

Weekly Eagle News – Head of Schools

My Favorite Parents:

I thought of calling this “A Tale of Two Cautions” – one is for us as adults and the other is for our students.

For us as adults: Lately I have been so struck with the power of algorithms in determining what news I encounter. Don't judge me (😊) but I generally use Microsoft Edge for browsing and stick with the default homepage, a personalized page of curated news blocks. In the category of innocuous, one might look at my curated page and think that the Boston Celtics (another reason to judge me!) are almost the only team in the NBA. Okay, so it is not a big deal when it comes to sports, but how does this same approach impact what news stories I see on more important topics?

Here is an example. For me, I was really concerned for a time by Russian aggression and, particularly during that time, my Edge front page was regularly populated with articles about the Ukrainian-Russian conflict often from perspectives that highlighted Ukrainian successes on the battlefield.

Much of what we encounter now on the web has been personally curated with the result that we can find ourselves in an echo chamber of self-confirming news and views.

Obviously, it helps a bit to be cognizant that this is happening. Being aware should make us more discerning and appropriately skeptical. It also helps to be consuming news from multiple sources with a conscience effort to ensure that they represent a broad set of political and philosophical perspectives.

The biblical principle that is at play in this situation is “discernment.” A mark of spiritual maturity is that we are able to understand (discern) what we experience around us, differentiating between what is evil and what is good. God's desire is that we would all become spiritually mature. See Hebrews 5:11-16 (and into chapter 6).

For our students: If you are the parent of an adolescent you are going to want to be aware of an emerging international trend, a flavored nicotine pouch marketed under the brand ZYN. It is a smoking alternative that allows the user to feed (or develop) a nicotine addiction. The Swedish-based company that developed and marketed this product is owned by US tobacco giant Philip Morris. Teens can be particularly susceptible to nicotine addiction and the impacts of such addiction on the developing brain are significant and deleterious. At this point, I am not aware of an issue on our campus with ZYN, but we are not naïve about the likelihood of having to address this moving forward.

Have a great week.

Brian