# Should Smartphones Be Allowed In US Schools?

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## Smartphones, Classroom Distraction, and Student Conduct

Young students aged 15 to 18 regularly sneak around on their smartphones because the administration and teachers have banned them as they distract students during school hours and also promote the culture of cheating during exams. Moreover, big smartphone companies such as Samsung and Apple have targeted school students as their most thriving market and, therefore, launched new features in their updated models to lure students into buying their smartphone products. The logic that if a child is given an inch, he/she will take a mile is true in this regard, as if students are given the liberty to use smartphones in learning institutions, they will not just use them for research purposes. Whenever a student texts or picks up a call during a lecture session, every student and teacher around is affected, and the attention of the students is diverted. This makes it difficult for students to learn in a conducive environment. It can also cause a teacher to stop teaching because of the disturbance and everyone's diverted attention on the smartphone. This analytical essay effectively delves into the seriousness of the insight as to why students should never accept the use of smartphones in the US school environment, as well as in the world as a whole.

School students can use smartphones for constructive purposes if the school administration wants to enhance learning outcomes; therefore, some US academics support the use of smartphones in schools (Dodson, 2020). Even though smartphones are a positive means of learning and research, these technological devices can also be used negatively, thus disrupting the learning process in learning institutions. Therefore, the use of smartphones by students in the school environment is bitterly opposed by other US academics. For instance, in the classrooms, if a student can access the reading material and research online through a smartphone, the same student can have access to destructive information such as pornographic material available on many Internet websites (Wang & Ronald, 2009). Besides, a student who can positively use distinctive features with which a smartphone is well-equipped, such as writing emails to peers or teachers and accessing research through the Internet, can also misuse the freedom by listening to music during lecture hours, cyberbullying, etc.

# Cyberbullying, Social Risk, and the Case for School Restrictions

A significant reason why smartphones should not be allowed in the realm of learning institutions is that their free use has contributed to the risk of cyberbullying in the United States. The United States Parliament for the 2019-2020 academic year has passed a policy to control the potential cyber risks, including privacy issues that smartphones stirred up in many countries of the United States. Students up to age 14 across the United States, according to this legislation, have been banned from taking their digital technologies to their classes. The goal of this legislation is to break the phone addiction in school students as well as control the risk of cyber-bullying to ensure students' attention on their schoolwork in their classrooms. It has been reported by the US Bureau that 25% of teenage school students and 38% of young people outside the learning institutions experience cyberbullying repeatedly through their smartphones. Sadly, the Bureau reported that at least half of the suicides attempted around the states of the US in the last few years were by teenagers because they had been bullied by unknown people (Wang & Ronald, 2009).

US academics have approved this legislation by banning school students from having their phones out in the classrooms as they are not only a source of distraction from learning but also cause dangerous risks such as students filming other students and teachers, which subsequently results in bullying those people anonymously later. The US Bureau has also reported after implementing the banning legislation that the amount of "online bullying and peer-on-peer abuse" has decreased. Before that academic policy, cyberbullying was not the only problem, but theft in the playground, blackmailing over the content students recorded or filmed during their class hours for targeting teachers and students anonymously, and sharing adult content were the major concerns smartphones posed. However, banning the presence of phones in the school environment has reduced the educational inequalities to support the low-cost policy in the learning environment as well as reduced the detrimental effects of cyberbullying and safety issues and has controlled the suicide rate (Beland, 2016).

The socially immoral act of invading someone's privacy is the main concern. US academics have warned the schools regarding the ban on smartphones within their premises as school students pry into the privacy of their fellow students through their smartphones. The videos they film during class hours and pictures they take are then posted on some famous social media websites such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, etc., without the person's consent and cause serious harm to people's moral and personal space. Furthermore, students take screenshots or photographs of their classmates while in the bathrooms and use those pictures for "sexting" other students, which is a clear example of the misuse of smartphones for harassment and bullying purposes. The cyberbullying case of Megan Meier raised awareness of the misuse of smartphones in schools. She committed suicide because her fellow students texted her some "hurtful" messages on MySpace, a social media platform, in 2006. Later, in 2010, another teenage school student, Tyler Clementi, committed suicide

by jumping from the George Washington Bridge because his roommate shared videos of his personal time with his classmates by spying on him by installing a CCTV in his room. Moreover, another negative concern that has become rampant over the years in learning institutions is the increasing rate of theft cases. The fact that smartphones from valuable companies such as Apple and Samsung are expensive makes them a valuable prize for thieves. This act of theft does not only promote immorality in students, but the content, such as private videos and pictures, can later be used to blackmail a person, whether a student or a teacher, and such instances again relate back to cyberbullying.

## Digital Learning and Arguments for Responsible Smartphone Access

On the contrary, some policymakers restrict schools from banning smartphones during class hours as they think that the virtual world would enhance and improve the learning process because smartphones aid school students in understanding vital academic knowledge from the Internet. This specific group of US legislative authorities perceives banning smartphones as a hindrance to students accessing relevant academic content, as students at an early age are creative, and relying only on course material provided by teachers and school administration could diminish their creative abilities. Therefore, this group suggests that students should be permitted to bring smartphones to schools, but only if they use this technology constructively to enhance positive learning and performance outcomes. Richard Dodson's analysis of the use of smartphones and their impacts in 8 different states of the US effectively indicates that keeping smartphones in backpacks and lockers during non-instructional time in classrooms has proven to be an effective technique for restricting students from negative smartphone use. Nearly one school in every eight states of the United States believed that permitting students under the supervision of a teacher was the top priority of the administration to drive instruction as a major instructional goal. Even some of the principals of the schools wanted to increase the use of social media platforms in their learning environment (Dodson, 2020).

The main reasons why parents and school administration allow students to have smartphones within the premises of schools are scheduling and the safety of the children. In a recent poll in the United States, 90% of parents were in favour of providing smartphones to school students so that they could contact their children in an emergency. 70% of the parents who took part in the survey accused the school administration of not allowing school students to use office phones in case of illness or emergency (Mullen, 2006). Despite smartphones' importance in education for enhancing learning and performance outcomes, no one can turn a blind eye to the fact that they have been a cause of online bullying, which has increased peer-to-peer abuse in classrooms. Now, smartphones have followed students to their homes through the evil of cyberbullying, where they should be safe.

In conclusion, regarding the detrimental effects of using smartphones within the premises of learning environments, allowing school students to contact their parents in case of emergency or illness

through office phones is a compromise solution to put an end to parents' concerns (Mullen, 2006). However, allowing students to use their own smartphones after reviewing the undeniable negative results of using smartphones during their study hours is not a healthy step, as the US legislative authority already suggested, because young students do not understand the negative impacts smartphones pose on their lives. The policy the US Parliament has made to reduce losses in the form of teenage suicide due to cyberbullying arising from extensive smartphone use while students are in school is considered the best academic policy in the United States to date. Last but not least, digital technology should be used constructively to enhance learning outcomes in the learning environment instead of posing damage and harm to the members of society, especially to the vulnerable learners of the community.

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