

# Schools should embrace cell phones as learning tools instead of banning them



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Cell phones can be learning tools argues A.J. Dean BY A.J. DEAN

As a youngster, do you remember how your teachers would always warn you to be careful with scissors? It was common to hear them say to the class, "Do not ever run with scissors." If you were caught running with them, you were disciplined in some manner. By the time the next arts and crafts lesson began, however, the scissors would still be available for use by the class, and depending on the kindness of the teacher, perhaps to the scissors safety violators as well.

Since the notion that "one bad apple doesn't spoil the whole bunch" applies to a case as simple as this, why should it not also apply to the use of cell phones in high schools across the nation?

When cell phones are used and monitored properly, they are extremely useful in a classroom — terrific for learning, and they ultimately give students and parents a true feeling of safety.

According to the Center for Digital Democracy, 80 percent of high school students in the United States have cell phones. Educators should incorporate these cell phones into their teaching since so many students come to school with them. For example, most high schools in the United States do not have enough computers for all students to use at once. By allowing cell phone usage, the ability to access the Internet will become much easier and will help schools save money.

Since a cell phone uses a separate network to access the Internet, wireless networks will be spared the rugged strain all school wireless networks undergo. With a less stressed wireless network, fewer repairs will need to be made, thus relieving the IT staffs at schools.

Along with cell phones being used as mini computers, they also can serve as learning tools in other ways. Many critics argue that kids will become distracted if cell phones are allowed in class. Cell phones, however, potentially create the same distraction that comes along with sitting next to a classmate.

Unless you move toward single-student classrooms, the potential distraction of communicating with others will always exist in school.

Homework alerts and project directions can be sent via text message and students can keep themselves organized by taking advantage of calendar and organizer applications on their cellular devices.

Some schools, such as Harrisburg Academy, have teachers and coaches using text messaging to communicate pertinent information to students, such as practice and meeting times. By encouraging this, communication in the schools will be more productive and the school day will be more efficient.

In addition, cell phones should be allowed in high school classrooms because they can be lifelines. Parents want to be able to contact their children, and there is no better way to do that than with cell phones.

Many phones are now equipped with GPS systems that allow parents to know the exact location of their child.



A.J. Dean

In the Columbine catastrophe, the first individuals to reach emergency personnel called from cell phones. News was spread more quickly because students were able to communicate with the media during the actual shooting. Columbine was more than a decade ago and was one of the first tragedies where wireless technology played a role in saving lives.

With current cell phones and their remarkable advancements, you owe it to yourself to understand that they are more than just gadgets. They are communicators, organizers and are capable of searching the Web.

One of the many missions of the educational system in the United States is to prepare students for life as adults so they can be productive citizens in a vastly changing world.

Technology has been around for decades and is only growing and advancing. So why are schools not informing students on how to use it safely and effectively?

Not only have the times changed but so has society. The days of the good old blackboard and chalk are numbered and already are giving way to the technologically advanced classrooms of tomorrow.

So I ask, why should we let the few bad apples who misuse this new technology spoil it for the whole bunch?

**A.J. DEAN** is a Patriot-News Davenport Fellow and a senior at Susquehanna Twp. High School.

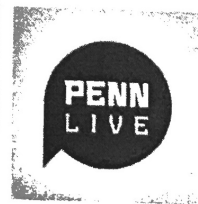
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