

News Debate: Tough Cell

Should cell phones be allowed in schools?



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Are cell phones OK for school?

As students head back to school, many are focused more on ringtones than on blackboards. Nearly 44 percent of 10- to 18-year-olds in the United States own cell phones, according to a recent technology survey. Now some schools are telling students to leave their mobile phones at home.

New York City recently banned cell phones from its school system. Within a month, school officials **confiscated**, or took away, 3,000 phones from students. Schools across the country are asking this question: Should cell phones be allowed in school?

Cell phones are often misused, say some education officials. Students have been caught making calls in class and text messaging test answers to their friends. Plus, cell phones are among the most frequently stolen objects in schools. Many teachers think getting rid of cell phones would prevent students from being distracted during class.

Cell phones may not even be very useful in a school emergency, according to Kenneth Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services. He told *WR News* that too many cell phone calls in an emergency would "overload phone systems and 911 operators."

Cell phones provide a convenient way for families to stay in touch. Parents like knowing they can get in touch with their kids, especially at dismissal time. That's why some schools allow cell phones, but only if students keep them turned off and out of sight during class.

"I don't see a reason to ban cell phones," Leland Dishman, a school official from Boaz, Alabama, told *WR News*. "Our kids are very responsible, and I do not expect much of a problem."

"Cell phones are OK as long as the school doesn't object," William Scharffe of the Michigan Association of School Boards told *WR News*. He says that if phones are allowed, however, students need to use them responsibly and at the proper time.