



Cell Phone Policies

PRESENTERS

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The Proposal

- Governor Hochul has begun developing a statewide policy proposal prohibiting **smart phones** in schools.
- If passed, students will still be allowed to carry simple phones that cannot access the internet but do have the capability to send texts, which has been a sticking point for parents.
- The proposal is expected before the end of the year, and Hochul said she would take it up in New York's next legislative session, which begins in January 2025.





Why Is This Necessary?

- Governor Hochul’s reasoning: “I have seen these addictive algorithms pull in young people, literally capture them and make them prisoners in a space where they are cut off from human connection, social interaction and normal classroom activity.”
 - Her goal with this policy is “to develop effective solutions on smartphones that help protect our kids’ mental health and deliver the best results for our schools.”
- Additionally, in June 2024, Pew Research reported that 72% of high school teachers nationwide say that students being distracted by cell phones is a major problem in their classroom.
- A May 2024 report by U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy also shows that adolescents who spend more than 3 hours per day on social media face double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes, such as symptoms of depression and anxiety.



District-by-District Approach

- Some districts in New York have a district-wide cell phone ban in place, or have attempted one, but Governor Hochul believes implementing a statewide ban will be easier and more effective, as it “will take the pressure off individual school districts.”
 - “Sometimes it’s just easier to blame the governor of the State of New York when you want something done.”



Cautionary Tale / Considerations

- Former NYC Schools Chancellor David Banks and Mayor Eric Adams had planned on implementing a cell phone ban in NYC public schools during the 2024-2025 school year, but they ultimately decided that it was not the right time to do so.
- They postponed the plan because they were still working out kinks and needed to come up with a “balanced approach.”
 - Adams explained, “If you don’t do it right, you won’t get it right.”
- Ultimately, while cell phones can cause distractions in classrooms, they understand **the importance of allowing students to stay connected in the event of an emergency.**
 - Recently, there were reports of a gunman at a NYC public high school and a lockdown was put in place as a result. Parents emphasized that in the event of an emergency like this, they need to be able to reach their children.



Additional Considerations

- Aside from parental concerns, there are other important considerations for districts to make before they decide to adopt a cell phone ban:
 - Logistics – how will this ban be implemented?
 - Locking pouches – high cost associated with this
 - Box drop off – in the morning at a designated location, or each period in the front of the classroom?
 - The honor system / locker drop off
 - Length of ban
 - All day? Or can phones be used during lunchtime / recess?
 - Who will monitor the ban?
 - Will the ban be enforced differently in different schools?





Additional Considerations

- Outreach and pacing can ease implementation
 - Wellsville Central School District in Allegany County formed a committee comprised of parents, students, faculty, and administrators who surveyed stakeholders about their thoughts on a restrictive cell phone policy.
 - They also consulted with schools in the region who had instituted similar policies, sponsored parent nights attended by a school physician, and combed through educational research on the topic published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Journal of Adolescent Health, the Pew Research Center, etc.
 - The District believes its policy worked out so well *because of* the amount of time it spent ahead of the actual implementation of the policy.