



# CELL PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS

## A GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



**INSTITUTE FOR  
FAMILIES & TECHNOLOGY**

IN COLLABORATION WITH

**TEACH  
+PLUS**



**PHONE**  
*free*  
PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS MOVEMENT

**50CAN**

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# CELL PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

**This guide provides clear steps for solving the problem of rampant cell phone use in schools.<sup>1</sup> It is based on extensive quantitative and qualitative national research across a range of school settings. In partnership with Phones in Focus, who have surveyed more than 100,000 educators, Stand for Children also conducted interviews with participating educators who implemented an effective cell phone policy.**

## THE PROBLEM

Principals and superintendents from across the country report that cell phones in the classroom significantly undermine student academic achievement, social development, and well-being, and they play a central role in escalating fights, cyberbullying, and non-consensual recording during school hours.

## SOLVING THE PROBLEM

### **Bell-to-Bell Versus Instructional Time Only Policies**

**If you want to address the problem of rampant cell phone use in schools, an effective Bell-to-Bell Policy—phones off from the beginning to the end of the school day—is required.** Instructional Time Only policies lead to inconsistent classroom implementation, resulting in continued distractions, and students accessing phones between classes and during lunch results in continued harm to students' social development and well-being. **An Instructional Time Only policy is not a solution to the problem of rampant cell phone use in schools.** Preliminary [findings from the Phones in Focus research](#) indicate that clearly stated, strict, school-wide cell phone policies—regulating both when and where students can access their phones—are linked to less in-class phone use and higher teacher satisfaction.

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<sup>1</sup> In this guide, the term cell phone refers both to personal cell phones and other personal electronic devices with communication capabilities including, but not limited to, Smart Watches, tablets, iPods, wireless headphones, etc.

# EFFECTIVE BELL-TO-BELL APPROACHES

Principals and superintendents interviewed for this guide shared these best practices for an effective Bell-to-Bell Cell Phone Policy:

✓	✓	✓	✓
Cell phones are turned off all day, including during lunch and passing periods	Cell phones are physically stored away from the student	There is effective and consistent communication of the new policy to educators, parents, and students	There is strict enforcement with immediate consequences when cell phones are seen

They also recommend these four effective, easy-to-implement Bell-to-Bell Cell Phone Policies:

**No Phones at School**

All other approaches are substantially less effective or substantially more difficult to implement.

## ENFORCEMENT GUIDELINES

Regardless of which effective bell-to-bell approach you select, success depends on firm enforcement of an **effective consequence framework**. Here is a consequence framework drawn from a wide range of schools that have effectively implemented bell-to-bell cell phone policies:

Level 1: First Offense	Level 2: Second Offense	Level 3: Third Offense
The electronic device is taken from the student and securely stored in the main office; the student may pick up their device at the end of the day.	The electronic device is taken from the student and securely stored in the main office; a parent or guardian must pick up the device; the student must turn in their device(s) to the main office every morning for one week.	The electronic device is taken from the student and securely stored in the main office; the student will not be allowed to bring the electronic device onto school grounds for the remainder of the year.

A consequence framework should not include fees, fines, suspensions, expulsions, or the deployment of a school resource officer or local law enforcement officer.



Image from [www.lockers.com/cell-phone-lockers](http://www.lockers.com/cell-phone-lockers)

## CENTRALIZED COLLECTION

### Cell Phone Lockers with Combination Locks

Strategy	Best for	Cost	Rating*
Students turn off their cell phone and store their phone in Cell Phone Lockers all day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Middle schools</li> <li>▶ Smaller high schools</li> <li>▶ High schools with few entrances</li> </ul>	\$20-35 per locker	<b>Effectiveness:</b> 4.5
			<b>Staff Satisfaction:</b> 4.5

\* Based on quantitative and qualitative feedback

<h3>Pre-Launch</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Communicate</b> policy to educators, staff, and parents.</li> <li>2. <b>Purchase and install Cell Phone Lockers</b> near building entrances or in central hallways.</li> <li>3. <b>Assign</b> each student a Cell Phone Locker and orient them on the first day.</li> <li>4. <b>Staffing:</b> Assign a staff person to stand near each bank of Cell Phone Lockers to ensure cell phones are stored.</li> </ol>	<h3>Morning</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students power off cell phone and place in their Cell Phone Locker.</li> </ol> <h3>Afternoon</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Students retrieve their cell phone from their Cell Phone Locker.</li> </ol>
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Image from [phonelocker.com](http://phonelocker.com)



Image by [overyondr.com](http://overyondr.com)

## LOCKABLE POUCHES

Strategy	Best for	Cost	Rating*
Students turn off their cell phone and store their phone in a locked pouch all day.	Any school setting	\$8–\$30 per pouch, with annual replacements averaging 20–30% of the first-year cost	<b>Effectiveness:</b> 4.0
			<b>Staff Satisfaction:</b> 4.0

\* Based on quantitative and qualitative feedback

### Pre-Launch

- 1. Communicate** policy to educators, staff, and parents.
- 2. Purchase pouches and magnet stations.**
- 3. Determine placement of magnet stations:** Place magnets on rolling carts that can be located at building entrances; mount magnet station to either the interior or exterior wall near building entrances.
- 4. Staffing:** Assign a staff person near magnet stations who can provide assistance should students need support, ensure student places cell phone in the pouch and locks/unlocks the pouch.

### Morning

- Staff at each entrance ensure students turn off their cell phone and swipe pouch over locking mechanism to lock it in their pouch.
- Students store their pouch in their locker or backpack.
- First period teacher checks that each student's phone is in their pouch and that the pouch is locked and not damaged (if policy is to keep pouch in backpack).
- 4. Students arriving late or leaving early:** Proceed to the main office to use a magnet station to lock/unlock their phones.

### Afternoon

- 1. Retrieving cell phones:** Students report to the magnet stations placed around the school and/or held by staff to open their pouch and remove their phone and put their pouch in their backpack.



## LOCKERS ONLY

Strategy	Best for	Cost	Rating*
Students turn off their cell phone and store their phone in their lockers all day.	Any school setting with lockers	None	<b>Effectiveness:</b> 4.0
			<b>Staff Satisfaction:</b> 4.0

\* Based on quantitative and qualitative feedback

<h3>Pre-Launch</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Communicate</b> policy to educators, staff, and parents.</li> <li><b>Staffing:</b> Assign a staff person near each entrance to ensure cell phones are turned off and, at least initially, in each locker hallway to ensure powered off phones go into lockers.</li> </ol>	<h3>Morning</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff at each entrance to remind students to turn off their cell phone.</li> <li>Students must show the staff person that their phone is off.</li> <li>Students place their phones in their locker for the entire day.</li> <li><b>Students arriving late or leaving early:</b> Upon entry to the school, cell phone must be turned off and placed in the student's locker.</li> </ol> <h3>Afternoon</h3> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students may turn their phones back on after the last bell, or when they leave the building.</li> </ol>
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