Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***Cellphones in Schools: Mini Research Essay***

Hypothetical: The principal is considering reversing the current ban on cellphones in the classroom. Currently, students are to keep their cellphones in their lockers during school hours. If students are caught with phones by a member of the staff, consequences are given. But, many schools are getting rid of their cellphone bans. Perhaps we should too. Write an essay in which you argue that our school should keep, get rid of, or change our cellphone policy.

Step 1—Write a blog post discussing your thoughts and experiences concerning the issue

Step 2—Read and analyze all articles

Step 3—Write down important notes from these three articles

Step 4—Establish a thesis and outline your recommendation to the principal

Step 5—Type a rough draft of your essay

Step 6—Complete a final copy of your essay

**Article #1**

**By Opening the Door to Cell Phones, Are Schools Also Feeding an Addiction?**

http://neatoday.org/2016/06/20/cell-phones-in-the-classroom/

JUNE 20, 2016 • 10:55AM

BY [TIM WALKER](http://neatoday.org/authors/tim-walker)

When the Glendale Unified School District loosened cell phone use restrictions a few years ago, Chris Davis welcomed the change for two reasons. First, as a history and journalism teacher at Clark Magnet School, he looked forward to not spending an inordinate amount of his time chasing down wayward students with their ever-present smartphones.

“If the school tried to impose a ban, that’s how I would spend my day. What a waste of time and energy,” Davis says.

But Davis recognizes mobile devices as more than what some consider the “new chewing gum”—a nuisance more than an offense and one very difficult to enforce. He believes that as long as each of his students has access to a cell phone, and the parameters around their use are clearly defined, the classroom rewards outweigh the risks of a more open policy.

Sure, some students in other schools spend class time staring at their devices, texting, sharing, communicating through sites like Snapchat—generally presenting an ongoing classroom management provocation. But these are not major issues with Davis’ students. Accommodating cell phones in the classroom, he believes, doesn’t amount to a deal with the devil.

Clark Magnet has a science and technology focus, which makes it ideally suited for a wider use of smartphone applications. But even in Davis’ history and journalism class, he encourages students to use the devices for oral histories. When using Google Docs/Drive, Davis finds that some students find typing and editing on a smartphone easier than the relatively bulky Chromebooks they also have access to in class.

“All the teachers are aware of the classroom management challenges, but it’s just a more realistic approach. When used carefully and with limitations, it is a very useful learning tool.”

Realistic. This is how many teachers describe their acceptance, if not embrace, of how the hyper-connected, media-saturated world of their students has gained a foothold in their classrooms. George Summerhill, a middle school teacher in Reno, Nev., calls it the “new reality,” one that he concedes he is ambivalent about. But Summerhill also doesn’t want to be trapped in what he views as myopic thinking about the looming dangers of classroom technology. Now in his 12th year of teaching at Cold Springs Middle School, Summerhill made adjustments, started small, and so far likes what he sees. He may sound a little resigned, but “cell phones aren’t going away so why not use them?” he asks. “Let’s turn it into a learning device and maybe eventually teens will see it more than just a device for entertainment.”

Julie Fleck, a science teacher at Mandan High School in North Dakota, doesn’t see that evolution in her own students and believes the pedagogical rewards of cell phones in the classroom may be overhyped.

“Critical and creative thinking are key, and these devices in my opinion don’t really serve that goal,” says  Fleck.

Still, according to a 2013 study by the [Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project,](http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/02/28/how-teachers-are-using-technology-at-home-and-in-their-classrooms/) 73 percent of middle and high school classroom teachers use cell phones in their classroom instruction—a number that has likely increased over the past three years. So while it’s indisputable that educators’ comfort level and familiarity with these devices has increased, it’s probably unwise to confuse their use with unbridled enthusiasm. Of those educators who integrate mobile devices in their instruction, many are keen to do so, but others fall into the grudging acceptance camp or somewhere in between.

Regardless of the level of enthusiasm (or complete lack of), the jury is still out about the long-term ramifications of, to use another popular platitude, “meeting students where they are.”

Even George Summerhill can’t help but wonder, “I’m not really sure what kind of Pandora’s Box we’ve opened up.”

**Too Late to Turn Back?**

While open cell phone policies are not the norm for most schools, the stigma around the devices has faded. More than 70 percent of school districts have taken their cell phones bans off the books (the most notable being New York City—the nation’s second largest school district, which did so in 2015.) This has resulted in a hodegpodge of guideline and rules. The decision about how to proceed—however cautiously—is often left up to individual teachers.

The rollback of cell phones bans, says [Liz Kolb of the University of Michigan,](http://www.soe.umich.edu/people/profile/kolb_liz/) has been driven to a large degree by parents—but not because they are clamoring for the devices to be used in classroom instruction.

According to the Pew Center, some 88 percent of teens ages 13 to 17 have or have access to a mobile phone, and a 73 percent have smartphones.

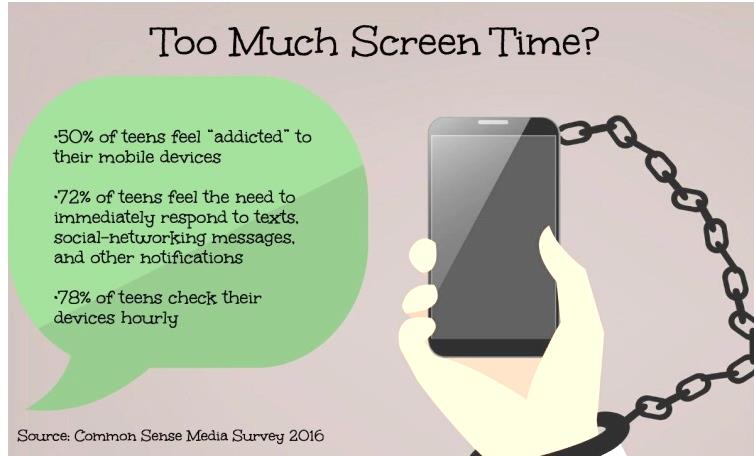
“Students already had the devices and parents want to be able to connect with their children throughout the school day, thus some have pushed for a more inclusive policy,” explains Kolb. “Since students had the devices, schools began to think of ways they could utilize them in ways that made sense for classroom learning, rather than just seeing them as a distraction.”

Accordingly, many schools have adopted [Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)](http://neatoday.org/2012/07/19/should-schools-embrace-bring-your-own-device/)policies that allow students to use their own cellphones in class under strict guidelines.

“While some teachers do bemoan BYOD policies, many have also embraced it, and looked for ways that the cell phones enhance and extend their learning goals in ways that they could not have done with traditional tools,” Kolb adds.

Steve Gardiner, a social studies teacher at Billings Senior High School in Billings, MT understands that in the hands of a well-trained first-rate teacher mobile technology has potential—in theory. The reality on the ground, he believes, is quite different.

“It’s just too tempting for a student. Once that phone is brought out, most can’t resist texting a friend or begin playing a game right in the middle of a lesson,” Gardiner says. “In all my years of teaching, cell phones have been by far the most distracting presence.”



**Cell Phones in the Classroom: Understanding the Long-Term Consequences**

Gardiner, the 2008 Montana Teacher of the Year, doesn’t necessarily doubt that mobile devices in the classroom foster greater student “engagement,” but does engagement automatically lead to learning? “I think these devices fragment students’ thinking,” he says.

And what does the research say about learning? What’s available, which isn’t an abundance, presents a murky picture. A [2014 study by Stanford University f](https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/scope-pub-using-technology-report.pdf)ound positive effects for digital learning on lower-achieving students but didn’t specifically focus on smartphones. On the other hand, [a study released in May 2016 by the London School of Economics](http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1350.pdf) looked at 91 schools in four U.K. cites and found that the schools that banned cell phones had higher test scores—particularly among low-achieving students.

The debate over cell phones in school, however, extends beyond the parameters of pedagogical appropriateness and classroom management. Concerns about cell phones in the classroom are also grounded in what we know about teenage brains, including the inability to concentrate while multitasking and possibly [long-term effects on overall health](http://www.livestrong.com/article/1005653-cell-phones-negatively-affect-health-teens/).

[Dr. Richard Freed,](http://richardfreed.com/about/)a a child and adolescent psychologist says it is past time to start calling teenagers’ attachments to these devices—or more accurately their applications—what it is: addiction.

“Unlike other technologies, there is something very specific about smartphones. It represents a life connected to entertainment, social media, gaming, and incessant texting,” Freed says. [A 2016 survey from Common Sense Media,](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/about-us/news/press-releases/new-report-finds-teens-feel-addicted-to-their-phones-causing-tension-at) involving 1,240 interviews with parents and their 12- to 18-year-old children, revealed that 50 percent of teens do feel “addicted” to their mobile devices.

“We’ve had to psychiatrically hospitalize kids when parents try to set limits on phones or take them away. Police are sometimes called. Teachers are confronting the same thing in schools every day,” says Freed.

As the conversation broadens to incorporate issues like brain development and addiction, finding that middle ground on cell phones in the classroom could be even more elusive. Can we adapt our classrooms to the connected world of students while avoiding the consequences that have yet to be fully identified and understood?

There’s no doubt many educators are successfully integrating cell phones in their instruction and doing so in moderation, but Steve Gardiner wonders if we’re just feeding the beast.

“Addiction is a strong word, but I think it’s accurate,” Gardiner says. “I know how much time I’ve spent dealing with cell phones. When I think about the accumulative effect in classrooms across the nation – the time lost we should be spending on instruction and building student relationships, I realize how much this one problem has cost us.”

**Article #2**

**Why Phones Don’t Belong in School**

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-freed/why-phones-dont-belong-in-school\_b\_9666730.html

[Richard Freed](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/author/richard-freed): Psychologist, author, and speaker on parenting in the age of digital technology

A recent *Los Angeles Times’* [article](http://www.latimes.com/local/education/la-me-how-teachers-cope-with-texting-in-class-20151103-htmlstory.html) reveals that teachers across America must compete with students’ phones for attention. Matt Miles, a high school teacher from Fairfax County, Virginia, says the problem is getting worse: “Whereas 5 years ago, I could quietly ask the one rebellious student to put his or her phone away with no real interruption to class, doing that today would require multiple conversations with a majority of my class.”

The push for students to use phones while at school, and even during class, comes from this generation of preteens and teens who — as illustrated by the recent documentary *[Screenagers](http://www.screenagersmovie.com/" \t "_hplink)* — struggle to stop playing with their phones. Adding fuel to the fire are tech pundits who [claim](https://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/style/2015/06/15/cellphones-school-teaching-tool-distraction/OzHjXyL7VVIXV1AEkeYTiJ/story.html) that smartphones provide learning opportunities for children. Parents, too, may want to communicate by phone with their kids throughout the school day.

But new research is questioning the wisdom of allowing phones in school, as studies reveal this practice is putting students’ learning and safety at risk.

**Distracted Learning**

There’s no doubt that smartphones have remarkable capabilities which, in theory, could promote student learning. But the truth is that kids — in spite of the best efforts of parents and teachers — use their phones primarily to access digital amusements. A Kaiser Family Foundation report [says](https://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/8010.pdf): “The transformation of the cell phone into a media content delivery platform [has]... facilitated an explosion in [entertainment] media consumption among American youth,” including TV and video games.

It’s therefore not surprising that a recent London School of Economics [study](http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1350.pdf) found that schools which ban the use of phones experienced a substantial improvement in student test scores, with the researchers concluding that phones “can have a negative impact on productivity through distraction.” Researchers found that phones hurt vulnerable students the most. Study co-author Dr. Richard Murphy, an assistant professor of economics at the University of Texas, [reports](http://news.utexas.edu/2015/05/18/mobile-phone-bans-lead-to-rise-in-student-test-scores): “Allowing phones into schools would be the most damaging to low-achieving and low-income students, exacerbating any existing learning inequalities.”

[Research](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03634523.2013.767917) on college students (average age 18) in a simulated classroom reveals how phones hurt learning, as students who *did not* use their phones “wrote down 62 percent more information in their notes, took more detailed notes, were able to recall more detailed information from the lecture, and scored a full letter grade and a half higher on a multiple choice test than those students who were actively using their mobile phones.”

**The Illusion of Safety**

Understandably, some may believe that children’s safety is improved if parents and children can reach one another by phone during the school day. However, in order to get a message from their parents, students must constantly monitor their phones, even during class. This constant phone and online use is now recognized as posing risks for children. Why? Because research is [revealing](https://thecyberbullyingproblem.wikispaces.com/file/view/60026528.pdf) that kids who spend more time online are more likely to be involved in cyberbullying than kids who spend less.

Schools therefore inadvertently increase the chances that kids will be cyberbullied at school through open phone policies. Marc Vincenti, a retired English teacher from Gunn High School in Palo Alto, California, witnessed how students using phones during school increases their risks of being victimized. Vincenti asked one of his students, who appeared troubled, if she was okay. She responded, “I’m so sorry, but on my way to your class I got a text six pages long from my boyfriend’s old girlfriend saying what a slut I am.”

We should be doing everything we can to limit cyberbullying, especially during school hours, as [research](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/04/150427082803.htm) shows that it increases the danger that kids will skip school or consider suicide. Schools will protect students’ safety by having them keep their phones off in backpacks from morning bell to last. If parents or children need to reach one another, the school office can be used — a policy that has worked well for decades.

**The Need for Leadership**

Schools will clearly promote their students’ academic success and safety by limiting the use of student phones during school hours. Presently, most schools leave it to teachers to manage phone distractions in their own classrooms. But this piecemeal approach has left teachers with inadequate support to confront the difficult and potentially unsafe task of limiting disruptive phone use by defiant students. In a recent *New York Times’* [article](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/nyregion/new-york-teacher-gets-wise-at-a-hard-knocks-school.html), teacher Ed Boland acknowledges, “I just wish somebody told me how to get a cellphone out of a kid’s hand.”

School leaders and teachers therefore need to work together to help students and parents recognize the substantial benefits of keeping phones off during school. Such teacher-leader cooperation will also ensure that phone limits extend to lunch and passing periods to protect students.

Principal Anita Berger of Banneker High School, a Washington, DC magnet school, is providing strong leadership on student phones, particularly considering the challenges faced by her students. Banneker’s [student body](http://greatergreatereducation.org/post/21684/do-we-need-another-selective-dcps-high-school-a-group-at-dunbar-thinks-so/) is 85 percent black, a group of teens who — according to a recent Common Sense Media [report](https://www.commonsensemedia.org/research/the-common-sense-census-media-use-by-tweens-and-teens) — nationally spend almost twice the amount of time each day using phones when compared with white children (4 hours, 11 minutes to 2 hours, 12 minutes). Black students also tend to [score](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#mathematics/gaps?grade=8) lower academically than white children. So, Banneker’s students would especially benefit from school phone limits which, according to the London School of Economics phone study, particularly help lower achieving students.

Principal Berger and Banneker have done just that, with a [rule](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/are-smartphones-dumbing-down-school-or-are-they-vital-learning-tools/2015/10/25/3e278ac8-7a27-11e5-b9c1-f03c48c96ac2_story.html) that students don’t use phones during the school day. This has helped Banneker students excel, as the school ranks in the top 2 percent on *The Washington Post’s*list of America’s most challenging high schools, and nearly 100 percent of its graduates are [accepted](https://goodblacknews.org/2014/03/29/five-ivy-league-colleges-vie-for-dc-student-avery-coffey/) into post-secondary institutions. “Although we know there are many benefits to mobile technology,” Berger [says](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/are-smartphones-dumbing-down-school-or-are-they-vital-learning-tools/2015/10/25/3e278ac8-7a27-11e5-b9c1-f03c48c96ac2_story.html), “the distractions outweigh the benefits.”

Banneker’s phone limits also promote a supportive and engaging school community. “We do not have social media drama, and students actually interact with one another during lunch,” Principal Berger adds. Schools across America can learn a lot from Banneker.

**Article #3**

**5 Reasons to Allow Students to Use Cell Phones in Class**

https://theinnovativeeducator.blogspot.com/2012/07/5-reasons-to-allow-students-to-use-cell.html

Sunday, July 8, 2012

*Guest post by*[*Michael Soskil*](https://www.blogger.com/profile/13789664899983322261)*Cross posted at*[*A Teacher's Life for Me*](http://teacherslifeforme.blogspot.com/)

1. If we are preparing our students for life after school, we should allow them to use the tools they will be using when they get there.  How many jobs can you think of right now where a smart phone is not beneficial?  Mechanics order parts on their phone, engineers view blueprints, doctors calculate dosages, and grocers check inventory.  The list is endless.  By the time our students enter their professions the need to utilize mobile technology will be even stronger.  Not preparing our students for that world is negligent. 

2. In a time when schools are facing tightening budgets, using technology that is readily available is logical.  How many schools point to a lack of funds as a reason they are not doing more with technology?  We can go a long way towards solving that problem by using technology that is available for free and probably in a majority of HS students' pockets.

3. Mobile devices are great for teaching 21st century skills.  If you want kids to learn to collaborate, what better tool can you use than a phone?  Videoconferencing with people all over the world becomes easy.  One of the main arguments against student phone use is that kids might cheat.  My response is that tests that are so lacking in rigor that students can look up answers on a phone or get them from another student are lousy and outdated in a world where information is free and easy.  We need to get used to the fact that kids don't need to know "stuff" nearly as much as they need to learn to use that "stuff."  Tests of recall don't prepare our students for the world ahead.  Kids know this - it's why they think school is irrelevant.  Kids working together to find solutions to problems (collaboration) should be encouraged, not labeled as "cheating."  Policies that ban cell phones because students might text each other are short-sighted.  As Kevin Honeycutt is fond of saying, "Students used to pass notes on paper.  We never banned paper."

4. Double standards are not OK.  I know of several districts where administrators come into classrooms with iPhones and/or iPads to take notes on teacher observations.  Yet, in these same classrooms students are not allowed to use mobile devices.  The message this sends to students is totally unacceptable.  These are great tools.  Kids know it.  Let them use them.

5. We need to teach kids responsible ways to use technology.  Keeping them "safe" by refusing to expose them to technology is irresponsible on our part.  Students are using cell phones whether we ban them in school or not.  They are communicating, sending pictures to each other, using social media and social networking, and consuming information.  We need to be teaching them how to do this while protecting themselves from both mistakes they might make that will follow them for decades and others who want to do them harm.  The dangers and pitfalls of using mobile devices aren't going away.  Isn't it our responsibility to teach our students to be safe?

For those who have read the Harry Potter books or seen the movies, a member of my PLN showed a great parallel between events in those stories and this debate with the following quote:

[](https://1.bp.blogspot.com/-FUbvKC2WYtE/To8k3e__b9I/AAAAAAAAAHQ/TnzH-hmTgGo/s1600/dolores-umbridge-1.jpg)

"Children, put away your wands. You won't be needing them." - Delores Umbridge

Now it's your turn.  What are the policies on cell phones in your school?  Do you think phones should be used by students in schools?  Are there ways to ensure that phones are not misused in schools if we allow them?

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**How to Cite Your Work**

We won’t be using formal MLA citation methods for this essay. However, when you include an quotation, thought, or finding that came from one of the three articles, you need to tell the reader which article it came from.

* Article 1: Author—Tim Walker/Source—*NEA Today* website
* Article 2: Author—Richard Freed/Source—*Huffington Post* website
* Article 3: Author—Michael Soskil/Source—*The Innovative Educator* website

To cite, just mention the source or author in the sentence:

* As Walker suggests...
* As noted on *The Innovative Educator* website...
* According to an *NEA Today* article...
* According to psychologists Richard Freed...
* “...,” notes educator Michael Soskil.
* “...,” suggests the *Huffington Post.*

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**How to Write Your Introduction**

Your introduction should be at least six sentences. Start with a hook. Useful hooks for this essay include a stat, story, “imagine if”, and a quote. After the hook, frame the debate (explain that this is a hot topic in schools across the country) and state your thesis.

A thesis is one sentence at the end of the introductory paragraph that clearly states the position you will be arguing. Often times, the main reasons for supporting your position are tagged on to the thesis. Here are some examples:

* We should be allowed to have cellphones in the classrooms because...
* We should maintain our current policy of not having cellphones in the classroom because...
* We need to tweak our school’s current cellphone policy by...

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**How to Write Your Body**

You’ll need to come up with three distinct reasons why you support your position. For each body paragraph, start by summarizing the reason, and then follow it up with supportive details. You can back up a reason with information from the articles along with personal experience and ideas. Each body paragraph should be at least five sentences in length.

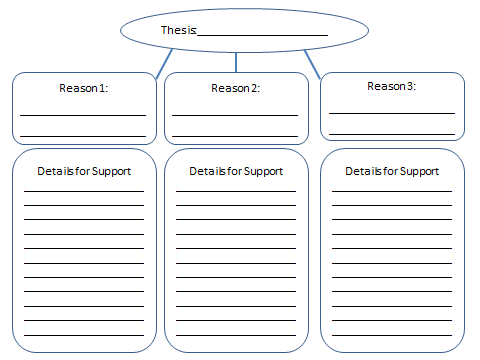
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**How to Write Your Conclusion**

For the conclusion, simply reword your thesis and review the three reasons why you support your position. Then, end with a call-to-action, telling your audience what you believe the school should do. Your conclusion should be at least five sentences.

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Brainstorm

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**Scoring**

Brainstorming Notes: 10 points

Rough Draft: 50 points

Final Copy: 100 points

**The writer begins with an effective introduction that includes... (7 points/14 points)**

--an interesting hook. (2/4)

--a framing of the issue. (2/4)

--ends with a clear thesis and preview of reasons. (3/6)

**The first body paragraph... (8 points/16 points)**

--begins by plainly stating a main reason that is different than the others. (2/4)

--includes substantial logical, persuasive support. (4/8)

--includes at least one quotation or reference to one of the articles. (2/4)

**The second body paragraph... (8 points/16 points)**

--begins by plainly stating a main reason that is different than the others. (2/4)

--includes substantial logical, persuasive support. (4/8)

--includes at least one quotation or reference to one of the articles. (2/4)

**The third body paragraph... (8 points/16 points)**

--begins by plainly stating a main reason that is different than the others. (2/4)

--includes substantial logical, persuasive support. (4/8)

--includes at least one quotation or reference to one of the articles. (2/4)

**The writer ends with a conclusion that... (6 points/12 points)**

--restates the thesis and reviews the main reasons without copying the intro. (3/6)

--provides a persuasive call-to-action to the intended audience. (3/6)

**Overall, the essay... (13 points/26 points)**

--flows together well. Transitions are used to connect ideas. (2/4)

--is balanced. No one body paragraph is unreasonably larger than the others. (1/2)

--cites the articles correctly. (1/2)

--uses at least two quotations from the articles. (2/4)

--incorporates a formal, persuasive tone. The writer doesn’t sound like a robot, nor does

he or she sound angry or unreasonable. There is some attitude present. (4/8)

--uses sophisticated word choice and a variety of sentences. (3/6)

**Deductions...**

--There are several grammar and spelling errors (up to 10 points)

--The essay is under 350 words (up to 10 points)

**Notes/Quotes from Article #1**

**Notes/Quotes from Article #2**

**Notes/Quotes from Article #3**

**Rich Martin**

**No Phones=Better Learning**

***Huffington Post* reports that Banneker High School in Washington, D.C. is one of the highest achieving schools in the nation despite the challenging backgrounds of its students. One hundred percent of Banneker’s graduates are accepted into college. One reason for the students’ success is, according to the school’s principal, their ban on cellphones during the school day. Says principal Anita Berger, “the distractions [of cellphones] outweigh the benefits.” I agree with Berger’s conclusion. Although cellphones do offer students some advantages, they ultimately are detrimental to the learning environment. We should maintain our school’s current policy of not allowing cellphones during the school day. They would only distract from learning, feed into students’ cellphone addictions, and lead to cyber bullying.**

**Although many suggest cell phones make for great learning tools in the classroom, two recent studies demonstrate that they’re ultimately a distraction and decrease the quality of learning. *NEA Today* reports that a May 2016 study by the London School of Economics found that schools that banned cell phones had higher test scores. In addition, according to *Huffington Post*, another study found that college students who did not use their phones “wrote down 62 percent more information in their notes, were able to recall more detailed information from the lecture, and scored a full letter grade and a half higher on a multiple choice test” than students who actively used their cell phones. These findings shouldn’t be surprising. Obviously, if a student is texting in class and checking their Instagram, they won’t be paying much attention to the teacher, and they consequently won’t learn as much.**

**“But wait,” you might argue. “Students can have their cell phones with them and use them responsibly. They won’t text during class.” Well, the research shows that many students can’t help but constantly check their phones. According to a 2016 Common Sense Media survey, 72 percent of teens “feel the need to immediately respond to texts, social-media messages, and other notifications.” In addition, 50 percent of teens admit to feeling addicted to their mobile devices. The fact of the matter is, most students wouldn’t be able to handle the temptation of constantly being on their phone. You wouldn’t place a bowl of sweets in front of someone trying to diet. You wouldn’t place a pack of cigarettes next to someone trying to quit smoking. So why allow students to have cell phones when many of them are just going to give in and use them when they know they shouldn’t?**