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CELL PHONE BAN IN CLASSROOMS: PARENTS SPEAK UP

The Cell Phone Debate

More than 90 percent of [teenagers](#) have access to a cell phone and 45% are online almost constantlyⁱ.

Whether cell phones help or hinder learning inside and outside of classrooms, is hotly [debated](#) by teachers and administrators.ⁱⁱ

Those in favor of [allowing cell phones](#) in classrooms argue that they offer a measure of safety for children, can be research and learning tools inside and outside classrooms, expand students' access to information and new learning formats, and offer students the possibility of individualized learning.ⁱⁱⁱ

Those who favor [banning cell phones](#) in classrooms argue that cell phones distract students and diminish focus, can provide students access to questionable content, increase cyberbullying and other disciplinary issues, create physical and mental health issues, encourage cheating, and potentially expose children to sexual predators.^{iv}

As the [debate has intensified](#), school leaders and district administrators have relied on surveys of teachers, administrators and experts to settle the debate.^v For example, a [2007 survey of 112 school administrators](#) found that 82% believe parents support their school's cell phone policy.^{vi} Another, 2020 [survey](#) of 210 school principals showed that 90% supported restricting cell phones.^{vii}

Though well intentioned, such studies fail to give voice to a school's customers—parents and families who entrust their child to the school. Setting strategy without listening to their customers—parents and families—can be a mistake. What are parents' beliefs about banning cell phones in classrooms?

C-CUBES-K12™ Parent Voice Study: 2022

The Parent Voice Study – 2022 is based on parents residing in the U.S., are 18 years of age, and currently have a child in school.

Survey Administration

Results are based on a national sample of 10,897 parents who completed an online survey in November-December, 2022. The survey uses proprietary items to measure their student's school and educational experience.

Methodology

This brief analyzes items rated as: completely disagree=1, somewhat disagree=2, neither agree/nor disagree=3, somewhat agree=4, completely agree=5.

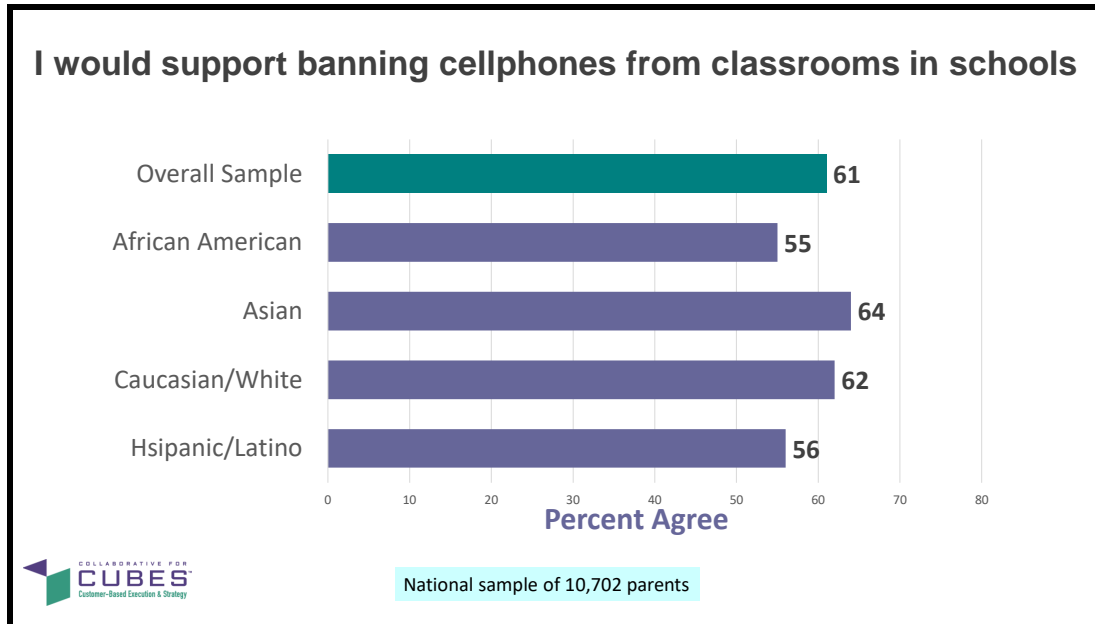
I would support banning cell phones from classrooms in schools

Results

Overall, 61 percent of parents support banning cell phones from classrooms.

Support for banning cellphones in classrooms is higher among Asian (64%) and Caucasian (61%) parents but slightly lower among African American (55%), and Hispanic/Latino (56%) parents.

Figure 1: Agreement with “I would support banning cell phones from classrooms”



These results are similar for parents whose child qualifies for free or reduced lunch (60%) versus parents whose child does *not* qualify (61%).

Shaping School District Strategy: What’s Next?

Banning cell phones in classrooms is a critical decision for school leaders. Their policy should not only weigh the pros and cons of the ban, but also incorporate the needs of parents.

Parents’ concerns about cell phone usage stem from their desire for strong academic outcomes for their children. An earlier C-CUBES-K12™ brief showed the vast—but silent—majority of parents prefers a school with strong academics. Banning cell phones should be a policy driven by and linked to strong academic achievement in school.

That is the only way for keeping the main thing the main thing. And the main thing is strong academics.

Author Bio

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ⁱ Scholsser, Kurt (2018), "New research finds 95% of teens have access to a smartphone; 45% online 'almost constantly,'" *Geek Wire*, June 1, 2018. <https://www.geekwire.com/2018/new-research-finds-95-teens-access-smartphone-45-online-almost-constantly/>

ⁱⁱ Rimer, Sara (2019) "Ban or embrace: Professor's share strategies for cell phones in class," *BU Today*, January 2019. <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2019/cell-phones-in-the-classroom>

ⁱⁱⁱ Regoli, Natalie (2018), "Cell phones in the classroom: pros and cons," *ConnectUS*, December 16 2018 <https://connectusfund.org/18-cell-phones-in-the-classroom-pros-and-cons>

^{iv} Regoli, Natalie (2018), "Cell phones in the classroom: pros and cons," *ConnectUS*, December 16 2018 <https://connectusfund.org/18-cell-phones-in-the-classroom-pros-and-cons>

^v Claybourn, Cole (2022), "Cellphones in school: What to know," *U.S. News and World Report*, October 20 2022. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/articles/cellphones-in-school-what-to-know>

^{vi} Obringer, S. John, and Kent Coffey (2007), "Cell phones in American high schools: A national survey," *Journal of Technology Studies*, 33(1), 41-47. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ847358>

^{vii} Tandon, Pooja S., Chuan Zhou, Caroline M. Hogan et al. (2020), "Cell phone use policies in US middle and high schools," *JAMA Network Open*, 3(5), May 18, 2020. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2765995>