

Thinks school officials should reconsider use of 1-to-1 devices

To the Editor:

I am the parent of a first grader at Killington Elementary School and have spent most of my career as a law school professor. I'd like to share my perspective as a parent and educator regarding our district's use of 1-to-1 devices (iPads and Chromebooks), and why I believe our district should remove these devices from our elementary school classrooms and drastically reform the way our middle and high school students use them.

In our district, 1-to-1 devices are a regular fixture in our students' day-to-day experience:

- Beginning in kindergarten, students use gamified software on iPads to learn math
- Starting in third grade, keyboarding begins to take priority over handwriting
- Physical textbooks have been supplanted by digital copies on Chromebooks (the proposed design for the new Woodstock Union High School and Middle School does not include lockers, due in part to the fact that students no longer receive their own books)
- Generative AI programs are provided to students to assist with school work

My concern is that our district's substantial reliance on technology is not serving the long-term interests of our children and is not supported by educational research.

As a parent, I'm concerned that my seven-year-old son is being introduced to hardware and software that is not developmentally appropriate. My wife and I have made conscious choices about our son's use of technology, after consulting with our pediatrician and reading numerous academic articles about the impact screen time has on children's neurological and social development. This research has led us to conclude that elementary school is far too young for him to use a 1-to-1 device and the software that comes with it, even for educational purposes.

As an educator, I've personally observed the problems with having 1-to-1 devices in the classroom. For one, even my most disciplined students easily become distracted and veer off-task with a device in front of them. This diminishes their own learning experience, as well as the quality of the class discussion. I've also witnessed a dramatic change in how my students study. Most of them have relied on 1-to-1 devices to read, take notes and do assessments throughout their entire academic career. As a result, many believe that passively watching educational content and using study apps is sufficient to enable them to fully understand and retain information. However, these technological tools are far less effective than their analog counterparts (handwritten notes, physical text books, tangible study aids). Sadly, the students who need the most help are the ones who tend to rely most heavily on technology. This overreliance rarely pays off in the form of better grades and a passing score on the bar exam.

In our district, I'm concerned our curriculum unnecessarily encourages students to use technology in ways that lack the depth and quality of traditional study methods. One example of this is Dreambox, a gamified software program designed to help kids learn math. Our district provides this software to elementary students on school issued iPads starting in kindergarten. The program is owned by a private equity company, which also owns the Chelsea Football Club. I tried the software on their website (dreambox.com) and found it to be high on animation, but low on educational quality. I was also turned off by the idea that students were rewarded for correct answers with tokens to use at a virtual arcade or with money to purchase accessories for their avatars. But, perhaps most importantly, every exercise I encountered could easily be replicated, and probably improved upon, with real world activities designed by our teachers; activities with far more texture, social connectivity, and meaningful payoffs.

My experience with Dreambox reinforced my belief that 1-to-1 devices and the "educational" software they contain are not suitable replacements for the creative in-person human instruction our teachers are fully capable of providing to our students. That being said, students with learning differences should absolutely have the right to use any assistive technology they need as part of their individual learning plans. Our district should also continue to provide older students with the resources and tools necessary to build specific technological skills, such as those needed for coding, robotics, graphic design and video production.

As they did with the smartphone policy, I hope our district administrators and school board members thoroughly examine the evidence and have a thoughtful conversation about this issue.

The district's technology policy will be on the agenda for the next MVSU board meeting on May 4 at 6:30 p.m., which members of the public may attend in person or on Zoom. I encourage anyone interested in learning more about this issue to attend that meeting.

**Respectfully,
John Ralston
Killington Resident**

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lost his job to India writes now for a number of publications, but he sees those writing gigs drying up. It makes me wonder if they're using his old essays to train the AI to cut out the writer. At best, I find AI to be a great research tool and an upgrade to web browsers. I also understand this to be the biggest threat to workers in over a century.

As we celebrate May Day and contributions of the workforce, let's remember that workers are under an unprecedented attack. Throughout history, the only way workers have gotten a fair shake from the owners of capital is with collective action. I'm happy to report that this year, for the first time in a long time, we saw a slight uptick in union density to over 10%. This in spite of the fact that The Donald, with a stroke of his Sharpie, illegally decertified the unions of tens of thousands of government workers on the bogus grounds of national security.

Well, Happy May Day, workers of the world. Today is your day. Enjoy it, because the struggle for worker prosperity is a work in progress, and it gets harder every day. Brothers and sisters, in solidarity we will prevail.

Contact Kurt Staudier at staudier@sover.net.

The world needs a more profitable climate solution

What the world needs now is a more profitable climate remedy that will create lots of construction and farm jobs. Yes, renewable energy is lucrative but not like it could be if leveraged more directly against fuel scarcity (Hormuz) and CO2 emissions (warming). If we can't save the climate to save ourselves, then by all means, let's do it for profit. That way there's nothing to fight about.

Case in point, Vermont imports 80% of its electricity and runs two, old, small, inefficient wood plants, McNeil and Ryegate. These plants are losing money and emit over 600,000 tons of CO2 per year. That's most of the CO2 that the Vermont Climate Council should want to see reduced after setbacks to the Clean Heat Standard, EV stations and the Transportation & Climate Initiative. These programs deserved completion, not cancellation.

Fortunately, a multi-system upgrade can double the operating efficiency of McNeil and Ryegate (now only 25%), increase electric output substantially and accrue valuable carbon credits by simultaneously reducing CO2 gas at emission point and removing CO2 from the atmosphere. So, these projects should be quite lucrative and will salvage older inefficient plants that are fast becoming obsolete.

The World Bank, commercial banks, institutional investors, state agencies and strategic investment firms should design a specific loan package with and for investor-owned utilities and other owners such as rural cooperatives and state power authorities. The goal is to finance the commercial transformation of old inefficient power plants into profitable, negative emission, power and storage stations. This multi-system approach fully utilizes the existing plant but with four main improvements.

First, waste heat from the stack, waste steam from the tur-

bine and heat pumps preheat boiler water.

Second, sustainable biofuels gradually replace fossil fuels and/or chips from whole logs, especially from clear-cut forests. Thanks to photosynthesis, C4 biofuel crops rapidly remove CO2 from air as they grow.

Third, the exhaust system incorporates CO2 capture & re-use capacity at point of emission both to 'reduce' emissions and to produce synthetic fuels and feedstocks from CO2 and water. Said feedstocks include graphite for graphene or calcium carbonate for concrete and fertilizers

— all in high demand. New catalysts turn CO2 with H2O into H2 and/or synthetic fuels, such as methane, methanol, ethanol, gasoline and diesel. These synfuels can augment fuel supply by over 20% or be

sold as low carbon fuels. The green icing comes from verified CO2 reductions, traded as carbon credits on the Voluntary and Compliance Carbon Market (CCM) in the EU, California and China.

Fourth, these redesigned power and storage stations will also remove from air most of the CO2 they emitted before through the miracle of C4 photosynthesis, thereby earning even more carbon credits. Removing CO2 from air is considered more costly than reducing it at emission point but need not be so. Most farmers, especially dairy farmers, want new cash crops. Fossil fuels and wood chips from clear-cut forests can be gradually replaced with biofuels made from C4 crops like sorghum, millet, maize, algae, amaranth, switchgrass and hemp from local agrivoltaic farms. C4 crops remove CO2 from air with great efficiency, are good for soil and reduce erosion due to rapid climate change — all in accordance with Vermont's Land Conservation Act 59. Thus, local agrivoltaic

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Bringing behavioral health care closer to home

It's been a year of transition and growth at West Central Behavioral Health as we complete our first year as a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). This state certification reflects a simple goal: make it easier to get timely, high-quality mental health and substance use care, and to connect people to the right supports without sending them from place to place.

Through the CCBHC model, we're focused on:

- Growing our workforce.
- Improving timely access to services.
- Delivering whole-person, recovery-oriented care.
- Strengthening partnerships with community providers.
- Making it easier to get coordinated services in one place.

Meeting CCBHC requirements strengthens our role as one of New Hampshire's ten community behavioral health centers. And in a rural region like ours, that work depends on relationships—with local providers, schools, first responders, employers, and neighbors. We're continuing to rebuild and expand that community presence after the pandemic.

As we recognize May as Mental Health Awareness Month, we want to share a few snapshots of what that looks like on the ground:

A Mental Health Awareness Art Exhibition at the AVA Gallery and Art Center

We're proud to partner with AVA Gallery for the sixth year of *Gathering Constellations*, a Mental Health Awareness art exhibition featuring 36 artists and 49 works exploring hope, connection, and renewal. It's a reminder that healing shows up in many forms. The exhibition runs May 1–June 11 in the Linda Roesch

Running for State Senate

To the Editor:

I am running for Vermont Senate in the Windsor District.

When my wife and I put down roots in Windsor County, we were looking for something that has become hard to find: a place to raise a family and belong to a real community. We found it here. For seven years I've served my neighbors, and am now Pomfret's Selectboard chair. Between local governance and my law practice, I've seen firsthand that our communities need a stronger voice in Montpelier.

I'm running because I've learned what happens when state policy meets local reality. When a landslide cut Pomfret in half, I helped secure more than half a million dollars in state emergency aid. When 350 of our neighbors faced dangerously long 911 response times, I negotiated a regional partnership with Hartford that cut those times nearly in half. I drafted the proposed Volunteer Protection Act with Senator Clarkson to protect the people who serve our communities. And when a landowner tried to shut down public access to trails in Tunbridge, I led Pomfret in filing a Supreme Court brief that helped protect more than 500 miles of public trails statewide.

Vermont needs legislators who have done the work on the ground — not just voted from afar.

I will fight to keep Vermont affordable by pushing for education reform that actually addresses rising costs. I will work to strengthen our schools and expand access to childcare. I will push to reform Act 181 so land use restrictions apply where development pressure is real, not indiscriminately across rural Vermont. And I will support programs that make it easier to build homes Vermonters can actually afford.

These challenges are connected, and so are the solutions. When families can't afford to stay in Vermont, schools shrink, volunteers disappear, and the civic life that holds our communities together begins to fray.

Windsor County, Thetford and Pittsfield deserve a senator who understands how these pieces fit together — a senator who has spent years learning what it takes to make state policy work on the ground.

I would be honored to earn your support in the Aug. 11 Democratic primary. You can learn more at bricknerforvtstate.com.

**Benjamin Brickner
Pomfret Resident**

Visual Arts Gallery.

The opening reception is Friday, May 1, from 5–7 p.m., and is open to the public.

Care Coordinators meet people in the community

When someone is working on their mental health, the needs don't stop at the therapist's office. Our Care Coordinators help clients identify medical, educational, social, and other support, and then connect them to services. They coordinate referrals and partner with providers to build and follow a care plan.

This spring, our Care Coordinators are meeting people where they are and sharing resources at partner locations in Claremont, including Baby Steps Family Assistance and the Claremont Soup Kitchen.

Supported employment team helps clients find the right job

Work can be an important step on the path to recovery—and it can also restore routine, confidence, and connection. Our supported employment team helps clients find and keep competitive jobs by exploring strengths and interests, supporting the job search, preparing for interviews, and providing ongoing coaching.

During spring career fair season, our Supported Employment Supervisor has joined our HR team to connect with local employers and share resources that can open doors for clients.

Mobile Crisis Response Team meets needs as they arise

When a mental health crisis happens, timing matters. Our Mobile Crisis Response Team provides in-person support during and after a crisis by assisting first responders and going wherever the crisis occurs, including schools, public spaces, and homes. Licensed clinicians also answer calls through New Hampshire's Rapid Response Access Point. This evidence-based program helps reduce strain on emergency departments and law enforcement while providing immediate, community-based clinical support.

Call or text 1-833-710-6477 or visit NH988.com to chat online with trained crisis staff.

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) meets clients at home

Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) is a team-based approach for people living with serious mental illness so they can remain safely housed and reduce hospitalizations. A multidisciplinary team brings coordinated clinical and medical support—including medication management—into the community.

InSHAPE is getting back to the great outdoors

With longer days and warmer weather, our InSHAPE (Self Health Action Plan for Empowerment) mentor is getting clients outside for walks and hikes—supporting wellness and connection for more than 30 participants.

InSHAPE is an evidence-based program that improves physical health and quality of life for people with serious mental illness through exercise, nutrition support, and community inclusion.

Community collaboration and outreach

West Central is expanding access to care by partnering across the continuum. As a CCBHC, we're focused on coordination so shared clients can get the right behavioral health services without unnecessary delays.

Over the past year, we've worked to align partners and strengthen community awareness, so it's easier to understand what services are available and how to access them. Outreach, stigma reduction, and behavioral health literacy help remove barriers across the 24 towns we serve.

If you're looking for information — for yourself, a loved one, or a neighbor — visit West Central Behavioral Health online (webh.org) or call our main line to get connected.

Deb Herndon is the West Central Behavior Health vice president of community engagement.



GUEST COMMENTARY
Deb Herndon