

School Phone Ban Appeal

This is a student written document requesting a change of the phone ban to only class time. This appeal is based on logic and the needs of students.

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Why a Full Phone Ban is not Logically Supported

Students have a choice

The point of the phone ban is to increase focus and better education, yes? Well the thing about that is, focus is a choice that every student makes for themselves whether they have a phone or not. Taking away a student's phone does not make them choose to listen closer, they can daydream, get some sleep, or just be thinking about their own problems. An unfocused student is an unfocused student with or without a phone. Actually, the lack of weight of a phone in a students' pocket for a whole school day arguably could distract them more than letting them keep it. The itching feeling of losing, or being kept from an item we usually carry every day is something I feel we all can relate to.

The same is said with students dedicated to their work. I know that most students with a higher than average gpa do not go on their phones in class unless permitted for their own personal music playlist, to participate in class games, or research projects. Either way, taking away this choice will lead some good students to be distracted by the change, or lack of music, while the unfocused students will mostly stay the exact same way and with even more resentment towards their school.

I will not ignore that eliminating that choice might help some students focus who may be phone addicted, except this is a problem in itself. In everyday life we have to make choices for our own benefit to drop bad habits and improve ourselves. Without this self determination these students might simply spend their time at home on their phone instead of doing homework.

Unpredictables

My main concern is that phones are a necessity when it comes to being informed on the unpredictable scenarios that come with life. One category being home situations, loved ones that may need to contact a student immediately for support. If a loved one is hurt or endangered back home, they may call their student out to come help them whatever the scenario may be. Some students may have the family car and that's why they are being called out instead of another loved one. There are simply too many scenarios to account for, for a student to be not directly reachable.

This also has to do with sports notifications through sportsyou to let athletes know when to leave class for their events, or club meeting changes. A student may miss their event if the event leaving time changes because they do not know. An entire club can get stuck at school in the heat for an hour or longer because they didn't know a meeting was canceled, and their parents don't get off until 5pm. This has happened to me and multiple friends because the club forgot to send out a notification that day, but without phones during passing periods this would happen every time a club meeting was changed or canceled. In experiencing the phone ban for a few weeks, I have encountered problems with filling out club volunteer forms, or advertising clubs through fliers. Both of these things are usually through QR codes, or just taking a quick picture of the flier in the hallway, both are now a crime to do. In this obstruction the local HB. 1481 policies of all day ban do not follow the responsibility of accounting for students' needs properly under Section 38.0231 Subsection © stated under "*The Original House Bill*" header paragraph 2.

You could announce all of these over speaker, but coaches are usually outside gathering equipment on the buses and no student would be there to announce it. Also, announcing every club event would get annoying to the rest of the student base that do not participate in that club.

Not to mention those with sound sensitivity problems constantly being triggered by loud and/or crackly announcements. An email could be easily missed and the entire team could be late. Club meetings could be canceled due to a teacher emergency or a teacher forgetting, in both cases they would not think to email someone to announce it over the intercom. All of these are prevented by the heads up students have checking their phone in passing period, or a 2 second glance in class.

Hypocrisy

If the reason for a phone ban is to increase a student's education, shouldn't the teachers not be on their phones in class either? Therefore the phone ban should extend to them as well should it not? If not, how is any teacher scenario different from a student's personal scenario? Maybe for the specific wording it may be different but not the foundation, both need their phones for communication and planning. These are all questions that snarky students could easily ask, if you could clarify a proper answer that supports teacher's use but not students then that would make the transition easier.

A big con of banning phones is the removal of personal music choices on a student's phone. Naturally a student builds their playlist out of music they like, music that they find, helps them be happy the most. This is a supported researched topic by Harvard Business Review stating, "music is a powerful emotional regulation tool, and a recent meta-analysis found that music therapy is an effective way to reduce feelings of stress and anxiety. This means that picking the right type of music, at the right time, and for the right task, can be a powerful productivity booster. It can improve your mood, and make you more relaxed, focused, and proficient.

At the same time, the specific types and aspects of music that influence our performance are variable. One size does not fit all.” (Chamorro-Premuzic) To ignore this large impact on people by removing phones entirely is hypocritical to the purpose of removing them in the first place. If the purpose really is to increase focus, then giving students no chance to listen to music contradicts this purpose by not allowing them a chance to lower stress.

The Changed House Bill

The House Bill uses Texas Education Code (TEC), §37.082(d) and on as its amended law prohibiting personal communication devices. The first problem with this is the fact this section is unupdated on Statutes.capitol.texas.gov a government website used for public law finding [As of August 18th]. Ignoring this very blatant but separate problem of misinformation, this section used to be about paging devices, now it has been amended to all personal communication devices.

This amendment, contrary to the original proposal of the House Bill highlighted under “The Original House Bill,” bans phones not just during class but during all of the school day. This change is the only problem I truly have, as it is not logically supported and is negatively affecting club and sport active students.

The updated code available on the [Model policies and Guidance](#) page under the T.E.A. now reads, “the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school shall adopt, implement, and ensure the district or school complies with a written policy prohibiting a student from using a personal communication device while on school property during the school day.” (H.B. 1481) Now while I could defend the ban of phones during class time, during all of the school day is an unreasonable and for the most part very weakly defended argument so far. This change is disapproved by students, and parents alike.

Having the originally proposed ban of “Instructional time” allows students to take care of their varied personal matters talked about in “Unpredictables”

Why Passing Periods and Lunches?

Now here’s the muddy part, how does restricting phone use during transitional periods help a student’s education? Nothing is being learnt during a student’s 5 minute walk to their next class. So being able to look at a copy of their schedule, check on school events or after school plans, let their parents know of a surprise meeting or any other event does not go against the purpose of this new law. Allowing students time to check these things would maintain their participation in clubs and sports, without further hassle on the students, parents, or any teachers involved in these events.

The Original House Bill 1481

House bill 1481, the law enacting these procedures states, "Notwithstanding Section [38.0231](#), the board of trustees of a school district and the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school shall adopt policies **prohibiting students from using personal wireless communication devices during instructional time.**" ([Capital.Texas.gov](#)) Instructional time is most agreeably defined as “the hours during the School day designated by the School for class instruction.” (Law Insider)

The instructional day being defined as “the period when students are in the classroom for instruction,” (Barton) by the *Texas Association of School Boards*. Using these two definitions, and the exact words of the House bill, it would have been a school’s and even district’s choice to allow phones in times outside of these periods. This is supported in Section 38.0231 Subsection (c) stated “Each school district or open-enrollment charter school that adopts the guidelines

developed under Subsection (a) may implement the guidelines in a manner that best meets the district's or charter school's individual needs and the individual needs of students in the district or school, including students with intellectual or physical disabilities.” (Texas Statutes)

Our Proposal

Now I support banning phones during class time simply due to the amount of misuse across the student base, however, banning phones during all of the school day disrupts a student's need for communication potentially causing them problems. It is the Board of Education's and Texas Education Agency's job to implement a better policy for students' individual needs as stated in Texas Education Code Section 38.0231 Subsection (c)

Passing periods, lunches, and free periods are a student's time to check on their clubs and sports, their ride home, and to chat with friends about these things or anything else. Therefore, to avoid the problems listed above that cause unnecessary chaos among the students, we would like to move to open these time slots for phone/electronic device use by implementing the originally proposed House Bill.

Also, recent news in San Antonio school districts did something similar to my previous proposal. In the Article it describes a version of my proposal.

“Districts like North East ISD and Alamo Heights ISD let students check their phones between classes and at lunch.

It's all in the wording of how “school days” are defined but both NEISD and Alamo Heights ISD still will not allow cell phone use during class time.

Schools that define a day as “start bell to end bell” prohibit cellphones in every capacity. A day defined as “instructional minutes” allows cellphones outside of instructional time.

This is the terminology NEISD has adopted per the TEA.

“Students are allowed to use them during passing periods or lunch breaks, before school or after school,” Aubrey Chancellor with NEISD said.

In short, the day gives districts the ability to work with the needs of their community while complying with the new law.

“Every school system needs to determine what is best for their community,” Chancellor said.”

This instance redefining the school day is the best way to enforce a phone ban that does not restrict clubs, student’s long range communication, or ability to contact authorities in the case of an emergency. It also does not require a change of the House Bill and therefore will be easier to implement on a local level allowing students to choose based on the pros and cons of the current all day phone ban.

SIGN THE PETITION

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