

AP English Language and Composition
Reading Time: 15 minutes
Suggested Writing Time: 40 minutes

Cell phones have been widely available for over twenty years, but schools and legislators haven't yet reached a clear decision on their appropriate use in schools. With cell phone use becoming more and more ubiquitous, particularly among high school students, and cell phones becoming more and more sophisticated, conflicts arise when it comes to students, schools, and cell phones.

Imagine that your school is considering implementing a school-wide cell phone policy. Carefully read the following seven sources, including the introductory information for each source. Then synthesize information from at least three of the sources and incorporate it into a coherent, well-developed essay that identifies the key practices associated with appropriate and effective cell phone use in your school and develops an argument justifying their inclusion and implementation in the policy.

Make sure that your argument is central; use the sources to illustrate and support your reasoning. Avoid merely summarizing the sources. Indicate clearly which sources you are drawing from, whether through direct quotation, paraphrase, or summary. You may cite the sources as Source A, Source B, etc., or by using the descriptions in parentheses.

- Source A (Shaw)
- Source B (U. of Alabama)
- Source C (Myers)
- Source D (Reid)
- Source E (Ulriksen)
- Source F (Barseghian)
- Source G (Lenhar)

Source A

Shaw, Katherine "Students and Cell Phones: Controversy in the Classroom." *Yahoo Voices*. July 4, 2005. Yahoo, Inc. < <http://voices.yahoo.com/students-cell-phones-controversy-classroom-3387.html> > August 6, 2012

Katherine Shaw is an elementary school teacher from Tennessee.

Pros and Cons of Student Cell Phone Use Proponents of student cell phone use point to the many benefits of cell phones. Cell phones, they say, are useful to both parents and students when scheduling after-school activities and changes in family plans (such as afternoon pick-up times). When parents are able to contact students on cell phones, office staff receive fewer calls from parents--calls that often require that messages either be carried to the classroom or relayed to teachers via in-class telephones. In addition, cell phones can be lifesavers in an emergency, providing police with vital and timely information. Cell phones have another use in emergencies: by contacting parents directly, students help keep school phone lines open instead of jammed with calls from worried parents. Some teachers also point out that cell phones have legitimate academic uses. Older students can conduct phone interviews during class time with teacher supervision, for instance. Also, many cell phones now have Internet capability, built-in calculators, and memories able to hold entire books. For schools with limited technologies available to students, cell phones mimic the computers that the classroom may lack. Detractors say that drawbacks to student cell phones outweigh the benefits. The primary concern is that cell phones distract students. Even though most schools require that phones be turned off during school hours, such a rule is difficult to enforce; for instance, students who leave class for a bathroom break could use the phone while out of the room. Cell phones are now so small that students can use them surreptitiously in class as well, particularly text messaging and video games. Should a phone ring in class, the entire classroom is disrupted--and teachers report that many students will answer the call. Cheating and inappropriate photos are also concerns associated with cell phones. As cell phones become more sophisticated and powerful, opportunities for cheating increase. Teachers have caught high school students taking pictures of tests to pass along to students in later classes, for instance, or accessing photos of textbook pages or notes during tests. Inappropriate photos taken in locker rooms and restrooms have also become a problem in some schools, which carries the potential for lawsuits; many school systems have banned camera phones while still allowing traditional cell phones. In some areas, only the more privileged students own cell phones, leading to envy, additional socioeconomic stratification, and sometimes theft. Opponents of cell phone use in schools point out that it's unfair to allow well-off students to benefit from them and deny the same benefits to poorer students.

Limiting Student Use of Cell Phones Many school boards have tried setting limits on cell phone use without banning cell phones completely. Requiring that phones be turned off during school hours, confiscating phones from students caught using them in class, and requiring that phones be set to voice mail only have all had limited success. Some teachers are so frustrated with cell phone interruptions that they collect the phones at the beginning of class and return them as students leave. With fears of lawsuits if students without cell phone access are caught in true emergency situations, some school systems have banned student cell phones from campuses but have supplied students with donated phones that only call emergency numbers. Other schools require that students turn phones in to teachers before tests; students caught with cell phones during testing are given automatic failing grades. Virtually all schools prohibit students from disrupting classrooms with ringtones, music, or sound effects from cell phones.

Short-Term Solutions It's not clear when--or even if--the controversy regarding cell phones will be resolved. What is clear is that cell phones have become a permanent part of society. Some teachers argue that trying to ban student cell phones is as futile as former efforts to ban calculators from classrooms. Still, schools need guidelines to govern inappropriate cell phone use. Teachers should post school and classroom policies regarding cell phones, and the class should discuss the policies at the beginning of the school year. Consequences for violating the policies should be substantial enough to make an impression.

The Future of Cell Phones in the Classroom Cellular technology has improved drastically in the last few years. Even more drastic improvements and changes are just around the corner. Keeping up with technological advances is not easy, particularly when benefits and drawbacks may not be clear, but it is necessary. Well-thought-out cell phone policies enable schools to continue to reflect the society they serve.

Source B

“Text Messaging and Its Effects on Teens’ Grammar.” The University of Alabama: Computers and Applied Technology Program. 2009. University of Alabama August 8, 2012. < <http://www.ua.edu/edtechcases> >

The Case – Carol and Chase

Carol and Chase are two students that attend the same high school and are in the same English class, but they would not consider themselves friends, as they hang out with other groups outside of school. Carol’s parents have a limited plan on their phone bill and currently cannot afford unlimited text messaging and therefore do not use it too often. Carol’s best friends also live in her neighborhood, and usually, she talks with them in person, not over text messaging. Occasionally, Carol may text one of her friends to see where they are, but as mentioned earlier, she cannot text very much due to her family’s phone/text plan. At school, Carol is a very good student and Science is her favorite subject but she enjoys English too. Chase’s family, on the other hand, has unlimited text messaging, and he uses it quite frequently. In fact, his phone bill states that he texts about 3500 messages a month.

In their ninth grade English class, Carol, Chase, and their peers had to write a formal paper. After the paper was finished, Mrs. Diego, the English teacher, assigned the students into pairs for peer-reviewing. Carol was paired up with Chase. The two traded papers and Carol noticed some oddities in some of the sentences Chase wrote. However, she did not want to anger Chase so she kept quiet. When Mrs. Diego read Chases’ paper, she found something that she has seen in several of her students over the past few years. Only about two or three sentences in the entire paper had an instance of informal use of text language in it, such as “b/c” or “cuz” for because. However, the paper is fraught with short, choppy sentences that give no depth and explanation to the given topic.

Carol’s paper was not perfect, for English is not her best subject and she is certainly not comfortable with writing. However, Carol tried her best, and when she made a main idea statement in a paragraph, she supported that statement with supporting facts, details, and descriptions. While Carol may not be any smarter than Chase, her grade on her paper is certainly higher.

Source C

Myers, Jennifer. “Texting Affects Ability to Interpret Words.” *U Today*. February 17, 2012. University of Calgary. 08/06/2012. < <http://www.ucalgary.ca/news/utoday/february17-2012/texting> >

A study done by Joan Lee for her master’s thesis in linguistics has revealed that university students who text more are less accepting of new words. Research designed to understand the effect of text messaging on language found that texting has a negative impact on people’s linguistic ability to interpret and accept words.

The study, conducted by Joan Lee for her master’s thesis in linguistics, revealed that those who texted more were less accepting of new words. On the other hand, those who read more traditional print media such as books, magazines, and newspapers were more accepting of the same words.

The study asked university students about their reading habits, including text messaging, and presented them with a range of words both real and fictitious.

“Our assumption about text messaging is that it encourages unconstrained language. But the study found this to be a myth,” says Lee. “The people who accepted more words did so because they were better able to interpret the meaning of the word, or tolerate the word, even if they didn’t recognize the word. Students who reported texting more rejected more words instead of acknowledging them as possible words.”

Lee suggests that reading traditional print media exposes people to variety and creativity in language that is not found in the colloquial peer-to-peer text messaging used among youth or ‘generation text’. She says reading encourages flexibility in language use and tolerance of different words. It helps readers to develop skills that allow them to generate interpretable readings of new or unusual words.

“In contrast, texting is associated with rigid linguistic constraints which caused students to reject many of the words in the study,” says Lee. “This was surprising because there are many unusual spellings or “textisms” such as “LOL” in text messaging language.”

Lee says that for texters, word frequency is an important factor in the acceptability of words.

“Textisms represent real words which are commonly known among people who text,” she says. “Many of the words presented in the study are not commonly known and were not acceptable to the participants in the study who texted more or read less traditional print media.

Source D

Reid, Geneva. "The Top 5 Ways Students Use Technology to Cheat." *HigherEd Morning*. Drexel University Online. < <http://www.higheredmorning.com/the-top-5-ways-students-use-technology-to-cheat> >

They can do it faster and more easily than ever before. But what's most worrisome: Today's students may not think cheating is wrong.

Let's start with the facts.

According to a recent survey by Common Sense Media, 35% of teens use their cell phones to cheat.

And if you're wondering how they do it:

- 26% store info on their phone and look at it while taking a test
- 25% send text messages to friends, asking for answers
- 17% take pictures of a test – and then send it to their friends
- 20% use their phones to search for answers on the Internet
- 48% warn friends about a pop quiz with a phone call or text message

If cheating's gone high-tech, so have morals: 25% of teens consider the above actions "helping" not cheating.

When it comes to the Internet, 52% say they've engaged in some type of cheating.

But again, they don't see much wrong with it: 36% don't view downloading a paper as a serious offense, and 42% believe copying text from the Web is a minor offense at its worst.

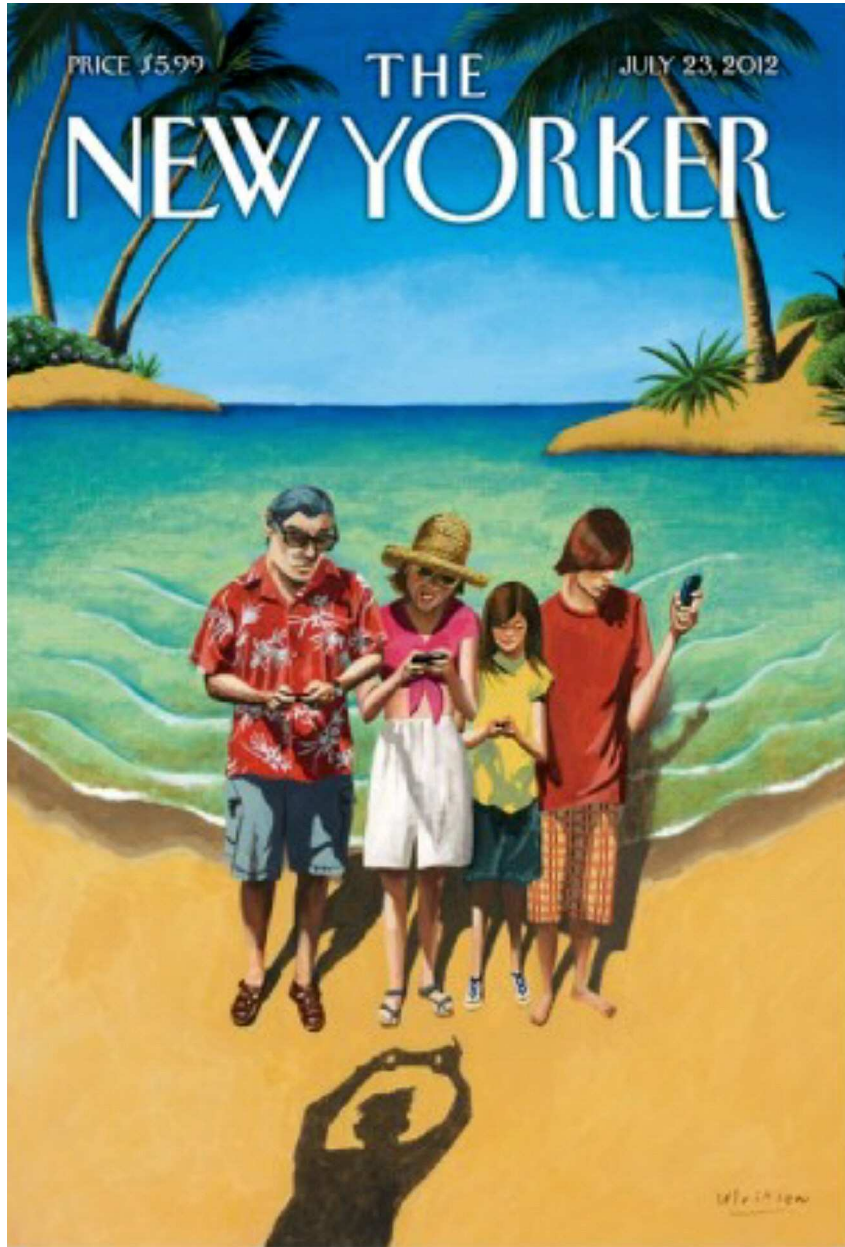
Educators are put in the difficult spot of trying to catch something that's difficult to detect in addition to dealing with students who seem to have a loose definition of "collaboration."

At Canada's Simon Fraser University, administrators have come up with a new failing grade for cheating students: FD. Given to repeat offenders, the mark stays on a student's transcript for two years.

Will a different kind of failing grade matter to students? Or do we need another solution?

Source E

Ulriksen, Mark. Cover: *The New Yorker*. July 32, 2012. Condé Nast Collection
July 28, 2012. < http://www.condenaststore.com/-sp/The-New-Yorker-Cover-July-23-2012-Prints_i8989411_.htm >



Source F

Barseghian, Tina "How Teachers Make Cell Phones Work In the Classroom." *MindShift*. May 10, 2012. KQED – National Public Radio. 8/5/2012 <http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2012/05/how-teachers-make-cell-phones-work-in-the-classroom/>

Technology is revolutionizing the world of education – replacing familiar classroom tools and changing the way we learn. MindShift explores the future of learning in all its dimensions – covering cultural and technology trends, groundbreaking research, education policy and more. The site is curated by Tina Barseghian, a journalist and the mother of a grade-schooler.

WHEN IT WORKS

In Ramsey Musallam's A.P. Chemistry class at Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory in San Francisco, cell phones are a natural extension of the way he communicates with his students.

As soon as kids walk in, Musallam sends out a text blast through Remind101, asking them a challenge question that's related to the day's lesson. "First person to tell me the units on K for a second order reaction gets chocolate," he types and sends off. His students know he does this regularly, so they're constantly anticipating the question during the day, in and out of class.

"Sure, that's kind of cute," he says, admitting that it can be seen as gimmicky. "But more importantly, in my mind that's saying, 'You're carrying around something that I can contact you with.' It's a fun way to stay motivated in our day, which can be pretty dry sometimes. It's a chance to think about what we're learning outside the context of state testing."

"I want it to be as rich and as visual as possible. I want them to see things, not just know it."

Once the class settles in and things are rolling along, the steady hum gets louder when kids are excited or working together, then quieter again when they're working out problems on their individual little whiteboards (to be clear, these are not digital).

Musallam constantly walks around, sending out directives – "Write the answer on your table!" "I want you guys to come up with an answer now, and text it in," "What's the ridiculous choice out of all these answers here?"

Students work in groups, and when they have a question, they call him over. He arrives with iPad in hand and records his voice and his writing on the iPad, which he immediately uploads to the class website so other students can benefit from the explanations instantaneously. (This, by the way, is another form of flipped teaching, he says.)

"This way, if I need to explain a common question, everyone can access it," he says. "I don't have to repeat myself going from group to group." But rather than stop what everybody else is doing so he can explain a concept, students can watch the video he just created if they need to. "I'll just tell them to look at the online tutorials to find out about common questions," he says.

Ramsey Musallam considers the online poll reflecting his students' answers.

During class, he asks students to take a multiple-choice quiz and send in their answers through a poll on their cell phones. The students' votes are immediately displayed on the projector that's hooked up to Musallam's laptop.

This is key, Musallam says, because seeing the answers that get the most votes makes a big impression on his students. "If they all held up note cards that said their answers — A,B,C or D — the visual of the 'distractors' [the wrong answers] wouldn't be as powerful," he says. "And this makes the experience more immediate. I want it to be as rich and as visual as possible. I want them to see things, not just know it."

Musallam can list a litany of reasons why and how mobile devices spice things up in class. "The data integration wouldn't be as rich, the experience wouldn't be as dynamic, the cognitive load is higher," he says. But even though all but one of his students have cell phones and use them for polling and instantaneous quizzing, it's clear that they would be just as rapt in the classroom activities without them; they're not necessarily fixated on the fact that they're using cell phones or that they're seeing instantaneous results of their polls. Their eyes and ears are on him.

What makes Musallam's class an interesting case study is that his teaching practice is based on a specific technique: he incorporates peer-instruction and inquiry-based learning, mirroring Harvard professor Eric Mazur. The videos and polls just help support that.

"I'm using it in the context of peer instruction, which is research based. You get anonymous feedback, which is great, and kids see all that information condensed," he says. "Sometimes it's just cute and fun and that

wears off. But much more often, it's more efficient and meaningful, and it makes the classroom feel like a bigger place."

Seventh-grade history teacher James Sanders, who teaches at Kipp San Francisco Bay Academy, makes the analogy of the cell phone as a tool being used in a modern-day shop class: It makes things a lot easier.

As Mussallam writes on the iPad, it's being shown on the projector.

Though every student in his history class has a Google Chromebook, only 60 percent have what he calls "smarter" phones, and many have iPod Touches. So he has students work in groups of three or four.

IS IT WORTHWHILE?

But for every teacher who's able to seamlessly integrate cell phones and other mobile devices, there's another who doesn't see the transformation as easily. Paul Barnwell, who now teaches English and digital media at Fern Creek Traditional High School in Louisville, Kentucky, decided to stop using cell phones in class after giving it a go with an eighth-grade class.

Barnwell bucked the school's policy and used Poll Everywhere for both multiple-choice and open-ended exit poll questions. About three-quarters of the students had cell phones at the time.

"Writing concise paragraphs explaining complex concepts is incredibly powerful."

"The kids were pumped up to use their taboo devices," he says. "After a few trials, they quickly understood how to submit their answers, and the engagement factor was high since their responses popped up onto the projected screen."

But he was uneasy with excluding those who didn't have a phone or the ability to text. And, he said, some of the "class clowns" took advantage of the anonymity of the polling to text inappropriate statements.

"I decided it wasn't worth the time or the hassle," he says.

Barnwell doesn't like the idea of letting students Tweet information to a common address and hasn't found an application that "promotes efficient 'best practice' yet. "But I'm also not seeking it out," he says, adding that because he's got 10 desktop computers in his current class, students can use them for research projects and looking up facts online.

Barnwell hasn't given up completely on cell phones, though. "If I can plan a lesson to ensure that high-level thinking is encouraged and greater participation, I might try phones again," he says. "As far as polling and other simple uses, I see little benefit at this point. I can't stand how most teenagers thoughtlessly and even belligerently use Twitter."

TEACHING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

It's not uncommon for kids to use cell phones for inappropriate behavior at school. But some believe that when students misuse the devices at school, teachers must step in.

"It's our responsibility as educators to teach kids how to interact with the world," Sanders says. "Those interpersonal human conversations are incredibly valuable."

Cell phones are just another tool, like pen and paper.

At Sacred Heart, where Ramsey Musallam teaches, the school's cell phone policy is shifting, as they try to sort out their social policies.

"Right now, kids can't use cell phones unless a teacher instructs them, but that's evolving," says principal Gary Cannon. But if kids are using them to take pictures, they're not reprimanded by faculty.

The staff fully recognizes that the cell phone is just a tool. Twitter and texting are just tools used to say or do what might happen in the hallways and dining halls regardless.

"The challenge is giving them a sense of a digital footprint," Cannon says.

For Musallam, that's all part of how he sees his job as an educator.

"I'm here to serve my students," he says. "If we can leverage cell phones in a way that's meaningful, I'm going to do it."

Source G

Lenhar, Amanda. "Teens and Mobile Phones Over the Past Five Years." *Pew Internet*. August 19, 2009. Pew Research Center. 8/04/2012. < <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/14--Teens-and-Mobile-Phones-Data-Memo/1-Data-Memo.aspx?view=all> >

Demographics of Teen Cell Phone Users

The percentage of teens in each demographic group who have a cell phone

	% of teens
All teens	71%
Sex	
Male	70%
Female	72
Age	
12-14	59%
15-17	83*
Race/ethnicity	
White (not Hispanic)	73%
Black (not Hispanic)	64
Hispanic (English-speaking)	71
Internet user	
Yes	72%*
No	51
Household Income	
Less than \$30K	62%
\$30K-\$50K	63
\$50K-\$75K	72
More than \$75K	79*

* indicates a statistically significant difference from other data points within the same demographic variable.

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, Gaming and Civic Engagement Survey of Teens/Parents, Nov. 2007-Feb. 2008. N=1,102 and margin of error is +/-3%, based on all teens ages 12-17.

