



**DR. TEFS'**

*Minutemen Monthly*

**Release: April 2024**

**RE: Cellphones and Public Schools**

**Schools and cell phones!**

Cell phones are in, seemingly, everyone's possession. The National Institute of Health (NIH) reported in 2022 that 95% of “teens” have access to a cell phone. By the age of 11, about half of children in the U.S. own a smartphone (Common Sense Media, 2023).

Cell phones are an incredibly powerful device. Cell phones are connected to the internet which, as we all know, can be an asset and an affliction.

The network within Revere is filtered per the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). CIPA was enacted by Congress in 2000 to address concerns about children's access to obscene or harmful content over the Internet. Schools are required to adopt and implement an Internet safety policy addressing:

**Access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet;**

**The safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;**

**Unauthorized access, including so-called “hacking,” and other unlawful activities by minors online; Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors; and Measures restricting minors' access to materials harmful to them**

We can all applaud Congress's passage of CIPA. We must remember though that our adolescents and young adults only spend about 8 hours a day in an internet-filtered environment. Many of our students spend the majority of their day with devices that are not subject to CIPA requirements. Their devices are NOT often filtered and protected from the liabilities of the internet.

As a father, I too struggled with “When” our adolescent daughters needed/should have a cell phone, what rules/expectations were enacted, and what training we provided. And no, sadly, their devices were not filtered from inappropriate internet material. Something I regret to this day.

As an academic and Revere’s Superintendent, I am responsible for recommending and enforcing policies and practices on many issues and concerns for a public school system. Student use of cell phones is definitely one of those “issues”.

For parents, caregivers, educators, and policymakers, the question of what is digitally appropriate should also receive significant discourse and analysis. We need deeper research and understanding of how media impacts our student's mental, physical, and emotional development. And we should ensure...demand, in fact... that all digital spaces are safe and healthy for our children and students to explore.

Governor DeWine recently referred to cell phone usage in Ohio’s schools during his annual State of the State address (4/10/24). I am happy that this issue is a strategic priority for our governor and legislative leaders. The Policy Committee of the Revere Schools stands ready to further review public policy recommendations from the General Assembly as Revere supports the restriction of cell phones in our schools, especially for our elementary and adolescent learners.

Though public policy is often a difficult aspect of the superintendency, I relish the opportunity to keep our students safe!

This is Revere!

Michael Tefs, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, Revere Local Schools

###

*References:*

*Common Sense Media (2023). Cellphones and Devices: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers - How to help preteens and teens use their phones safely and responsibly. September 26, 2023.*

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org>

*Richter, A., Adkins, V., & Selkie, E. (2022). Youth Perspectives on the Recommended Age of Mobile Phone Adoption: Survey Study. JMIR pediatrics and parenting, 5(4), e40704. <https://doi.org/10.2196/40704>*

*Rideout, V., Peebles, A., Mann, S., & Robb, M. B. (2022). Common Sense census: Media use by tweens and teens, 2021. San Francisco, CA: Common Sense.*