



*Every Child. Every Day. For a Better Tomorrow.*

Testimony of Raha Obaei, Teacher

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Senator Hagan, Dr. Morrison, fellow panelists, and other distinguished guests; it is truly my honor to speak to you about a matter very dear to my heart. My name is Raha Obaei, I'm a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Kennedy Middle School in Charlotte, North Carolina and I am a technology native. I grew up in a rapid, ever-changing technology-forward school district that had first-generation iMacs in each of our elementary classrooms. I was editor for my high school newspaper when we transitioned from a staff wide six-hour layout night to one person working on InDesign and Photoshop. I went to college at the University of Missouri where I was in the first graduating class to no longer have a twenty page physical portfolio, but an e-portfolio on a tiny flash drive and backed up by Microsoft Skydrive.

I've since taken what I've learned and been exposed to in my own years of education and have applied them in my classroom. My students utilize technology in one facet or another every single day. As you know, North Carolina fully adopted the common core last year. With that change, I pooled resources the avenue I knew best—through the internet and without a traditional textbook. My students spend as much time as possible in the computer lab, with Chromebooks, and on iPads because I believe they are facilitating my student's learning beyond just factual recall and engaging them in a way a textbook simply cannot.

With the limitless bounds of the internet and technology, I can better differentiate learning for each of my students. If Johnny comes to me on a third grade reading level he won't become frustrated because of a text he cannot read. I have a wide variety of resources available at my fingertips to better educate each of my students—whether they are reading at a high school level and have never felt challenged by a humanities class or they just entered the country weeks ago with minimal language skills.

I've seen first hand the impact it has on student learning, as well. My students did on average 19% better on an assessment of a unit that was facilitated by technology than on an assessment in which a hard copy of a text was utilized. However, what is almost more important to me is the anecdotal evidence my students constantly provide for me. When explaining to my students that we will be learning the next unit by solely reading textbooks and writing notes, one of my students meekly raised his hand and asked if they were in trouble. Not only is it a disservice to our children to teach in ways that are outdated and not as effective, but apparently it is also a form of punishment.

All jokes aside, I know I am pushing my student's critical thinking skills and giving them the tools they need to succeed in their educational and professional careers. My students have been the ones that brought to my attention that things we have learned in the beginning of this year are now historically inaccurate. Our first unit of the year is on human beginnings and the stages of man. One of my students brought their tablet to me before class a couple weeks ago and showed me a news clip stating archaeologists have found fossils of early man that may show that there were no distinct different stages of man. With this increasing access to new information, it is impossible for textbooks to keep up with the pace. I taught them from a textbook, and in turn they taught me using technology.

At the end of the day, when students leave my classroom I want them to master the content— because I do believe there is significance in knowing all about Mesopotamia—but moreover I want them to have

refined skills they can use outside social studies and sharpen their minds to one day be critical thinking citizens of the world. Thank you.