



Research Brief

Cell Phones

Question: What is happening with inappropriate student use of cell phones in schools...problems and policy?

Summary of Findings:

Cell phones are nearly ubiquitous among high school students. But with their increased popularity come increased concern about how they can be misused. Educators are concerned about students texting during class, passing answers during tests, bullying, or taking or distributing inappropriate photos. It is no wonder that so many schools are considering simply banning them. According to the Education Commission of the States, 14 states prohibit pagers and/or cell phones in schools, 8 states have repealed bans, and the rest have no statutes on the issue. Ten states, including some that have repealed bans, grant policymaking authority to local boards (Danforth, 2003).

But the fact that a tool can be abused is not actually sufficient reason to ban the tool. Johnson (2006) makes the point by putting forth a proposal to ban pencils because of all the ways they can be abused. And at least one principal agrees: "Virtually every piece of technology ... that students possess has the potential of being misused. But technology is part of the fabric of life today," said Kevin Mackin, principal at Mahtomedi High School. "Rather than fight a futile battle against students possessing technology, we have opted to set reasonable limits to its use."

Many families depend on cell phones. Parents want their teens to have a cell phone in case of an emergency (especially after 9/11 and shootings such as Columbine), to stay in touch with home before or after school, or to arrange rides. In this context, it is hard for schools to ban cell phones entirely. There is no doubt, however that policies, guidelines, and rules are needed.

The most common rule is to ban cell phone use during school hours, turn them off and put them away; an out-of-sight-out-of-mind kind of policy. But schools need to be thoughtful of how they design and implement these rules. In China, teachers use cell phone jammers to block cell phone use during tests. In the U.S., one school expanded the rules to include no cell phones at any school event and searched students' lockers and book bags in school and at extracurricular events. At another school, students leaving at 11:15am because of exams, were not allowed to use cell phones because the official rule was no cell phones until 3:25 pm. Elsewhere, one boy had his insulin pump ripped out when it started beeping and the substitute teacher thought it was a cell phone, and in another school, a boy was suspended when he took a phone call from his mother, who was serving in Iraq.

Other schools are taking a different approach entirely. They are looking at how they could take advantage of students' having cell phones for educational purposes. Some schools are using cell phones to push school announcements or academic content to students' phones, using cell phone software for SAT prep, accessing the Internet, or using cell phones for digital photography, flash cards, dictionaries, and calculators. For example, Gary Brown, IT Director for the Woolongong Diocese of Australia purchased a system to push school announcements out to the phones, and some of his teachers use them for quizzes (similar to the "clicker" student response systems). According to Brown, their cell phone abuse rate dropped to 0% because their students got to use their tool (the cell phones) but for school related purposes.

Online Resources:

(Note: ERIC documents can be found by going to <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> and entering the ERIC ID#)

Cell Phones: Nuisance or Necessity

Cell phones have become a ubiquitous accessory of high school students since the late 1990s. Initially banned by schools as an unnecessary distraction, events such as the Columbine tragedy and the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 have made most districts reconsider the place of cell phones in middle and high schools. Although many districts have struggled with these policies, most have removed the bans at the behest of students and parents alike. Parents want to be able to reach their children before and after school hours. Students use phones to call parents and schedule rides and extracurricular activities. Administrators also maintain that in an emergency, students could contact family members—or even the police—quicker.

<http://www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/educationupclose.phtml/52>



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More Students Using Cell Phones to Cheat

Over recent years, we have seen a noticeable rise in the number of mobile-phone-related incidents in examination halls across the country," Dr. Ken Boston, the chief executive of the QCA said. "There are clear and serious penalties for students who cheat in their examinations. Anybody who cheats in their exam will be disqualified and will lose their grade in that subject.

<http://www.technewsworld.com/story/49588.html>

Mixed Signals.

Danforth, Eric L.;

American School Board Journal, v190 n7 p30-32 Jul 2003

According to the Education Commission of the States, 14 states prohibit pagers and/or cell phones in schools, 8 states have repealed bans, and the rest have no statutes on the issue. Ten states, including some that have repealed bans, grant policymaking authority to local boards. Presents arguments pro and con on cell phones and school district options.

ERIC #: EJ669580

Cyber-Bullying: Creating a Culture of Respect in a Cyber World

Keith, Susan; Martin, Michelle E.;

Reclaiming Children and Youth: The Journal of Strength-based Interventions; v13 n4 p224 Win 2005

In the 1990s, many incidents revolved around student-on-student violence, usually involving guns. Schools implemented many programs to keep guns and gangs out of schools. In the 21st Century, school violence is taking on a new and more insidious form. New technologies have made it easier for bullies to gain access to their victims. This form of bullying has become known as cyber-bullying. This article provides a window to this little known world and offers practical suggestions for dealing with this new challenge.

ERIC #: EJ710387

A Proposal for Banning Pencils

By Doug Johnson

Learning & Leading with Technology - February 2006

http://www.iste.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Publications/LL/LLIssues/Volume_33_2006_2005_/February_No_5_/33564j.pdf

Schools, States Review Cell Phone Bans

More than a decade after many school systems and states prohibited students from carrying and using pagers and cellular phones in school, state lawmakers and administrators are rethinking their positions. The widespread use of the devices and parents' concerns about their children's safety are prompting new policies that allow student use under strict guidelines. Included: How schools are adapting student cellular-phone-use policies.

http://www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues270.shtml

Crafting A Workable Cell Phone Policy

With so many families depending on cell phones, banning them from schools became pointless. Now the debate is how to regulate phone use in schools, as more students own camera phones and ones that can send text messages and connect to the Internet. Included: Sample cell phone policies.

http://www.education-world.com/a_admin/admin/admin393.shtml

Teacher Mistakes Boy's Insulin Pump For Phone, Rips It Out

CLERMONT, Fla. -- A substitute teacher in Lake County, Fla., was terminated and banned from teaching in the county after he ripped out a student's insulin pump during class apparently thinking it was a ringing cell phone, according to a Local 6 News report. Officials said a ninth-grade student at East Ridge High School, who is a Type I diabetic, was in class Monday when his insulin pump began to beep, indicating he was low on insulin.

<http://www.local6.com/news/5056865/detail.html>



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Cell-Phone Student Back At School After Suspension High School Junior Punished After Talking To Mom In Iraq

A Georgia student, suspended after violating his high school's cell-phone ban to talk to his mother in Iraq, returned to class on Monday. Officials at Spencer High School in Columbus shortened a 10-day suspension for Kevin Francois, 17. Although cell-phone use is prohibited at the school, officials said Kevin was being punished for using profanity after a teacher interrupted his call from Iraq -- where his mother, a U.S. Army soldier, is serving in the Iraq war. Kevin denied cursing during the incident.

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/US/05/09/student.cellphone/index.html>

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<http://www.glencoe.com/sec/teachingtoday/educationupclose.phtml/52>

Principal's Cell Phone Hang-Up Angers Students

At Aurora High School, cell phones are banned in any sort of school activity -- including after school practices and even during sports games. While the ban of cell phones has been common in the school for at least several years, the recent initiative comes weeks after school authorities searched student backpacks and pockets of students during the school day for the contraband items. Principal Doug Kittle followed this by issuing an unofficial statement the next morning in the announcements proclaiming the new rules.

<http://home.comcast.net/~majerus-collins/cellphoneban.htm>

Cell Phones and Such...

Tim Lauer

As for those kids sending answers via cell phone, she says that in China they are all over that. She said that at her school during exams, they employ jamming technology that makes the cell phone inoperable... Now in addition to breaking up fights, and catching kids ditching class, the discipline dean can be in charge of deploying the jamming devices...

<http://tim.lauer.name/archives/004159.html>

High school limits student cell phone use

At Stevenson, students are allowed to use them only after school finishes at 3:25 p.m. and on weekends. The rest of the time, they must keep them off and out of sight. "What if exams finish earlier than that?" asks 15-year-old Karen Levy, who stands outside with a crowd of students ready to go home at 11:15 a.m. "It's not really fair."

<http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2002/01/21/schools-cell-phones.htm>

Schools dial up cell-phone content

As more and more teenagers own cell phones, a small number of schools are making the most of the devices' popularity by finding legitimate educational and instructional uses for them. Twenty-five schools in New Hampshire are encouraging their students who own web-enabled cell phones to use them to access homework, class assignments, and other content.

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/showStoryts.cfm?ArticleID=5326>

A Useful Role For Cell Phones In School

Question: Is it possible to turn the trend of cell phone usage amongst teenagers in school into a positive? The

Opportunity: The distribution of important information in school is an extremely resource intensive effort. If you were to calculate the straight labor cost, let alone the missed opportunity (more teaching) costs, it would be staggering.

Furthermore, the system is error-prone because it usually uses brute force people-power, bits of paper, and phone calls.

Premise - The number of students and parents that have cell phones is quickly growing and that installed base could be



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used to help disseminate information in a more efficient manner and in a way that parents and students are accustomed to and use on a daily basis.

<http://www.edugadget.com/2005/02/13/a-useful-role-for-cellphones-in-school/>

The Laptop vs. Cell Phone Debate

At the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, last week, a fissure appeared over what technology would be most effective in improving education in the third world. On one side: the highly-publicized One Laptop per Child Project (usually just called the "\$100 laptop"), spearheaded by Nicholas Negroponte of MIT's Media Lab. On the other: a cell phone featuring PC capabilities, an idea that's being promoted by Microsoft.

http://www.technologyreview.com/read_article.aspx?id=16279&ch=infotech

Cell-phone lessons prompt students to prepare for SAT

For generations, college-bound seniors studying for the venerable SAT I exam have carried around hefty volumes of test preparation booklets and stacks of flash cards. Now, teenagers can just flip open their cell phones to study for the college admissions test. A new program started this month by the Princeton Review, a test preparation company, and wireless application developer VOCEL allows students to do practice drills in math, reading and grammar by having the questions sent to their phones. Students can download a bank of questions and minidrills or have the phone call them at set intervals with practice test questions.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2004/10/18/MNG3S9BHPN1.DTL&type=tech>

Fear and Disruptive Technologies

Mike Muir's blog entry discussing how some schools react to technologies they don't fully understand yet. Includes how one tech coordinator eliminated cell phone abuse by using cell phones for school reasons.

<http://everyonelearns.blogspot.com/2006/04/fear-and-disruptive-technologies.html>

High School Policy Pages

Rock Island High School

[http://homepage.risd41.org/rihs/discuss/msgReader\\$675](http://homepage.risd41.org/rihs/discuss/msgReader$675)

Stevens High School

<http://myschoolonline.com/page/0,1871,46226-73732-49-2564,00.html>

Submitted Date: 5/1/2006 By: Mike Muir, Maine Center for Meaningful Engaged Learning

<http://www.principalspartnership.com>

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