineering.

Today, the seventh and ninth graders in Dobbs Ferry use laptops that store files in a "cloud" rather than on a hard drive. The computers can also be monitored by the district to ensure their proper use. Most impressive, however, is that the students keep the Chromebooks round-the-dock.

The Chromebooks cost \$300 each -- affordable by laptop standards, but a considerable expense when multiplied by 234, which is the total number of seventh- and ninth-graders in Dobbs Ferry. The investment, however, seems worthwhile as the district figures out how to best incorporate the machines into the curriculum.

The laptops put a lot of portable information in students' hands. They also even the learning experience for students, whose access to computers outside the classroom may vary.

Learning facts and figures, however, is only part of the curriculum in Dobbs Ferry. Building Bridges reflects that character education is also central to students' education.

Last week's Building Bridges program, held at Springhurst Elementary School, was inspiring to witness. The grade-school students learned a lot about "disabilities" from people who live with a range of conditions, including autism, deafness, attention deficit disorder, and even diastrophic dysplasia, which causes short stature.

During one event, a panel of Dobbs Ferry High School students, as well as a college freshman, talked about their learning challenges. The teens were frank about their situations, but also encouraging. They stressed the importance of seeking help and of respecting oneself and others, regardless of differences. By the end of the presentation, it was clear that the Springhurst students had learned important lessons, which many of them shared aloud.

The Chromebooks and Building Bridges add to the positive mojo started years ago in Dobbs Ferry with programs such as IB and Science Research. Rather than racing to keep up, there is noticeable effort to innovate within the district. For their initiative, Dobbs educators earn high marks.



Enterprise
THE RIVERTOWNS

*The Hometown Newspaper
of Hastings-on-Hudson,
Ardsley, Dobbs Ferry and
Irvington*

ESTABLISHED 1975

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