



Distraction-free Schools FAQ

Model Policy | Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

Why should states adopt distraction-free school policies?

[90% of teachers](#) support device restrictions during instructional time, reporting that cell phones are a [major classroom distraction](#). For example, [research shows](#) that 97% of students use phones at school, with 50% receiving 237 notifications daily. Additionally, cell phone use is linked to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and poor academic performance.

What's the best policy?

Research suggests that a bell-to-bell policy that prohibits all personal device use – such as smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, gaming devices, and headphones – throughout the entire school day, with devices locked away or stored, delivers the most benefits. Schools implementing this approach see [fewer distractions](#), [reduced cyberbullying](#) and social media-related conflicts, [increased student engagement](#), and [better teacher morale](#).

What if parents need to communicate with students in case of emergency?

[Experts warn](#) that phones can hinder safety in emergencies by distracting students from following instructions and spreading rumors. States should ensure that all schools have emergency communication plans that ensure student safety and that districts effectively communicate those plans to parents.

Aren't cell phones important learning tools?

While technology can enhance learning, school-issued devices like tablets and laptops are better suited for instructional purposes, as they can be managed and monitored for appropriate use.

See ExcelinEd's [Digital Literacy in Education model policy](#) for more.

Have schools with cell phone and personal device policies seen success?

Yes. Schools that have implemented device restrictions report better academic performance, [fewer behavioral issues](#), and [improved school culture](#).

Where can I find more resources on distraction-free schools?

For research and implementation resources, visit the [Phone-Free Schools Movement](#) to access their Phone-Free Schools Toolkit and more.

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