In January, I received an email from the Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators challenging principals to become a student for a day. I saw this as an opportunity to see what a middle school student in 2016 goes through in a day.

In order to be fair in my selection, I decided to host an essay challenge. One student had to convince me that he or she was the best student to shadow for the day. Mrs. Battles took this challenge one step further and developed an essay assignment. The students had to write why they wanted me to shadow or not to shadow them. I then took the pile of essays and started reading.

The essays were very informative and entertaining. Some of the students wanted a personal protector to help them get through the crowded hallways quickly. A few of the students wanted someone to do their work for them. The students who did not want me to follow them made me sound as though I was looking for someone to stalk all day. The most entertaining request was from a student who wanted me to hit him whenever he spoke out of turn in order to improve his manners in class. (Sorry Tony, I do not believe in corporal punishment.) When I finished several reads of the top essays, I chose to follow Braden Lloyd. Braden convinced me that he would give me the real-life seventh grade experience at Norwalk Middle School.

While shadowing Braden, my day was made up of many terrific experiences. I used critical reading skills in English; I learned about conductors, insulators, and circuits in science; I reviewed African history in social studies; I applied my limited math knowledge to percent discounts and tax rates; I learned about composure in Junior Leadership Academy; and I learned about teamwork in physical education. The one thing I did not do was pick up a trumpet and play along with the band, which should make them very happy. I especially enjoyed lunch time with the students. I got a chance to see them as “classmates” and not students. We also enjoyed some chilly time outside shooting baskets.

I did not shadow Braden because I was challenged to do so; I shadowed him because I wanted to see school life from the student perspective. I wanted to walk into the classroom and work as a student. I am in classes quite a bit doing observations. I watch how the students interact with the teachers, but I wanted to interact with the teachers and the students as a “student” to see what they truly go through.

After my experience as a seventh grader, I am filled with more than an experience; I am filled with pride. I am proud of the way our students participate in class and the knowledge they have. I am proud of the way our teachers challenge the students. I am proud of our building and all that goes on in it. Overall, I am proud to be a Trucker at Norwalk Middle School.

Wait! There is one last thing. I am also proud of myself. I was able to muster up the energy to get out of the desk in Mrs. Logan’s class at the end of the day. Those desks are not meant for a 46 year-old back, and I was tired. Our kids really do work hard and have fun.

Keep on truckin’!