

Problems with Parent Connect

With our grades being monitored by Parent Connect, it makes it difficult for students, parents, and teachers to communicate

"What's this about?"

The familiar words greeted me as I opened an e-mail from my dad, because, once again, Parent Connect had sent an automatic e-mail to him concerning a failing grade of some sort.

"Please do not reply to this message. Any response is sent to an unmonitored mailbox. LAUREN MINICK has received a failing grade for the following assignment(s)... You are receiving this message because you have requested an e-mail to be sent when your student receives a failing grade for an assignment."

You have all seen this before. You forgot to do the assignment, didn't do it or, in my case, were absent and unable to turn it in. Regardless of the reason, you have been annoyed by these automated messages at least

once, if not multiple times. I don't want to rant here, but the first thing I do when I open the e-mail from my dad is scream and make it known that I absolutely, positively hate these Parent Connect updates. When I skip lunch to check my e-mail and work on journalism projects, I want to know why I'm being bothered with a "concerned" message from my parents that in turn upsets me about a missing assignment only worth five points.



LAUREN MINICK

The option to sign up for Parent Connect is given at registration and Back to School night. Parents are assured it is not only accurate, but allows them to stay up to date on everything that happens in their child's classroom. This is why it is also referred to as Parent@School, is it not? Look, I am not completely against technology that allows my parents to play an

active role in my education. The use of programs such as Parent Connect is an all-around good idea, but there are better programs out there that we could use.

I believe that my generation has to face the fact that although we are technologically advanced, schools are pushing to make our parents just as informed as we are. Instead of rebelling against it, I say we embrace it.

After researching the Pearson School Systems' website, which spawned Parent Connect, I found a similar program that is possibly more effective. It's called Power School and has proved itself to be an award-winning classroom management tool, according to the company. Here are some of the features that I found appealing from the demo on Pearson's website:

- The program is accessible from both Macintosh and Apple computers and from any Internet

connection in the world.

- Grade assignments, updates and criteria are shown exactly as the teacher enters them and are said to be accurate up to the minute.

- Teachers are able to see students' progress in all classes.

- Multiple e-mails can be added to the progress report update section to ensure that all necessary parties are e-mailed.

I don't want to get "What's this about" talks, e-mails anymore. I want transparency and accuracy in the technology that is used to facilitate open communication among myself, my teachers and my parents. I want change.

I urge all teachers, students and parents to take 15 minutes of your time to watch a demo on the Power School program at <http://www.pearsonschools.com/demos/powerteacher/videos/>.

Challenges of a first-year president

With the first nine months under his belt, President Obama has focused most of his attention on domestic issues. But the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and accusations of racism are making his job difficult.

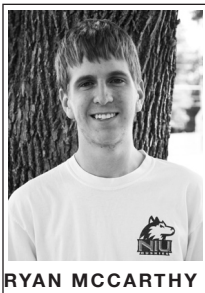
We all knew that President Barack Obama had a lot on his plate when he moved into the White House in January. The American people set a high standard for President Obama after all the campaign hype, and he has struggled to keep up with expectations on many issues.

The hottest topic over the past few months is the push for the reform on health care.

This has taken much of President Obama's attention and time making him susceptible to much criticism by conservatives.

While addressing the United Nations three weeks ago, Obama tried to convince world leaders that he would help reduce pollution in this country.

However, world leaders are not budging until the President gives more attention to world issues. This will be a continued trend with our own foreign policy.



RYAN MCCARTHY

Speaking of foreign policy, the proposed troop increase in Afghanistan has many people questioning President Obama.

According to a recent NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll, 1,000 people were asked whether they support an increase of troops. 44 percent said they would support an increase compared to the 51 percent that disapprove.

I am skeptical, like many Americans, because Obama has no previous foreign policy experience.

But the Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates have helped

President Obama settle into his role as commander-in-chief.

If he decides to increase the troops levels, it will be Obama's first major foreign policy decision that will be his responsibility.

But the other issue that has surprised many Americans, but not me, is that some people are hating Obama because of the color of his skin.

I can't tell you how much junk mail I have gotten e-mails calling President Obama derogatory names.

The controversy started when former President Jimmy Carter stated to NBC Nightly News that he believes that racism is a part of the hatred for Obama.

"An overwhelming portion of the intensely demonstrated animosity toward President Barack Obama is based on the fact that he is a black man," Carter said.

Hearing President Carter say these words brought me back to reality. Although we elected a black man as our president that doesn't mean everybody has accepted him. I was naïve to think that there are still some people who believe that minorities can't be successful.

I don't care if you disagree with President Obama's policies or views, but no one should think that someone of another race is inferior to lead this nation.

This will be a monumental time for the country, and I think we have the right man for the job. We as Americans will have to wait for the full results of Obama's actions to play out. I'm an impatient person. I want fast results just like anybody else, but unless we reconstruct many parts of our nation we will be back in the same mess in 20 years.