



Teens and Cellphones

A Guide for Teachers

School Policies and Technology Use

Prior to using technology in the classroom, teachers must have a clear understanding of their school's and/or district's technology guidelines. If teachers plan to use technology in the classroom, they should provide alternatives for parents or students who choose to opt out due to privacy concerns. We recommend that teachers work with students to develop a clear set of rules for cellphones and other digital devices in the classroom.

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Remember, in compliance with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), the minimum age for youth to have social media accounts is 13.

(Federal Trade Commission, n.d.)

Teenagers and Social Media

Most teenagers have reported that they have access to cellphones and they consistently are using social media platforms. In 2018, the Pew Research Center reported that teenagers used YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat the most (Figure 1). Teachers can use social media productively in a safe environment such as the classroom by providing opportunities for teenagers to practice social networking and written communication skills.

Figure 1. YouTube, Instagram and Snapchat are the most popular online platforms among teens. (Anderson & Jiang, 2018)

% of U.S. teens who...

	Say they use...	Say they use __most often
YouTube	85%	32%
Instagram	72	15
Snapchat	69	35
Facebook	51	10
Twitter	32	3
Tumblr	9	<1
Reddit	7	1
None of the above	3	3

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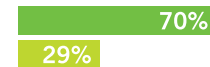
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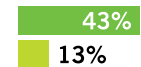
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Teenagers who use social media platforms report that they:

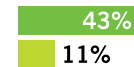
Sometimes feel left out or excluded when using social media



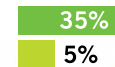
Have deleted social media posts because they got too few "likes"



Feel bad about themselves if no one comments on or likes their posts



Have ever been cyberbullied

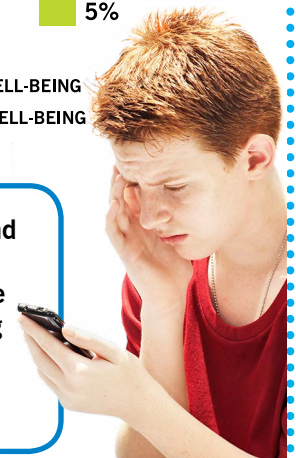


LOW SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING
HIGH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

(Knutson, 2018)

Teenagers who feel lonely and depressed were more likely to have experienced negative events such as cyberbullying or feeling excluded on social media platforms.

(Knutson, 2018)



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In today's world of technology, teachers can work with youth on incorporating effective and appropriate cellphone use into the classroom. Teachers need to be more involved and provide support for youth as they use cellphones not only for personal use, but also as learning tools in the classroom.

How Cellphones Positively Affect School Performance

- Enhances class participation when students text their responses to poll questions
- Helps students get up-to-date information online, which allows students to contribute during classroom discussion
- Allows students to be organized when they receive notification reminders of assignment deadlines

(Harriman, 2017)



Teenagers like to use cellphones to communicate with each other and with their families. However, a concern is that cellphone communication may affect teenagers' performance in school. Schools have not accepted cellphone use readily because some students may not pay attention in class, which can be detrimental to learning. Research also suggests that schools banning cellphones reported improved student test scores and that students gained an extra week of school during the course of the academic year (Beland & Murphy, 2016).

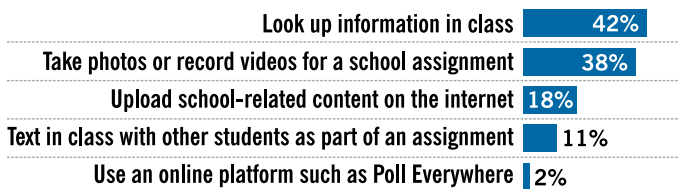
How Cellphones Negatively Affect School Performance

- Increase the chances of cheating in class
- Distract other students from learning
- Increase teens' use of poor spelling and use of shorthand writing styles on assignments because abbreviations are used when texting, ultimately leading to poor grades

(Blair, Fletcher, & Gaskin, 2015)



Teachers said students used their cellphones to do the following in classrooms:



(Purcell, Buchanan, & Friedrich, 2013)

Managing Cellphone Use in the Classroom

Ways to incorporate cellphone use in the classroom to increase student engagement:

- Create polls in class and quizzes via text messaging using Poll Everywhere or Kahoot.
- Organize and hold study group sessions for students by creating groups on social media platforms such as Twiducate. Students also can get social networking experience in a monitored environment.
- Create multiple-choice or open-ended questions for students using Socrative or Google Classroom.
- Create video discussion platforms on different topics for students using Flipgrid.
- Send reminders and updates for class using Remind.
- Keep the classroom quiet during independent work by using Bouncy Balls, a free noise meter app that can help students self-regulate their behaviors and stay on task.
- Students without cellphones can use the apps mentioned above on other digital devices such as tablets or computers.

(Common Sense Media, n.d.)



Social Emotional Learning

The social and emotional well-being of teenagers is important for their ability to learn in the classroom. Teachers can use cellphones to support students' social and emotional learning. Social and emotional skills are essential because they help teenagers achieve positive goals and help them develop and maintain positive relationships.

Cellphones can be used to implement social and emotional learning in the following ways:

- Integrate empathy life skills by using Pictello, a storytelling app to record videos of students sharing their experiences and beliefs on different topics
- Build mindfulness in the classroom through tools such as Smiling Mind, an app helping students practice meditation
- Organize teams in classrooms to make a positive impact on the community through tools focused on teamwork such as inspirED
- Make use of social and emotional learning resources such as Character Lab, Ashoka, Edutopia and CASEL

(Wagner, 2018)