

RETHINK THE PAGE

story by **christopher long**

School assignments need to be done on a computer for environmental sustainability.

THE FIRST TIME I walked through the glass doors of the SM East library, I passed a dim and oddly rectangular room. Naturally, I assumed it was storage or maybe even a depressing teachers lounge.

But, in the coming weeks, I came to know this room as the paper-copying, packet-stapling, worksheet-printing hub of East.

Although I was used to doing paper tests and quizzes, the rationale behind using paper — a precious resource — to print out busywork, such as vocabulary bingo and mathematician crossword puzzles, was unclear.

In a new age of technology with students armed with MacBooks and iPads, traditional, paper-based education shouldn't be the focus. To move into the modern area of education, SMSD should eliminate using paper for coursework other than quizzes and tests.

The use of paper for useless assignments and silly games practically makes me nauseous. This not only wastes paper, but also my time.

According to a study done by Walden University Research, 9 out of 10 students indicated that using technology in the classroom would help prepare them for the demands of the digital workplace.

As a freshman, I was astonished when stacks of cardstock and bound paper bundles replaced the iPads and PDF annotations in Squid, an app used to

annotate files. I knew from my nine years at elementary school. A regression that not only hurt my education, but the planet as well.

Despite enjoying being part of a school with 1800 students and endless opportunities, I missed my previous schools' joint push towards sustainability.

And even though the majority of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) tests are now digital, school districts maintain the age-old habit of printing out everything — their stubbornness only harming the environment.

But with the advancements of technology, there's no reason why schools can't make a push towards moving education digitally and moving paper towards the way of the Woolly Mammoth.

With countries like Malaysia, China, United Kingdom, South Korea and South Africa boasting the benefits of paperless education — such as preparing students for a digital workplace — SMSD should follow suit.

According to SMSD Board Documents, an estimated \$6.5 million was used to purchase supplies and instructional resources for the districts' 44 schools in 2024. The vast majority of this \$6.5 million budget was used for paper. This means that, in theory, each student was supplied with around \$240.99 for supplies. But with our existing MacBooks, all of this additional

money goes to waste.

However, SMSD's budget for technology is only \$29,000. Moving away from print coursework could easily save hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Although East has teachers like Mr. Bickersu s i n g digital tests or Mrs. Davis's digital Biology labs, it feels flat-out stupid when we get handed a huge, wasteful p a c k e t and then are told to put our \$1,200 macbooks away.

Online work not only utilizes existing resources, but it's healthier and more productive in an age where much of the workplace is digital.

It's an insult to past innovators that while anyone can yield millions of results on a simple Google search, society uses almost 70 million trees per year for paper.

Instead of shunning the millions of dollars already invested in MacBooks and smart TVs, SMSD needs to mandate touch screen devices to push all schoolwork into the direwolf and digital era.

THE PAPER TRAIL

Statistics about the true cost of paper usage

- The US kills 68-70 **million** trees per year
- **31 million tons** of printing and copier paper were used in the U.S. in 2022
- SMSD has a budget for instructional resources and supplies of about **\$6.6 million**
- **400 million tons** of paper are used worldwide in a given year

