

Article 1: Should Schools Allow Cell Phone Use During the School Day?

School systems in the United States face a challenge pertaining to the regulation of cell phone use by students in schools. There are drawbacks and benefits for cell phone use. School administrators, teachers, parents, and students continue to struggle with policies on cell phone use in schools since a complete ban is no longer universally accepted as best policy.

The confiscation of cell phones, an initial reaction by school administrations, has been very controversial. Some schools take the phones from the students and never return them; other schools keep them until the end of the school day. In either case, parents are notified that their children have violated the school policy on the use of cell phones during school hours. Although such confiscation policies were approved by school boards, some angry students and parents still resent the policy. In other strategies for dealing with cell phone use, some teachers require that phones be turned off in classrooms and placed out of sight; others label the phones and place them in a container on the teacher's desk until the end of class. Moreover, inappropriate use of the phones for cheating on tests has punishments ranging from reduction of the score by a particular percentage to automatic failure of the exam. Disrupting class with texting, playing video games, inappropriately using the photography feature, or receiving calls can affect students' class participation grades as well.

Not all parents want the schools to control phone use. Some cell phone providers offer tools for parents to control phone usage, customized to each child on the plan. Some parents prefer that they be the ones to have control of their children's cell phone use instead of having schools set the rules. Scheduling and safety are the main reasons parents want their children to have access to cell phones during school hours. Many parents recognize the distractions cell phones can create in the classroom and are concerned about mobile access to inappropriate content.

Recent research has revealed that texting (in class, in meetings, at dinner) has become a significant problem in the United States. A recent university study found that 90% of college students surveyed admitted texting during class. Some even admitted sending messages during tests. This rampant abuse has led some professors to ban phones during tests and/or during all classes. One professor informed students that if he even saw a phone during a test, the owner would receive an automatic zero, whether the phone was in use or not.

Severe penalties like the zero on the test go beyond the classroom. The number of incidents caused by drivers texting is constantly rising, prompting some states to pass strict laws outlawing the practice. California and Kentucky as well as other states impose fines if a driver is caught texting while driving. Even drivers themselves have reported texters they have observed on the road.

Cell phones have definitely become fixtures in present-day life for most people. Phones continue to be upgraded with extraordinary technology that makes them even more

attractive and engaging. With their widespread use, this debate will continue. There are people who believe that students should be taught about proper cell phone etiquette and personal responsibility for their use of the phones and are opposed to banning them. Others see no other alternative but to support a complete ban of cell phones in the schools.

Article 2: Cell Phones in School—Yes?

Schools all across the nation are faced with or have had to address students carrying and using cell phones in school. Even with school policies in place against students having cell phones with them during the school day, schools continue to discipline students for infractions of the rules and defend the policy with parents.

Schools might be able to lessen these battles by rethinking the place cell phones might have. Cell phones are essentially mobile computers, with most featuring texting, digital photography, video capabilities, and calculators. Some phones are able to access online dictionaries and other resources. If students happen to have particular applications, their phones' research capabilities extend even further.

While texting certainly can be very disruptive and distracting in many situations, there may be advantageous uses for texting in school. Imagine several student groups within a class or library, each group working collaboratively yet separately from the other groups. Texting might be used to quietly share information, ask and answer questions, indicate next steps, and even communicate with the teacher without audibly disrupting the work of the other groups.

With the research capabilities, students may more quickly access information they need for the task they're completing. The phones' cameras may also have a use in preparation for presentations.

In addition to the argument that students should be allowed to carry cell phones for emergency purposes, there well may be an argument for actually using cell phone technology within the classroom. Cell phone companies advertise their phones' latest and greatest capabilities all the time. Computers are wonderful educational tools; perhaps cell phones can be too!

Writing situation:

There is a debate in your school district over teens and their cell phone usage. Think about where you stand on teens and cell phone use in school. Teens in your school have been invited to a council meeting composed of administrators, teachers, and parents in preparation for a policy decision.

Writing directions:

Write the speech presenting your position on cell phone use. Make your arguments on cell phone use during school. Make your arguments clear and give reasons for them. As you support your arguments, consider the counterclaims from those who think differently about cell phone usage.