

Norkam Secondary School

Norkam Secondary has a rich blend of many cultures, lifestyles, attitudes and faces. When I enter the building from the back parking lot at 8:15 in the morning, I am welcomed by many sleepy students wandering the sparsely crowded halls, discussing the events of the night before, wondering what class they have first block, or complaining about some homework assignment they didn't complete. Some are eating rather questionable breakfasts such as ketchup chips and coke, while others have breakfast bars and protein shakes, and some are so hungry that they are devouring their ham & cheese bagel which was intended for lunch. Others are at their lockers sharing earphones, listening to new songs on their iPods or MP3s. As I hobble down the hallway to my classroom, I acknowledge and greet the group of boys who devoutly gather by Room 44 every morning.

These boys arrive on the bus from Rayleigh at 8AM and spend the next half hour entertaining themselves, rushing to finish homework they forgot about the night before, at times copying the work from a merciful friend. I suspect at times they may be bragging about a conquest or teasing one of their comrades about an embellished event. Nevertheless, they all seem quite comfortable and safe congregated in a row sitting on the heated bench by Room 44.

One boy in particular has caught my attention this morning. He is a grade 11, probably no taller than I and would be considered robust to some, chubby to others, and just plain roly-polly to a bully. He is begging his friends to help him with his Chemistry homework. His friends are endlessly teasing him and refuse to terminate his misery by supplying answers. To make the matter worse, I approach him and accuse him of cheating and copying. He is mortified. Shocked and speechless at first, he explains his plight. I giggle and relieve his apprehension by telling him that I am only teasing. His brown eyes sparkle with a hint of disbelief before a massive grin erupts on his rosy face.

I saunter away happily, fumbling through my bag trying to locate my classroom keys.