

News Debate: Cell Phone Scramble

Should schools relax cell phone policies?

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



Randy Faris/Corbis

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

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!

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.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the passage, what is the mobile technology policy at Freeport High School in Portland, Maine?

- A Students are encouraged to bring their own smart phones to class.
- B Students are required to turn off cell phones during school hours.
- C Students are allowed to use electronic tablets but not smart phones.
- D Students are not allowed to bring mobile technology into the school.

2. The passage shows two sides of this debate: Should schools relax cell phone policies? According to the passage, what is one argument AGAINST relaxing cell phone policies?

- A Cell phones may help reduce cyberbullying problems.
- B Most teens with cell phones don't send texts during class.
- C Students rely on cell phones to keep in touch with parents.
- D Cell phones allow students to cheat during exams.

3. What can you most likely conclude after reading the passage?

- A Most students agree with the policy to ban cell phones from school.
- B Schools that ban cell phones provide more opportunities for learning.
- C People have mixed opinions about the use of cell phones in school.
- D If schools relax their cell phone policies, more teachers will start texting.

4. Read this sentence from the passage: "If schools incorporate that technology into lessons, students will become more excited about their classes."

In this sentence, the word **incorporate** means

- A to eliminate
- B to blend
- C to improve
- D to study

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to

- A explain why New Manchester High School relaxed its cell phone policy
- B present both sides of a debate about school cell phone policies
- C describe how personal technology devices enhance education
- D persuade high school students to stop using cell phones at school

6. How many students have sent texts during class according to the 2010 study by the Pew Research Center?

7. How would Steven Hancock, an administrator at Princeton Day, most likely feel if his school relaxed its cell phone policy? How do you know? Please provide evidence from the text.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

_____ more kids than ever carry cell phones these days, schools have to make some tough decisions about mobile technology policies.

- A First
- B But
- C Because
- D Otherwise

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Eighth grader Grace Hurley thinks students should be able to carry cell phones in school in case they need to contact their parents during emergencies.

Who? eighth grader Grace Hurley

(does) What? _____

Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** regulate: to bring under the control of authority.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide & Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 1130

Featured Text Structure: Argumentative – the writer presents evidence for both sides of an argument

Passage Summary: “News Debate: Cell Phone Scramble” presents both sides of a debate about whether or not schools should relax cell phone policies.

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6. How many students have sent texts during class according to the 2010 study by the Pew Research Center?

Suggested answer: According to the study, 64 percent of teens with cell phones have sent texts during class. [paragraph 2 after subhead “No Cell Before the Bell!”]

7. How would Steven Hancock, an administrator at Princeton Day, most likely feel if his school relaxed its cell phone policy? How do you know? Please provide evidence from the text.

Suggested answer: He would most likely be unhappy since he thinks cell phones have “addictive qualities that will impede student engagement and learning.” [paragraph 2 after subhead “No Cell Before the Bell!”]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

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(does) What? **thinks students should be able to carry cell phones in school**

Why? **in case they need to contact their parents during emergencies**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** regulate: to bring under the control of authority.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.