

Getting Phones Out of Schools

Policy Memo

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endorsed by the **Institute for Family Studies**

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Executive Summary

Smartphones in schools are increasingly wreaking havoc on both the academic and social development of America's children. They are distracting students from learning, inhibiting students from healthy socializing, and causing student discipline issues in class and on campus. Teachers are frustrated, students are suffering, and parents feel like they're fighting an uphill battle against technology and peer pressure. Math, reading, and science scores have been dropping in the United States since 2012. As of 2022, the situation is dire, with scores for the lowest performing students at levels last seen in the 1970s.¹ Studies have also consistently shown that excessive smartphone use negatively impacts both short-term grades and longer-term skill development.²

School is not only an academic environment, but also a child's main social environment. Historically, it has been the task of teachers and administrators to help supervise that social environment to ensure that students are developing healthy behaviors and to police instances of bullying and abuse. As the social life of schoolchildren has moved into the virtual world, even when they are together in the real world, it has become almost impossible for teachers and administrators to offer this important adult oversight and correction. When a peer calls a child a name, a teacher can easily step in and address it, but adults are far less likely to be aware of situations where a student is being bullied over social media during class. New York City provided a real-world case study on how cyberbullying explodes when phones are in school. During the 2013–14 school year, New York City had a cellphone ban and only 178 incidents of cyberbullying. The district then removed the ban, and the number of incidents skyrocketed to 804 by 2015–16.³

Many schools and localities have recognized that phones undermine learning and discipline and have banned them during class time. This is a step in the right direction, but classroom policies alone aren't sufficient. Their effectiveness varies based on the strictness and perseverance of individual teachers, who often lament how frustrating it is to play "phone cop" while trying to teach their students. The result has been that despite classroom prohibitions, many students are still accessing and being distracted by their or other students' phones during class.

¹ Lauren Camera, "U.S. Teens' Reading and Math Scores Feature Largest Declines Ever," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 21, 2023, <https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2023-06-21/u-s-teens-reading-and-math-scores-feature-largest-declines-ever#:~:text=Another%20common%20theme%20that%20held.data%20was%20collected%2C%20in%201971.>

² Oluwafemi J. Sunday, Olusola O. Adesope, and Patricia L. Maarhuis, "The effects of smartphone addiction on learning: A meta-analysis," *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 4 (2017): 1–9, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2021.100114>.

³ Naomi Schaefer Riley, "To fight cyberbullying, ban cellphones from school," *New York Post*, February 6, 2017, <https://nypost.com/2017/02/06/to-fight-cyberbullying-ban-cellphones-from-school/>.

Moreover, many phone apps, especially social media, are designed to hold our attention even when we're not actually using them. Even if students only check their feeds and post photos during hall breaks, they're likely to still spend mental energy and attention at least during the first few minutes of each class period distracted by what they've seen or wondering about the reactions from what they've posted. Classroom policies also do nothing to mitigate the negative group-level social dynamics created by access to phones in the hallways, the lunchrooms, and bathrooms, affecting even those children who aren't on social media, and preventing children from developing healthy face-to-face social skills.⁴ Nor do they address the discipline issues arising from cyberbullying, or students photographing or videotaping one another without consent.

Based on these considerations, the best policy by far is to ban phones for the entire school day. Research indicates that removing phones from the entire school day yields much more substantial improvements in academic performance than only barring them from the classroom. For a school phone policy to be most effective, it must be a comprehensive ban and be diligently enforced with consequences.

This memo will give an overview of how a bell-to-bell no-phone policy can work and explain the critical factors for successful implementation, highlighting various state and local policies as examples. Smartphones have held American children captive long enough. Schools can be a critical part of the solution for freeing children from the addictive design of these devices and the harmful social environment they create.

⁴ Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (New York: Penguin, 2024), 54.

School Phone Bans Work

A 2024 study from Norway compared middle schools with smartphone bans to those without them and found that banning smartphones reduced bullying among both boys and girls, and improved girls' GPA, test scores, and their likelihood of attending an academic high school track. But the most striking result was the impact on mental health. Girls saw a 60% decline in the number of visits for psychological symptoms and diseases at specialist care and a 29% decline in the number of visits with their GP due to issues related to psychological symptoms and diseases.⁵

When Orange County Public Schools in Florida implemented a bell-to-bell phone ban last year, the district saw significant improvements in student engagement, social interactions, and a decline in discipline issues. At

one high school in Orange County, Timber Lake, Principal Marc Wasko said that not only has bullying declined, but students are more social and engaged than they were before the ban.⁶ South Portland, ME, Charlottesville City, VA, and Forest Hills Public Schools near Grand Rapids, MI, among others, were also early leader school districts that banned student cellphone use not just during class but throughout the school day. All the districts have reported similar decreases in behavioral incidents and bullying, and positive benefits for students. One student in Michigan said eighth grade is better than seventh because

In seventh grade, I used to spend over an hour getting ready in the morning. I had to make sure I

⁵ Sara Abrahamsson, "Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and Mental Health," *Norwegian Institute of Public Health*, February 2024: 1–73, <https://openaccess.nhh.no/nhh-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/3119200/DP%2001.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

⁶ Natasha Singer, "This Florida School District Banned Cellphones. Here's What Happened," *New York Times*, November 6, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/31/technology/florida-school-cellphone-tiktok-ban.html>.

looked perfect. All of my friends had phones, and I just never knew when one of them was going to whip out their phone in class, in the hallway, or in the bathroom and take a picture. Because of this, I felt a constant, daily pressure to look a certain way so that I felt pretty in the pictures. No blemishes. I wanted to look perfect. Now, without phones being used by everyone, the pressure is off. There's nothing to worry about. I can be more natural. I can finally be me.⁷

The greatest impact of smartphone bans in schools, though, may be on the academic achievement gap. One of the earliest studies to assess the impact of removing smartphones on academic outcomes was carried out by researchers at the London School of Economics in 2016. The comprehensive study that covered 130,000 pupils at 91 schools in four English cities found that

student performance in high stakes exams significantly increases post ban . . . these increases in performance are driven by the lowest-achieving students. This suggests that the unstructured presence of phones has detrimental effects on certain students and restricting their use can be a low-cost policy to reduce educational inequalities.

The researchers found that following a ban on phone use, schools' test scores improved overall by 6.4 percent, but for underachieving students (those in the bottom quartile of prior achievement), the effect was doubled: their average test scores rose by 14 percent.⁸ The previously mentioned study in Norway also found that the largest positive effects of bans were for girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Making A Phone Ban Effective

In implementing a smartphone ban for the entire school day, there are three key factors for making the policy most effective: 1) distance between the phone and the student, 2) effective enforcement for violations, and 3) securing parental understanding and support.

1. Distance

There are several variations of phone-free policies. Some schools may ban phones altogether from school premises, requiring students to leave them at home. Other schools may require students to hand their phones in upon arrival, collecting them again only at the end of the school day. Similarly, schools can have students keep phones in a secure location like a central phone locker, or use Yondr pouches during the day, which prevent the student from accessing the phone. For schools where these practices are not logistically possible, the next best option is a “never used, seen, or heard” policy, where students are allowed to keep phones in their backpacks on the strict condition they are not allowed to take them out and use them at all during the school day, not even between classes or during lunch.

Ideally, phones should not only be out of sight but out of student possession.⁹ A 2017 University of Chicago study found that, “the mere presence of one’s smartphone may impose a ‘brain drain’ as limited-capacity

⁷ Chris McKenna, “No More Smartphones. How One Large School District Removed Distraction from Learning,” Protect Young Eyes, November 2, 2019, <https://protectyouneyes.com/no-more-smartphones-how-one-large-school-district-removed-distraction-from-learning/>.

⁸ Louis Phillipe Beland and Richard Murphy, “Ill Communication: Technology, Distraction & Student Performance,” *Labour Economics*, 41 (2016): 61–76, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2016.04.004>.

⁹ Phone Free Schools Project, “What is a Phone-Free School?” Accessed June 24, 2024, <https://www.phonefreeschools.org/whatisaphone-freeschool>.

attentional resources are recruited to inhibit automatic attention to one's phone, and are thus unavailable for engaging with the task at hand."¹⁰ This finding bears out in the data on phone bans. Studies show that the stricter the ban, the more positive the results. The study out of Norway found that the positive impact on girls' grades, GPA, and test scores was largest among middle schools that banned students from bringing their phones to school, or schools where students must hand their phones in before classes start, and weakest in schools with more lenient policies that only required students to have their phones on silent mode during lectures and permitted phone use during breaks.¹¹

A similar study conducted in the UK found that in secondary schools with "effective bans" (categorized as not having phones on school premises or having students hand them in for the whole school day) the national test exam (GCSE) results were one to two grades higher than schools with laxer policies. Most encouragingly of all, the study found this impact happened in spite of the fact that the schools with effective ban policies also had higher proportions of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (students from lower socio-economic households) than schools with less restrictive policies,¹² further indicating that phone bans can help solve academic achievement inequalities.

2. Enforcement

For any phone ban to be effective, it also must be diligently enforced, ideally by the entire school administration rather than solely by individual teachers. Pouches or lockers where students have to put phones

during the school day make it easier to enforce bans, because teachers don't have to be constantly policing students as much and it becomes obvious if a student has not put their phone in a pouch or locker.

Policies must also have significant, immediate consequences for violations that are consistent and visible enough to act as a deterrent. In Orange County, FL, the consequence for a first offense is confiscation, but it can escalate to detention or even suspension for repeated offenses. Principal Wasko said there were hundreds of phone confiscations during the first few days and weeks of the policy at Timber Lake, but once students realized the policy was being enforced, the confiscations dropped because students stopped taking their phones out.¹³ At one middle school in Connecticut, taking out one's phone leads to an automatic detention.¹⁴ The enforcement has made the policy effective and the school is seeing positive results. See example policies below with consequences.

3. Parental Support and Broader Considerations

Schools should also make an effort to secure parental understanding and support as they make any changes in the phone policy. Parents often express worry that if phones are banned at schools, they will not be able to communicate with their child whenever needed, perhaps to coordinate a pick-up, or in emergency situations.¹⁵ Schools can reassure parents that classrooms have phones where the office can call if a parent needs to get in touch with a child, and that if a child needs to contact a parent they can go to the school office. This

¹⁰ Adrian F. Ward et al. "Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One's Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity," *Journal of the Association for Cognitive Research*, 2, no.2 (2017): 140-154, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1086/691462>.

¹¹ Sara Abrahamsson, "Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and Mental Health," *Norwegian Institute of Public Health*, February 2024: 1-73, <https://openaccess.nhh.no/nhh-xmli/bitstream/handle/11250/3119200/DP%2001.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

¹² Iain Mansfield, Sean Phillips, and Niamh Webb, "Disconnect," Policy Exchange, April 29, 2024, <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Disconnect.pdf>.

¹³ Natasha Singer, "This Florida School District Banned Cellphones. Here's What Happened," *New York Times*, November 6, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/31/technology/florida-school-cellphone-tiktok-ban.html>.

¹⁴ Joanna Slater, "How a Connecticut middle school won the battle against cellphones," *Washington Post*, May 1 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2024/05/01/school-cellphones-confiscate/>.

¹⁵ Julie Jargon, "Schools Want to Ban Phones. Parents Say No," *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/tech/personal-tech/schools-want-to-ban-phones-parents-say-no-62889fe0>.

was standard until less than a generation ago, and although today's parents may feel safer having immediate access to their children, it is important for them to realize that this convenience can come with dire costs to their children's education and well-being. Schools have an important role to play in helping educate parents regarding these costs and making them feel more comfortable about the tradeoffs they may need to make in their child going phone-free during the school day. As for emergencies, phones may actually make the situation less safe by giving off light or sound to give away a location or serving as a distraction from running, hiding, or listening to first responders. And if there is an emergency where a phone would be beneficial, the teacher still has their phone to make any necessary calls.

More generally, although schools cannot police what happens after-hours, they should seek to create a culture that supports and empowers parents who aspire to give their children a phone-free childhood. Many parents feel unable to do so because of social pressures or because this would exclude their child from key activities, and schools have often been part of the problem rather than the solution. Many schools have followed the path of least resistance in using apps like Hudl to manage school sports or other extracurricular activities. Students desiring to participate in such activities must use a smartphone to access schedules or to communicate with coaches or teammates. Some schools have even required certain apps for checking in to

school assemblies or for class assignments. If schools begin implementing phone bans during the school day, they must move away from requiring apps for assignments or extracurriculars. If they continue *requiring* phones for extracurricular activities, they will send mixed messages to students and parents, and encourage the continued negative effects of phones within the student body.

A Current Lay of the Land

States are starting to take stronger actions on a broader level to get phones out of schools. Four states have passed bans on phone use during instructional time: Florida¹⁶ was the first to pass such a law in 2023 and then Indiana and¹⁷ Ohio¹⁸ followed in 2024. Most recently, Virginia's Governor issued an Executive Order directing executive branch officials to issue guidance on cellphone-free education policies for the state's school districts to adopt.¹⁹ Some states have gone a step further. Louisiana and South Carolina, in close order this summer, both announced bell-to-bell phone bans, getting phones out of the entire school day.²⁰ Governors Gavin Newsom of California²¹ and Kathy Hochul

¹⁶ Ryan Dailey, "Florida Gov. DeSantis signs bill to ban students from using phones and TikTok in schools," *Orlando Weekly*, May 10, 2023, <https://www.orlandoweekly.com/news/florida-gov-desantis-signs-bill-to-ban-students-from-using-phones-and-tiktok-in-schools-34164256>.

¹⁷ Kirsten Adair, "Indiana lawmakers ban cellphones in class. Now it's up to schools to figure out how," NPR, April 3, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/04/03/1240667966/indiana-bans-cell-phones-schools-social-media-distraction>.

¹⁸ Cole Behrens and Donovan Hunt, "A new law makes Ohio schools limit student phone use. Are central Ohio districts ready?" *The Columbus Dispatch*, May 16, 2024, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/education/2024/05/16/will-central-ohio-schools-be-ready-for-new-student-cell-phone-use-law/73698721007/>.

¹⁹ Dakin Andone and Sara Smart, "Virginia governor issues executive order that will limit or ban cell phone use in schools," CNN, July 10, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/10/us/virginia-school-cell-phone-restrictions-youngkin/index.html>.

²⁰ Penelope Lopez, "Louisiana bans cell phones in schools. Parents and school official weigh in," KATC, July 18, 2024, <https://www.katc.com/vermillion-parish/louisiana-bans-cell-phones-in-schools-parents-and-school-official-weigh-in>; Amanda Shaw, "Cell phone use to be banned in SC schools by 2025," Fox Carolina, July 12, 2024, <https://www.foxcarolina.com/2024/07/11/cell-phone-ban-planned-sc-schools-by-2025/>.

²¹ Christopher Cadelago, "Gavin Newsom wants to take smartphones out of schools," *Politico*, June 18, 2024, <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/06/18/gavin-newsom-wants-to-take-smart-phones-out-of-schools-00163852>.

of New York²² have also expressed interest in pursuing phone bans for the entire school day in the coming months. Pennsylvania²³ and Arkansas²⁴ are planning to provide grant programs to school districts for pouches to lock phones up during the school day. And Kansas is setting up a task force on the issue.²⁵

Several localities have also implemented or are considering bans. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is the second largest school district in the United States and has recently announced a bell-to-bell phone ban that includes lunch and breaks, though it will not go into effect until January 2025. While the specifics are still being ironed out about what kinds of lockers or pouches will be used, it is encouraging to see the district pursue such an ambitious policy.²⁶ New York City, the nation's largest school district, looks likely to follow suit.²⁷ Marietta County, near Atlanta, recently implemented a ban, and DeKalb County is piloting a similar program.²⁸ Katy Independent School District, which serves part of Houston and some nearby cities, has also pursued a ban,²⁹ as well as Granite County, Utah, another large school district.³⁰ Policies initially found in niche districts and small private schools just a few years ago have now secured support from a broad coalition of policymakers across the political spectrum.

Example Policies:

Florida

Florida passed the first-ever statewide ban to ban smartphone usage during instructional time and it also bans TikTok on school-owned devices and school Wifi.³¹ Unfortunately, the Florida ban still permits phone use outside of class time; however, some of the most damaging effects from social media are limited through the state's novel approach of banning TikTok.

Relevant Portions of Florida Law, CS/HB 379:

4. Prohibit and prevent students from accessing social media platforms through the use of Internet access provided by the school district, except when expressly directed by a teacher solely for educational purposes.
5. Prohibit the use of the TikTok platform or any successor platform on district-owned devices, through Internet access provided by the school

²² Aidan Joly, "Hochul begins push that would ban cell phones in schools," WIVB, July 17, 2024, <https://www.wivb.com/news/new-york/hochul-begins-push-that-would-ban-cell-phones-in-schools/>.

²³ Hayden Sherry, "New Pennsylvania law aims to limit students' smartphone use during school," ABC 27, July 16, 2024, <https://www.abc27.com/pennsylvania/new-pennsylvania-law-aims-to-limit-students-smartphone-use-during-school/>.

²⁴ Antoinette Grajeda, "Arkansas governor, education secretary call on schools to join mental health pilot project," Arkansas Advocate, July 2, 2024, <https://arkansasadvocate.com/2024/07/02/arkansas-governor-education-secretary-call-on-schools-to-join-mental-health-pilot-project/>.

²⁵ Matthew Self, "Student cell phone use in Kansas classrooms under scrutiny by State Board of Education," KSNT, July 11, 2024, <https://www.ksnt.com/news/kansas/student-cell-phone-use-in-kansas-classrooms-under-scrutiny-by-state-board-of-education/>.

²⁶ Howard Blume and Defne Karabatur, "LAUSD approves cellphone ban as Newsom calls for statewide action," Los Angeles Times, June 18, 2024, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-06-18/lausd-board-approved-strict-cell-phone-ban>.

²⁷ Jeff Winter and Alisha Ebrahimji, "The nation's largest school district could ban cell phones by January," CNN, June 26, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/06/26/us/nyc-public-schools-cell-phone-ban/index.html>.

²⁸ Kristal Dixon, "DeKalb schools to pilot classroom cellphone ban for students," *Axios*, July 10, 2024, <https://www.axios.com/local/atlanta/2024/07/10/dekalb-classroom-cellphone-ban>.

²⁹ Kennedy Sessions, "New Katy ISD policy bans cell phones in the classroom, igniting debate," *Chron*, April 18, 2024, <https://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/education/article/katy-isd-cell-phones-policy-19409704.php>.

³⁰ Curt Gresseth, "Granite School District lays down the law on cellphones in schools," KSL News Radio, May 9, 2024, <https://kslnewsradio.com/2100985/granite-school-district-lays-down-the-law-on-cellphones-in-schools/>.

³¹ Ryan Dailey, "Florida Gov. DeSantis signs bill to ban students from using phones and TikTok in schools," *Orlando Weekly*, May 10, 2023, <https://www.orlandoweekly.com/news/florida-gov-desantis-signs-bill-to-ban-students-from-using-phones-and-tiktok-in-schools-34164256>.

district, or as a platform to communicate or promote any district school, school-sponsored club, extracurricular organization, or athletic team.”

“A student may possess a wireless communications device while the student is on school property or in attendance at a school function; however, a student may not use a wireless communications device during instructional time, except when expressly directed by a teacher solely for educational purposes. A teacher shall designate an area for wireless communications devices during instructional time. Each district school board shall adopt rules governing the use of a wireless communications device by a student while the student is on school property or in attendance at a school function.”

Orange County, FL

In designing their rules governing the use of wireless devices for their district, Orange County chose to go a step further than the state requires and banned phones for the entire school day, from bell to bell. This is a good reminder that localities need not feel limited by state-level policies and can pursue more aggressive policies that are best for their district.

Orange County Policy:

Pursuant to the Technology in K–12 Public Schools law (CS/HB 379), which took effect on July 1, 2023, section 1006.07(2)(f), Florida Statutes, now provides that “a student may not use a wireless communications device during instructional time, except when expressly directed by a teacher solely for educational purposes. A teacher shall designate an area for wireless communications devices during instructional time.” The 2023–2024 Code of Student Conduct requires

that wireless communications device(s)* be silenced and put away (in a backpack or purse) during the school day while on campus, including lunchtime and transitioning between classes.

**Wireless communication devices include but are not limited to, cell phones and/or auxiliary/ ancillary devices such as watches and ear buds.*

The following actions will be taken if a student violates OCPS’ cell phone policy:

- Confiscation (Item returned at the end of the day)
- Detention
- Positive Alternative to School Suspension (PASS)
- Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)³²

Granite County, UT

Another one of the largest public school districts in the country, Granite County, UT, has now drafted a phone ban policy.³³ The draft language reads:

In Elementary and Junior High Schools, subject to limited exceptions outlined below, use of personal electronic devices shall not be used, kept out of sight, and notifications turned off during school hours. In Senior High Schools, use of personal electronic devices shall not be used and must be kept out of sight and notifications turned off during instructional time. Personal electronic devices may be used during passing times and during lunch periods. However, in consultation with school community councils, senior high schools may develop further restrictions.

Prohibited student uses of electronic devices during school hours shall incur administrative consequences:

First violation: educator shall warn and redi-

³² Orange County Public Schools, “Student Cell Phone Policy,” Accessed June 24, 2024, https://www.ocps.net/students_and_parents/student_cell_phone_policy.

³³ Curt Gresseth, “Granite School District lays down the law on cellphones in schools,” KSL News Radio, May 9, 2024, <https://kslnnewsradio.com/2100985/granite-school-district-lays-down-the-law-on-cellphones-in-schools>.

rect student.

Second violation: educator shall confiscate the device and return it to the student at the end of the class period.

Third violation: educator shall refer student to the office and the administration shall confiscate the device and return it to the student at the end of the school day.

Fourth violation: educator shall refer student to the office and the administration shall confiscate the device and return it to the parent or guardian after alerting them to the violation.

Additional violations: administration shall engage the parent or guardian to address the concern. Additional school consequences shall be evaluated and administered as appropriate.³⁴

South Carolina

Included a proviso in the state's FY 2024–25 budget that says in order for school districts to receive state funding, they will need to implement the policy adopted by the State Board of Education. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is now working to draft a policy banning the use of cell phones and other personal electronic communications devices during the school day. *Their goal is to have full implementation across the state by January 2025.* The proviso states:

To receive state funds allocated for State Aid to Classrooms, a school district shall implement a policy adopted by the State Board of Education that prohibits access to personal electronic communication devices by students during the school day. For purposes of this provision, a personal electronic communication device is considered to be a device not authorized for classroom use by a student, utilized to access the Internet, wi-fi, or cellular telephone signals.

Proviso 1.103 (SDE: Anti-Bullying/School Safety)

California

AB 3216 (that has not yet been signed into law) reads:

The governing body of a school district, a county office of education, or a charter school *shall, no later than July 1, 2026, develop and adopt, and shall update every five years,* a policy to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones while the pupils are at a school site or while the pupils are under the supervision and control of an employee or employees of that school district, county office of education, or charter school. *The goal of the policy shall be to promote evidence-based use of smartphone practices to support pupil learning and well-being. The development of the policy shall involve significant stakeholder participation in order to ensure that the policies are responsive to the unique needs and desires of pupils, parents, and educators in each community.*

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a pupil shall not be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone under any of the following circumstances:

(1) In the case of an emergency, or in response to a perceived threat of danger.

(2) When a teacher or administrator of the school district, county office of education, or charter school grants permission to a pupil to possess or use a smartphone, subject to any reasonable limitation imposed by that teacher or administrator.

(3) When a licensed physician and surgeon determines that the possession or use of a smartphone is necessary for the health or well-being of the pupil.

³⁴ Granite School District, "Electronic Devices and Acceptable Uses of Technology," Accessed June 24, 2024, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SbpmcH9qecjkqMBf9ufTBwA4afFib_fY/view.

(4) When the possession or use of a smart-phone is required in a pupil's individualized **education program**.³⁵

Conclusion

States and school districts should enact school phone bans to remove phones not only from instructional time but from the entire school day. Ideally, a policy should have a means of physically distancing students from their phones during the school day, like pouches or lockers, and should impose significant and consistent consequences for violations, enforced not solely by individual teachers but by the entire school administration. Finally, schools should work to explain the policy change and rationale to parents to secure their support and demonstrate how parents' communication needs with their children can be met without children using their phones. Schools should seek to frame their policies as helping to empower parents who may feel at the mercy of tech companies and peer pressure, establishing school days as oases of learning and healthy socialization in an increasingly tech-saturated childhood.

Measures that until recently would have seemed radically countercultural are garnering support across the country. Many school districts and states have already written or implemented phone bans, offering models for others to adopt. Early results from their experiments have shown remarkably positive impacts on both learning outcomes and students' mental health. Policymakers in other states and local school districts should confidently follow these examples and reclaim their school days from tech tyranny.

³⁵ An act to amend Section 48901.7 of the Education Code, relating to pupils, Assembly Bill No. 3216, California State Legislature, 2023–2024 Reg. Sess. (2024). https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB3216&showamends=false.

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