

# Cell Phones in Schools

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Embracing Mobile Devices to Enhance Learning  
from Kindergarten through Graduation

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**It's an indisputable fact about "kids these days": they love their mobile phones.**

The average age at which they acquire their phones is 10, and by the time they're in their teens, 73% will own smartphones.

And like adults, they're glued to other digital devices, too. With 64% of teens now using their own laptops or tablets, the concept of the family computer has fallen by the wayside.

With mobile technology so widespread among children, these devices inevitably end up in schools and classrooms.

But educators can do more than simply remind students to turn their phones off during class. Rather than viewing this technology as a nuisance or potential distraction, they can and should embrace the opportunities it can bring to the classroom and to learning.

Read on to find some of the best practices schools are using to manage the use of mobile devices in the classrooms. Even more importantly, you'll also discover some innovative ideas for using mobile technology to engage your students more thoroughly—and to keep them that way.



## Creating a Mobile Device Policy at Your School: Factors to Consider

Formal policies govern behavior within a school or school district. They make clear what's expected of whom and by whom, as well as what is and is not acceptable within the educational environment.

Which is why schools should have policies governing the use of mobile devices. Establishing boundaries for cell phone use helps to minimize potential disruptions and keep the focus on learning.

But there's more to mobile device policies today than whether or not students can bring and use such devices on campus. If educators are to work with this technology and somehow integrate it into the education experience, the policies must also address the daily logistics of using these tools.

### Handling equal access to technology during school...

Many schools today provide their students with laptop computers, and others prefer tablets. Perhaps over time schools will begin providing mobile phones to students as well.

In the meantime, schools need to decide how they'll ensure all students have equal access to the technology in question. For example, what if you want your students to use a certain mobile app, but not everyone has a cell phone?

### Some options are:

- Provide the technology for students who don't already have it;
- Have students "group up" to share one person's equipment; or
- Forego using certain tech tools if not all students have them.

For example, some schools purchase tablets that students can borrow for the entire course of their academic studies. Others choose to issue such devices only for the duration of the particular class. Students with their own personal tablets may use those instead of borrowing one. However, those students are bound by the same rules as those using the school-issued tablets. They're also frequently subject to a second set of BYOD (bring your own device) rules.



### ... and outside of school.

Will students be taking their school-issued devices home? Some schools expect it, while others don't allow it. A number of schools let older students take them home, while those in younger grades have to leave them at school.

Are these devices strictly for school-related tasks, or can the student use them for personal tasks? In either case, does the school place any controls on what information the students can access, and if so, how?

Further, when devices are taken home, they'll be used on Wi-Fi networks outside the school. The school should provide antivirus and online security measures for these devices.

*A school district in Texas has gone beyond issuing technological tools for each student. They're also helping students in need secure free internet access at home.*

*Schools around the country are experimenting with letting their students keep their mobile devices over the summer. Students use the devices for fun—but also for schoolwork. Some schools also issue guidelines for family learning and usage "dos" and "don'ts" to make the time productive.*

By establishing policies that deal with these and other logistical issues, educators can start leveraging the power of mobile devices to engage their students.



## A World of Knowledge in the Palm of Your Hand

As technology improves, every smartphone becomes a more efficient handheld computer. And over time, more and more apps allow users to perform increasingly sophisticated tasks. That benefit can and should extend to schools and their students.

Savvy schools that allow students to carry mobile devices can leverage them to enhance student learning—turning a potential headache into an opportunity.

*The key to successfully integrating mobile devices with a curriculum is to use the technology to engage students and get them excited about their classes.*

Here are just a few ways teachers are using mobile devices as teaching aids.

### Take attendance in a novel way.

Teachers can set up a system for students to use their phones to “check in” to class. It can be as simple as setting up a group text and asking everyone to confirm their attendance—or as fancy as a custom app that integrates with the school’s back-office software.

*Some schools have a “check in and charge” system for mobile phones during detention. Students deposit their phones with the teacher, confirming their attendance. While they’re doing their homework, their phones are being charged. It’s a small reward to look forward to at the end of the hour.*

### Use phones as bell ringers at the beginning of class...

A number of mobile apps let teachers pose a question and then allow the group to submit their answers by phone. Teachers can instantly see and share the results with everyone.

This can be a great way to informally test learning and retention from a prior lesson—not to mention grabbing the students’ attention from the very beginning of class.

### ... or as exit tickets at the end of class.

Keep students engaged during the final minutes of class—instead of them staring at the clock and packing up their backpacks. Just ask a question related to the day’s lesson that they’ll have to answer via mobile, before they can leave.

This also helps teachers gauge how much students understand the material.

## Care and Usage Guidelines

Schools that issue tablets and laptops to students usually provide written rules explaining educators’ expectations and students’ responsibilities.

### Common points include:

- The school retains ownership of the device. Students typically borrow it for the academic year, return it for the summer, and use the very same device the following year.
- Students are given instructions for the day-to-day care and handling of the device.
- They’re explicitly forbidden from modifying the device’s hardware or software in any way.
- Students are responsible for installing system updates when they become available.
- Repairs and maintenance should be done only by the school’s IT (information technology) department.
- Schools are responsible for cybersecurity measures and the procurement of licenses as needed for various programs and apps.
- Students are expected to have their devices fully charged and ready for use every day.

### What Governance Policies Work Best for You?

## Manage the day-to-day flow of information between you and your students.

Turn the “I forgot my homework” excuse into a thing of the past. A number of apps let students submit their work directly from their mobile phones or tablets.

Students and parents can also use apps to check their grades and scores. You’ll give yourself more time to teach instead of telling each kid individually how well they did on their last quiz—or fielding questions from their parents about it.

*For schools that use the Aeries® Student Information System<sup>1</sup>, students and their parents can look up and calculate projected grades using Aeries’ mobile app.*

## Use multiple media to let students interact with course material.

Mobile devices have leveled the playing field for previously difficult and time-intensive creative pursuits. Today, anyone can be a director, videographer, interviewer, or musician... Whatever activity a teacher has in mind, there’s probably an app for it.

Get the whole class involved by setting up a podcast where the students take turns being the interviewer and subject.

Get to know your students better as individuals by picking a journaling app for them to work with regularly.

For younger students, use cameras on students’ smartphones to record them talking about what they’re doing in class. In this way, students start learning about technology, while their parents keep up to date on what they’re learning.

## Encourage participation with educational games.

Smartphones and tablets can be used to play all kinds of games including video games, virtual board games, and classic computer and arcade games. New games are released every day—including educational ones—so you’re bound to find something that fits what you’re looking for.

For example, you can teach younger kids math with the mobile version of the classic computer game Number Munchers. For older students, you can set up a scavenger hunt using augmented reality.

To encourage a spirit of friendly competition in the classroom, you can keep track of scores—or anything else!—using a mobile leaderboard. Students will be able to compare their performance to that of their classmates. It’s a welcome change from simply tracking their grades all the time.

### **Shakespeare + Twitter = Fun**

*How does one modernize Shakespeare? For a California teacher, it meant having her students follow a line-by-line reading of Romeo and Juliet on Twitter. Lines would be posted a few times per hour, and each time the class met they would discuss the most recent posts.*



## Create paperless class notes.

For classrooms that supply or allow the use of mobile tablets, students can take “handwritten” notes without paper. There are also apps that let students contribute to a collective whiteboard. When they type or draw within the app, their contribution shows up on the screen at the front of the room.

(There are paperless note-taking systems for smartphones as well; they just offer less space to work with.)

## Save money and lighten students’ load.

Remember when you had to buy a big, pricey scientific calculator for high school math?

Those days are over. Now, countless calculator apps offer everything students need right on their phones. Many are free, and even those with a fee are a serious bargain compared to what you used to spend on your clunky calculator.

The same goes with electronic textbooks. A tablet is far lighter than a bag full of hardcover texts, and e-textbooks are sometimes significantly cheaper than their print counterparts. And most e-reader apps let you highlight and take notes within a book, so students get the full ownership experience.

Plus, carrying less means fewer things to worry about losing or getting thrown out!

## Record classes for students to review later.

Whether you record your classes with a smartphone or some other way, you can post them to YouTube for students to review later.

You can also require students to view other people’s online videos and lectures. For example, Ted Talks can be very educational. Though some may watch these on a desktop computer, plenty will view assigned lectures on mobile.

A number of teachers have been structuring their lessons in a “flipped classroom.” They record their lecture for students to watch or listen to outside of class, while class time is used to practice and apply the lesson.

<sup>1</sup> Aeries® Student Information System is provided as an example only and is not endorsed by or affiliated in any way with KwikBoost.



## Custom Charging Solutions for Every School's Needs



*"Our students and teachers race into our library during passing periods to use the KwikBoost charging stations. It was worth every penny and is constantly used."*

**- Carroll High School**

There are a number of ways to handle the integration of mobile technology into the classroom. But whether your school provides mobile devices for its students or students bring their own, everyone can benefit from the use of these tools.

Of course, you can't require students to participate in class via mobile devices if their batteries give out. Using mobile technology in the classroom means the devices need to stay charged at all times. KwikBoost offers a number of charging solutions to fit your school's unique needs.

- KwikBoost Stay & Charge floor stands and wall-mounted charging stations can power up to 8 cell phones at a time. They're ideal for the teacher's lounge, or a classroom where younger students leave their devices to charge overnight.
- If your class makes heavy use of mobile technology, KwikBoost Mini Power Table has built-in cables to charge devices while they're being used. The Power Table adds outlets and USB ports. Both leave plenty of room for books and other classroom materials.
- Oftentimes you need to keep unattended devices secure while charging. Our KwikBoost Charging Lockers work like hotel safes. They can be configured to store only cell phones, or to accommodate tablets and laptops as well. Devices are charged in individual lockers, so they'll be secure even in the highest traffic areas in your school.



## **An Exciting Time** to be an Educator

Every once in a while, new technology comes along that completely reshapes the learning landscape. With record numbers of students bringing mobile devices to school, now is one of those times.

Forward-thinking schools will take advantage of the opportunities these tools can provide by introducing and integrating them into their curriculum. As many educators have already discovered, these devices can improve engagement, leading to better grades and a brighter future for their students.

KwikBoost can help your school stay "powered up" so you can execute on all that potential.

## About KwikBoost:

KwikBoost designs, manufactures, and markets mobile device charging stations, power tables, charging lockers, and custom solutions built to keep devices charged and people connected while on the go.

We focus on simple, beautiful, and thoughtful products and services. KwikBoost products power the technology that connects us to the people, activities, and experiences we love.

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