


Cell phone scramble: should schools relax cell phone policies?

 *Current Events*, a Weekly Reader publication, November 7, 2011

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

More kids than ever carry cell phones these days, and schools are making tough calls when it comes to regulating the devices.

Some schools have relaxed their mobile technology policies. New Manchester High School in Douglasville, Ga., is one of several schools that launched "bring your own technology" programs this year. Students at that school are encouraged to bring their own smart phones, electronic tablets, and other Internet-enabled devices to class, and teachers are incorporating them into lessons. Using personal devices to enhance education has many fans.

Many schools, however, are cracking down on cell phone use by students. Freeport High School in Portland, Maine, for example, strengthened its anti-cell phone policy for the 2011-2012 school year. The school, which used to allow students to use cell phones during lunch, now requires students to turn off cell phones during school hours. Supporters of such cell phone restrictions argue that the devices distract students from learning and provide more opportunities for kids to cheat.

Is it time schools relax their cell phone hang-ups? Current Events student reporters Peter Brosnan and Akash Bagaria each dialed up a side.

SMART PHONES, SMART KIDS

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

By Peter Brosnan

Cell phones might be smarter for the classroom than you think! Schools should allow students to carry cell phones because, if managed properly, the phones can enhance learning and become valuable teaching tools, while keeping students safe and in contact with their parents.

First, many students are excited to use cell phone technology. If schools incorporate that technology into lessons, students will become more excited about their classes.

As cell phones become more like mini laptop computers, they can be very useful in the classroom. For example, students can use cell phone technology to access online books, newspaper articles, and other materials. When you focus on the positive uses of cell phone technology, the possibilities are endless!

Finally, many parents and students rely on cell phones to keep in touch in case plans change after school. Grace

Hurley, 13, an eighth grader from Yorktown Heights, N.Y., agrees. "We should be able to carry our cell phones in school because we may need to contact our parents in emergencies," she says.

NO CELL BEFORE THE BELL!

[ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

By Akash Bagaria

Schools should ban students from carrying cell phones during classes. Cell phones can be a major distraction and impair student learning. Cell phones also give students more opportunities to cheat and cyberbully.

Kids can use cell phones to take pictures, chat, surf the Web, and listen to music. Those features can distract students during the school day. According to a 2010 study by the Pew Research Center, 64 percent of teens with cell phones have sent texts during class. Those texts are most likely distracting kids from their studies. Steven Hancock, an administrator at Princeton Day School, agrees. He says, "Cell phones have addictive qualities that will impede student engagement and learning."

In addition, cell phones allow students to cheat during exams. Students can text friends or find answers on the Internet, for example.

Finally, cell phones in class may lead to cyberbullying. Sadly, students may use phones to take photos of other kids doing something awkward and text the pictures to friends. Gossip spreads like wildfire, after all.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Should schools relax cell phone policies? Tell us at edce@weeklyreader.com

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