

Students will have some input in grades

By Bill Rea

In a pilot project, Grade 9 students at Mayfield Secondary School will be able to engage in negotiation when it comes to their grades.

Principal James Kardash said this will involve four courses this year, with the students receiving input throughout the semester, and being able to use that as they progress. They will be able to receive the feedback, gain from it and use it, he said. He added there will be a detailed portfolio for each student. The teacher and student will be able to review all the feedback that was offered, and they will be able to discuss how much has been mastered.

'There's a lot of evidence out there that says as soon as you put a mark on a piece of paper, the learning stops,' Kardash observed, adding that's been a source of stress and anxiety on the young students in the past. He said as students progress into the higher grades, they have come to dread the marking system. 'We've got to put the joy of learning back into education.'

Kardash commented this is starting slow. 'We want to phase it in,' he said.

He also said they are going to want feedback from the students, teachers and parents so they can figure out where things need to be fixed with the program.

'We want to grow it, but we've got to start somewhere,' he added.

The program is starting this year in academic French and English, applied math and open business. Kardash added that just about every Grade 9 student is taking at least one of those subjects.

'There are a lot of teachers who have been doing this for years,' Kardash observed.

He also said that from all he's heard and read, there doesn't seem to be massive discrepancies between what the teacher and student believe when they sit down and discuss the progress. He said it's rare to have a difference of 10 per cent or more.

'This might be a way to affect some change and get a focus on learning.'