

Dear Members of the Kansas Legislative Committee on Education

As a dedicated teacher within the Kansas education system, I am reaching out to express my fervent support for the proposed legislation to ban cell phone use in our schools.

I am a graduate of Kansas State University, where I received my teaching degree. I also have a Master's degree from Pittsburg State University in Educational Technology. I've taught in Goddard Public Schools and the Wichita Catholic Diocese Schools over the past fourteen years. I understand this bill, as drafted, would not impact my current students, but I would like to share my experience about why I think this issue is critical for all students across the state.

My daily experiences in the classroom have shown me firsthand the detrimental impact that cell phone access has on our students' learning environment, engagement, and overall educational experience.

Classroom Disruption

Each day, I witness the disruption caused by cell phones. Despite our best efforts to integrate technology positively into our curriculum, we have not considered the full range of negative consequences. Cell phones often cause students to divert their attention to social media, messaging, and games during instructional time. This constant battle not only disrupts the flow of lessons but also diminishes the quality of education for all students present.

Impact on Learning and Comprehension

The presence of cell phones has significantly affected students' ability to understand and retain information. Cell phones compromise their critical thinking and problem-solving skills by preventing them from engaging deeply with problems. AI apps offer them easy access to cheating on their phones during the school day. Students are lured by the immediate gratification of their cell phones, weakening their attention span. It often overshadows the lasting benefits of a well-delivered lesson, leading to decreased academic performance and a lack of preparedness for future challenges.

Student Well-being and Social Skills

From a social perspective, cell phones in school have contributed to a marked decline in face-to-face interactions among students, impeding the development of essential social skills. The classroom should be a place of collaboration and communication, yet cell phones have fostered isolation and disconnection. Furthermore, it has led to an alarming rise in cyberbullying and exposure to inappropriate content during school hours, posing significant risks to student well-being and safety. To put this into perspective, I do a project with my students during our nutrition unit where I check their screen time. The objective is to help students decrease their screen time and increase their physical activity. The majority of my students average at least six hours a day on their cell phone. I have even seen numbers as high as thirteen hours a day.

While I know not all of these hours come from school, we can at least monitor the hours during a school day. I believe these high screen numbers have caused social anxiety.

A Call for Action

Enforcing a ban on cell phone use during school hours will not only improve the educational experience but also promote a healthier, more engaged learning community. Such a policy would allow teachers to reclaim the classroom as a space for active learning, undivided attention, and mutual respect. It would also support students in developing healthier relationships with technology, balancing its use with the importance of direct human interaction and the demands of their education.

I urge you to consider the perspectives of an educator, witnessing the challenges and obstacles that cell phones in the classroom present. By supporting this ban, you will be taking a significant step toward enhancing the quality of education in Kansas, ensuring that our classrooms remain environments where learning, respect, and engagement are paramount.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue. Together, we can make a positive change for the future of our students and the integrity of our educational system.

Sincerely,

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