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Began researching effects of “tech” (digital media and evolving technologies) on the brain a decade ago.

The parents giving testimony February 14 for House Bill 2641 asked if I would provide testimony. I am seeing clients today so I am providing written testimony only.

A little history:

In April of 2015 the SMSD district was considering the 1:1 initiative to issue iPads and laptops to every student. At that time I shared my concerns as a parent of (then) elementary-aged students in the district based on my knowledge and research as a neurotherapist and clinician. The measure passed and my concerns went unaddressed.

On November 26, 2018 there was another opportunity to share concerns with the district’s digital learning in Pre-K through 12 at a Shawnee Mission School District Board of Education meeting. As I was unable to attend, my comments from 2015 were read by a proxy.

A couple of the parents speaking today asked that I re-share those 2015 and 2018 comments to you again today in 2024.

Today I share my support of Bill 2641, a bill which solely focuses on student personal phones, not school issued digital media devices. However, my words from 2015 and 2018 carry weight not only on the topic of school-issued devices but on student phones during the school day.

Here is a paired down version of what I shared in April of 2015...

Without moderation in the use of digital media you will see....

-decreases in comprehension and long term memory, worsening grades and test scores and an increase in student dissatisfaction

-educators spending valuable classroom time managing student misuse of technology, student disengagement and distraction

- Increases in cyber-bullying, agitation and anger, cheating and multi-tasking.
- Increases in the diagnosis of ADHD due to decreased attention span and impulse control.
- Increases in depression, anxiety, suicide ideation and suicide completion.
- Increases in prescribed medications for ADHD, depression and anxiety

At that 2018 meeting we were also addressing increasing suicide rates. I felt like I had practically predicted it in 2015. It felt defeating that steps weren't taken then. As you sit here today, do you think any of these "predictions" have improved?

In my practice I see how these devices have wreaked havoc on our youth in almost every measurable way. In 2015 I felt I could practically see what would happen, like following a bouncing ball. What I didn't consider was what would be missed when kids turned to phones so ubiquitously. They don't learn soft-skills like eye contact, tolerating strong emotions, feeling bored and making friends. Our students are social and emotional beings who aren't practicing their social and emotional skills because they can easily escape to their devices.

While this policy won't address every device or every time a device can hijack a person, it will provide some much-needed breathing room for their brains and bodies. It will give them a chance to escape some of the negative effects while creating space to learn soft-skills as well as educational curriculum.

In 2015 there weren't a lot of people talking about the negative effects of technology on the developing brain. That is not the case in 2024. And today, you have the chance to do something truly meaningful in the lives of Kansas kids. In three years' time, wouldn't it be nice to point to all of the positive effects of this policy?