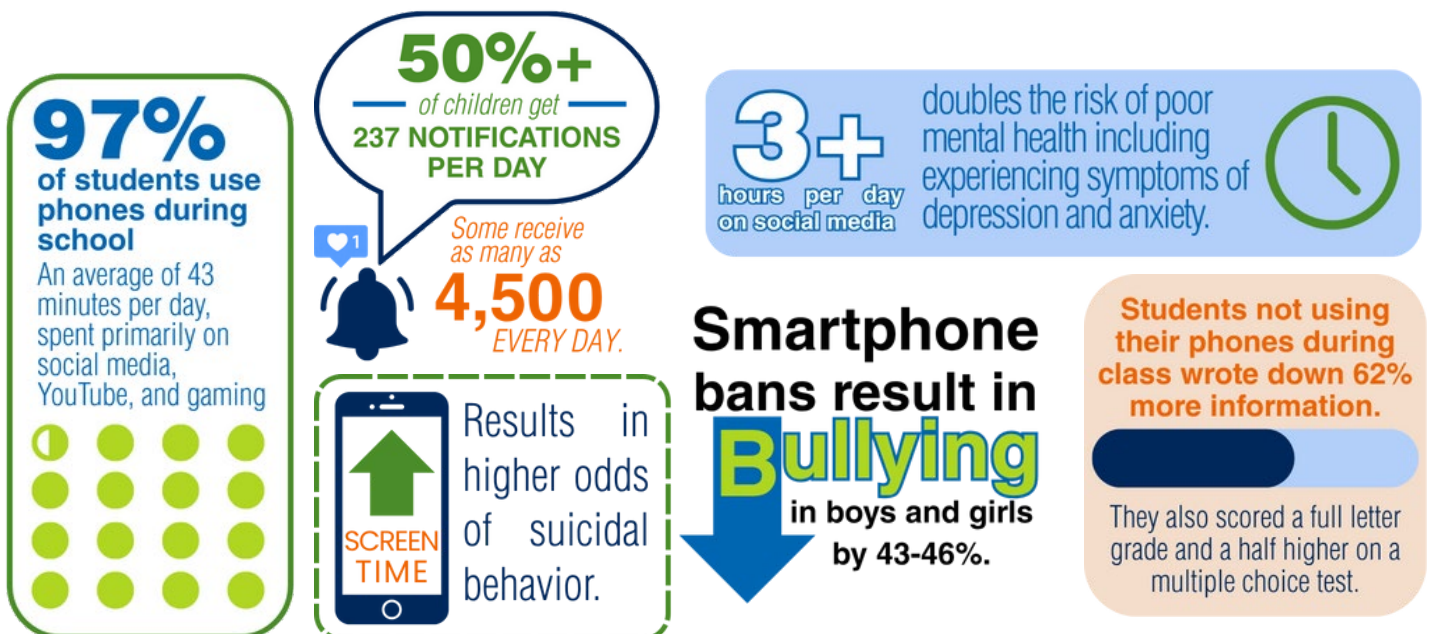




Distraction-Free Schools Act: A Summary of Research

Research consistently shows that the presence of personal electronic devices in classrooms, especially smartphones, can significantly hinder student learning, attention, and social development. A landmark study by Ward, Duke, Gneezy, and Bos¹ found that even the mere presence of a smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity, meaning students are less able to focus, retain information, and engage in higher-order thinking. This is particularly concerning for younger students, whose executive functioning and self-regulation skills are still developing. The Georgia's Distraction-Free Education Act reflects this evidence, emphasizing that a "bell-to-bell" restriction on personal devices helps foster a more focused, connected, and academically supportive environment.²

Beyond academics, cell phones can also negatively impact student safety and well-being.³ Socially, unrestricted phone use can reduce face-to-face interaction, increase social isolation, and contribute to mental health challenges, especially when students are exposed to social media during the school day.^{4,5} By removing these distractions, schools can create a more inclusive and emotionally safe environment where students are better able to connect with peers and adults, engage in learning, and build essential life skills.⁶



¹ Ward, Duke, Gneezy, & Bos. (2017). Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One's Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity. *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, 2 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1086/691462>

² Kuznekoff, J. H., & Titsworth, S. (2013). The Impact of Mobile Phone Usage on Student Learning. *Communication Education*, 62(3), 233–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2013.767917>

³ Social Media and Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory (Executive Summary).

⁴ Chu, Ganson, Baker, Testa, Jackson, Murray, & Nagata. (2023). Screen time and suicidal behaviors among U.S. children 9–11 years old: A prospective cohort study. *Preventive Medicine*, 169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2023.107452>.

⁵ *Constant Companion: A Week in the Life of a Young Person's Smartphone Use*. (2023). Common Sense Media and C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.

⁶ Abrahamsson, S. (2024). Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes, and Mental Health. Norwegian Institute of Public Health.