

SHOULD CELL PHONES BE BANNED FROM CLASSROOMS?

Yes

I am all for the proper integration of as much technology as possible into our classrooms. I am, however, absolutely, fully, totally against cell phone use as a teaching tool. Cell phones do not have a place in our classrooms as such. Although it would definitely be part of a school board's discussion on integrating cell phones into their schools, I'm not going to spend time on the fact that students would use them for purposes other than educational. They already do that, even when they are not being used as a tool. There are plenty of other negatives to focus on.

No true best practice has started out with, "Have

students bring their cell phones to class." Parents can find plenty of unnecessary ways to spoil their children. The new LeBron shoe. The latest Justin Timberlake album. Any phone that is worthy of being called an educational tool is not on the "buy one, get one free" plan. You cannot expect students to come to



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While schools are struggling to finance the newest hardware and software, they are overlooking that many secondary students already own a technology tool that can be integral not only in school learning, but in the students' future professional lives. Additionally, schools are often criticized for not connecting learning to the real world. What better way to connect students' classroom learning with their everyday lives than a tool they already enjoy using? Instead of using the cell phone as social toy, students can learn how to use their phone as a tool for knowledge construction. As an alternative to spending time and money creating policies to fight cell phone use in schools, teachers and administrators could spend

their time finding useful ways to integrate these devices as knowledge construction, data collection, and collaborative communication tools in order to help students become more competitive in the 21st-century world.

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Liz Kolb

school with a Blackberry. If they have a Blackberry... OK, I'll just stop there, because the discussion on why a parent bought their child a Blackberry is so ridiculous my head may explode.

Schools should find that the money they would spend on student cell phones, if they chose that route instead of having students bring their own, would be much better utilized for other technology purchases. Laptops, just to touch on one small slice of a district's technology budget, are much more versatile yet uniform than cell phones. When discussing the money that districts would spend on cell phones, don't think about just purchasing the phone. You will also be paying for some type of plan that would probably include text messaging and Web access if you were to get the most out of what you have. Any monies spent on phones and plans would be much better served with any

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number of other technologies. In this day and age of shoestring budgets and federal funding only for specific curriculum, every penny is scrutinized.

The goal of an educational setting should be to give students the proper tools to succeed once they step into society. The time students spend in a classroom setting is increasingly being divided between curriculum, pedagogy, assessing, and so on. Every year a new "best practice" author is making a buck from "trendsetting" administrators who feed the book to staff members before the ink dries. There comes a time when the school day will begin to explode if it is not relieved of

some of the content. So how can instruction including a cell phone even be considered for that valuable block of time? Nothing that you can do on a cell phone will inspire students as they make their way into the world. I cannot think of a job where "cell phone operation" was a skill. Employers are much more concerned about a student's computing and critical thinking skills than their phone skills. Hopefully you are as well.

Josh Allen is the instructional technology facilitator for Papillion-La Vista Schools in Papillion, Nebraska. He has a master's in education and technology in education.

technology. Cell phones can be audio recorders, digital video camcorders, still cameras, note-taking devices, calculation devices, scheduling and management tools, phone conferencing devices, Internet researching tools, faxing and scanning devices, blog and Web page editors, or even audio assessment recorders. Cell phones can also be assistive technologies for special needs students. For example, using a free Web-based software called Jott, a hearing impaired student can record audio on a cell phone to create text-written e-mails. Furthermore, cell phones can couple with many free Web 2.0 tools such as Flickr for innovative classroom projects. For example, students can use their cell phones to take pictures during a field trip, send them to the class Flickr account, and then create a digital slideshow in Flickr.

Considering that it is more common for students and parents to have access to a cell phone than Internet at

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home, including cell phones in learning would provide more opportunities for better communication with parents and students. For example, teachers can create text message alerts to send information about school assignments or activities to parents.

Teachers who are concerned that cell phones will be distracting inside the classroom can set up a social contract with their students defining the structure and rules around cell phone use in the classroom. For example, the teacher can collect the cell phones at the beginning of class and return them to the students when it is time in class to use them. Furthermore, students do not even need to bring the cell phone into the classroom to use it as a learning tool. They can use them for homework or on class field trips.

Part of an educator's job is to help students safely navigate the media world. There are businesses that are completely mobile, and job interviews that are done via phone. Students need to learn how to use their social devices as a professional tool if they want to be competitive in the future. Currently, students are unaware of cell phone etiquette. Allowing cell phones to become learning tools will give teachers the opportunity to introduce appropriate cell phone etiquette to students as well as show them how their toy can become an essential professional tool.

Liz Kolb taught high school and middle school social studies and was a technology coordinator/integration specialist in Ohio. She is currently an adjunct assistant professor at Madonna University in Michigan as well as a doctoral student in learning technologies at the University of Michigan.