

Ban Cell Phones in School

Back in the pre-historic school days, students used to cheat the old fashioned way - by writing answers on their arms. They would have clandestine conversation during class by slipping notes to one another. Today, students are armed with a variety of technological gadgets that make these age old techniques of student slackery obsolete. Smartphones, equipped with internet access and text messaging capabilities have replaced the old pen and paper methods, making it easier, and more tempting, than ever to tune out the teacher. Smartphones should be banned from public schools as they are a distraction, facilitate cheating and send the message that the social lives of students are important enough to bite into learning time. While some parents and students may argue that carrying cell phones is a safety issue, or one of civil liberties, the two hundred years of effective education in this country that took place before cell phones existed serves as enough evidence to refute such claims. Further, schools have *always* limited what students can, and cannot, bring to school.

Currently, students are allowed to carry cell phones but must either leave them in a locker, or keep them switched off and out of sight. The reality is that students are using their cell phones during the day as the vibrate function of the phones makes this policy nearly impossible to enforce, which is making it quite easy to cheat on tests. "Students are using the phones in class, that's all there is to it," said Richard Manning, an assistant principal and former English teacher in Littleton School District in Durham, NY. "We know they are because sometimes they forget to turn off the ringer - the students we catch using them is a small percentage of the students who are keeping the phones on vibrate and operating undetected" (Moore, 8). According to Manning, the number of confiscated cell phones indicates a much larger number are actually being used during the school day. If even a small percentage of these students are using the phones to cheat, that is making testing unfair for a majority of the students who are not cheating.

Cheating aside, the phones clearly serve as a distraction. Most people - teachers and students included - can recall a number of times a class or conference has been interrupted by a ringing cell phone. The entire class or meeting loses focus while the embarrassed student fumbles through a

backpack to turn off the electronic device - the one he or she isn't supposed to have in the first place. Further, students waiting for a call or text can't pay attention. According to an article in *NEA Magazine*, 9 out of 10 teachers say "cell phones are often a disruption in class" (*NEA*, 53). The article goes on to explain that "a student who is waiting to receive a phone call, thinks of nothing but that call and blocks out anything being said in class" (*NEA*, 53).

And while many parents and students are claiming their children need the cell phones for safety reasons or in case of a family emergency, students managed in school until very recently without the use of cell phones. In case of an emergency, a parent need only call the school to have their child paged in class through the intercom. Most security experts agree (Walker, 21) that in the event of a community emergency, it is safer to allow school officials manage the flow of information to students rather than individual parents calling individual students inside the school.

For these reasons, schools should ban students from carrying cell phones into the school building. Smartphones have become a part of daily life in this country. They are a convenience and to some degree a safety necessity for adults. However, schools need to preserve the education time in the classroom by creating an environment that eliminates as many distractions as possible. It is the responsibility of the school, and the community, to make hard decisions that, in the long run, are best for our children.

Works Cited

"I Told You Never to Call Me Here." *NEA Magazine*. April 2006. 53-54

Moore, Bill. "Smartphones Creating Unfair Test Environment at Area Schools." *Greenville Pioneer*. April 17, 2012: 8

Walker, Lawrence. "The School's Role in a Community Emergency." *Security Monthly*. June 20:22-25.

***Do you disagree? What are YOUR reasons and how will you present them?*