

# Guide to Phone Free Schools Research

## Summary of Articles

### National/General

***Addressing Parent Concerns Directly*** – Summarizes nationwide interviews conducted by Stand for Children, including insights from principals and superintendents who have implemented a Bell-to-Bell cell phone policy. Easy to distribute.

***Away All Day Fact Sheet*** – Short examples of why an “away all day” policy is important, highlighting key data, testimonials, and Frequently Asked Questions. Developed by Stand for Children. Easy to distribute.

***FL Cell Phone Study*** – Study from the National Bureau of Economic Research, October 2025. 49 pages. Abstract: Cellphone bans in schools have become a popular policy in recent years in the United States, yet very little is known about their effects on student outcomes. In this study, we try to fill this gap by examining the causal effects of bans on student test scores, suspensions, and absences using detailed student-level data from Florida and a quasi-experimental research strategy relying upon differences in pre-ban cellphone use by students, as measured by building-level Advan data. Several important findings emerge. First, we show that the enforcement of cellphone bans in schools led to a significant increase in student suspensions in the short-term, especially among Black students, but disciplinary actions began to dissipate after the first year, potentially suggesting a new steady state after an initial adjustment period. Second, we find significant improvements in student test scores in the second year of the ban after that initial adjustment period. Third, the findings suggest that cellphone bans in schools significantly reduce student unexcused absences, an effect that may explain a large fraction of the test score gains. The effects of cellphone bans are more pronounced in middle and high school settings where student smartphone ownership is more common.

***Principals See Many Benefits of Cell Phone Policies*** – PDF of an online Rand report from October 2025, with selected findings from the American School Leader Panel and the American Youth Panel. Key findings included:

- Nearly all K–12 schools had a cell phone policy that allowed students to bring their phones to school during the 2024–2025 school year, but two-thirds of schools had a policy that prohibited cell phone use from “bell to bell.”
- Eighty-six percent of principals in schools with some sort of policy restricting cell phone use endorsed the safety-related benefits of those policies, most commonly

citing positive impacts on school climate, a reduction in inappropriate cell phone use, and a reduction in cyberbullying.

- Although six in ten youth supported some restrictions on cell phone use during classes, only one in ten supported bell-to-bell policies.
- Those youth who supported policies prohibiting cell phone use during classes did so because they said that such policies reduce distractions.

***Yondr cell phone Ft Wayne*** – Slide deck from a Yondr presentation with the Superintendent of Ft Wayne Community Schools. Includes national research and data, with a deep dive on the impacts and benefits when implemented in Ft. Wayne IN. 27 slides, FT Wayne section starts on slide 16.

**U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory Surgeon General's Warning on the Harms of Screen Use** – Report from the United States Surgeon General with recommendations for schools, kids, families, and researchers to mitigate the effects of screen use. 43 pages, school recommendations begin on page 29.

## **Arizona**

***AZ Cell Phone survey data.pptx*** – Results of a statewide survey from November 2025 on public and parent perceptions on cell phone bans. Conducted by Tulchin Research, sponsored by Stand for Children. Easy to distribute.

***Student Cell Phone White Paper*** – One page summary of research with very brief top lines and citations at the bottom. Designed for use in Arizona, but research is national/global. Written by Stand for Children, feel free to use as needed.

## **Links to Additional Studies**

1. [UNC Study](#): This peer reviewed study from researchers at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that middle and high school students spend nearly one-third of the school day on their smartphones, checking them dozens of times, often for social media and entertainment, with frequent checking linked to weaker attention and impulse control. <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/1118815>
2. CBS News: Dallas ISD officials said that, district-wide, they have seen a significant increase in library book checkouts, which they largely attribute to students no longer having cellphones with them during the school day. <https://www.cbsnews.com/texas/news/dallas-isd-calendar-school-library-book-checkout-report-texas-cellphone-ban/>
3. Angela Duckworth Yondr pouch study, Spring 2026. Schools across the U.S. have sharply restricted student use of phones during the school day. We evaluate one type of

restriction—lockable phone pouches—using nationwide data combining large-scale surveys, GPS pings, standardized test scores, and school administrative records, along with sales records from the largest pouch provider. Using a staggered difference-in-differences design, we find that pouch adoption substantially reduces phone use as measured by GPS pings and teacher reports. In the first year after adoption, disciplinary incidents increase and student subjective well-being falls, consistent with short-term disruption. However, effects on well-being become positive in later years and disciplinary effects fade. For academic achievement, average effects on test scores are consistently close to zero. High schools see modest positive effects, particularly in math, while middle schools see small negative effects. We find little evidence of effects on school attendance, self-reported classroom attention, or perceived online bullying.

<https://www.nber.org/papers/w35132>