#### **MEETING POSTING**

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#### TOWN OF NANTUCKET

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Committee/Board/s	Nantucket School Committee Meeting
Day, Date, and Time	Wednesday, June 25, 2025, 5:00 PM
Location / Address	Nantucket High School, Large Group Instruction Room (LGI) 10 Surfside Road Nantucket, MA 02544
Signature of Chair or Authorized Person	Katie Bedell
WARNING:	IF THERE IS NO QUORUM OF MEMBERS PRESENT, OR IF MEETING POSTING IS NOT IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OML STATUTE, NO MEETING MAY BE HELD!

#### **AGENDA**

- I. Call to order
- II. Welcome and approval of agenda
- Announcement: this meeting is being audio and video recorded III.
- IV. **Public Comment**
- V. Committee discussions and votes to be taken
  - a. Vote to adopt Policy IJNDD, Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Devices
- VI. Adjournment

**Policy: IJNDD** 

#### CELL PHONE AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Nantucket Public Schools is committed to fostering a school environment that prioritizes engaged learning, supports the development of social skills, and promotes the overall well-being of our students. To achieve this, Nantucket Public Schools is a cell phone-free community. This means that, subject to the exceptions outlined below, cell phones and other personal electronic devices are not accessible to students during school hours. Implementation of this policy varies by grade level, as further described below.

#### **Definition of Personal Electronic Devices:**

Personal electronic devices ("devices" as used herein) are defined as any electronic device utilized to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture or play images or video. These include, but are not limited to, smartphones, mobile phones, headphones, earbuds, smartwatches, tablets, laptops, and gaming devices.

The school reserves the right to classify additional devices as personal electronic devices.

#### **Grade-Level Policies**

#### **Elementary and Intermediate School:**

• <u>Policy</u>: It is understood that students may have phones or devices for afterschool use, but they must be turned off/silent and put away (in their backpack/bag) for the entire day. Smartwatches must have a "school" or "silent" mode to be worn; if that feature is not available smartwatches will also need to be put away (in their backpack/bag.)

#### Response to Elementary/Intermediate Policy Violations

- If a device is visible or used during the school day:
  - Cell phones and other devices will be taken and held at the front desk for the duration of the school day. They will be returned to students at the end of the day.
  - If there is a second offense, the parent/guardian will receive a call from the school requesting that the parent/guardian pick up the device; it will not be returned to the student.
  - Repeat incidents (more than 2) may result in the loss of the privilege to bring personal devices to school.

#### Middle School and High School:

• <u>Policy</u>: Students are not permitted access to their cell phones or other devices at school during school hours. Students are encouraged to leave devices at home. At the start of each school day, students must place their personal device in a designated locked pouch. Students will regain access to their device at the end of each school day.

#### Response to Middle/High School Policy Violations

• <u>First incident</u>: The cell phone or device will be confiscated and placed in the designated storage location for the remainder of the school day. The student can retrieve the device at the end of the day.

**Policy: IJNDD** 

- <u>Second incident</u>: The cell phone or device will be confiscated and placed in the designated storage location for the remainder of the school day. A school administrator will have a conversation with the student and contact the parent/guardian.
- <u>Third incident</u>: The cell phone or device will be confiscated and placed in the designated storage location for the remainder of the school day. The student's parent will be contacted to pick up the device at the end of the day.
- Repeat incidents (more than 3) may result in the loss of the privilege to bring personal devices to school. After the third incident, a meeting with the student and parent/guardian will be scheduled each time the policy is violated. At the meeting, an Action Plan will be developed to address the needs of the student that may be contributing to repeated non-compliance.

#### **Parent-Student Communication During School Day:**

- Students needing to contact a parent/guardian during the school day may do so by using the phone in the front office, or by accessing their cell phone in the front office with administrator approval. Parent/guardian and emergency contact numbers should be kept current.
- Parents/guardians needing to reach their student during the school day can contact the front office. The school will ensure urgent messages are promptly relayed.

#### **Accommodations:**

- If a student has a disability or medical condition that requires a cell phone or other device, the accommodation will be noted in the student's IEP, 504 Plan, or health plan. The Special Services Office, Health Office, or school administrator will notify appropriate staff of the necessary accommodations through the written plan.
- Students with outside responsibilities, such as after-school jobs or caregiving, should make all plans prior to the school day. If there is a need for a student to access their cell phone during the school day, they may do so in the front office or other designated location, and only with the permission of a school administrator.
- Families should make arrangements with their child that don't rely upon their child having access to a cell phone or device during school hours.

#### **School Events:**

Students may not use cell phones or other devices at school-sponsored events during the school day.

#### **Staff Use of Personal Devices:**

School staff are strongly encouraged to not use cell phones for personal use or personal devices in front of students, except for essential educational purposes (e.g. using Raptor/safety and security, taking photos in accordance with school policy, quick communication with another staff member, or essential communication with a parent).

SOURCE: NPS

### **WHITE PAPER**

# Yondr in Education: An Examination of Academic and Behavioral Outcomes



This white paper explores the impact of phone-free schools on students, faculty, and staff, presenting findings from independent research focused on the Yondr Program.

This study is the first of its kind in the United States.

#### INTRODUCTION

Educators and policymakers are increasingly embracing the shift towards phone-free schools. Research from Spain<sup>1</sup> and the United Kingdom<sup>2</sup> demonstrates that phone-free policies lead to significant improvements in educational outcomes; this echoes a rising trend in the United States, where schools are adopting measures from complete bans to more flexible policies.

While the primary justification for these bans is to reduce distractions, the advantages extend beyond mitigating interruptions. Implementing a comprehensive campus-wide approach that removes phones for all students encourages deeper engagement with instructional content, greater participation in classroom discussions, and improved social interactions. With more educational systems recognizing the benefits of such initiatives, phone-free schools are likely to become a standard practice.

Since 2014, Yondr has provided a solution and guidance on creating engaging, phone-free schools around the world. The independent research in this paper tested the efficacy of the Yondr Program and its ability to enhance educational outcomes.

#### **Key Research Findings:**

- After implementing Yondr, student academic success rates increased up to 6.27%.
- Students in Grades 11 and 12 saw the highest potential for academic improvement, with a 38% increase in the probability of passing grades in academically focused classes. Grades 6–12 overall experienced a 14.9% increase.
- Yondr positively impacts behavior, showing a 44% decrease in average monthly behavioral referrals.

The study reveals that school personnel overwhelmingly agree that Yondr has positively impacted nearly all aspects of their school, including a reduction in classroom disruptions and an increase in student participation.

#### ASSESSING YONDR'S IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The study examined over 37,000 final course grades before and after the implementation of the Yondr Program for students enrolled across middle and high schools in three different parts of the United States.

The data show a significant increase in academic performance following implementation.

<sup>1</sup> P. Beneito, & Ó. Vicente-Chirivella (2022). Banning mobile phones in schools: Evidence from regional-level policies in Spain. *Applied Economic Analysis*, 30(90), 153–175. https://doi.org/10.1108/AEA-05-2021-0112.

<sup>2</sup> L.P. Beland and R. Murphy (2016). Ill communication: technology, distraction and student performance. *Labour Economics*, 41, 61–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2016.04.004.

After the Yondr Program was introduced, a 14.9% increase in the probability of earning a 'C' grade in academically focused classes was observed. This indicates the Yondr Program has a positive impact on student academic performance.

Table 1. Results from Multilevel Logistic Regression Model — Grades 6–12

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z value	Pr(> z )
Intercept	2.28431	0.0932	24.509	<.001
Yondr	0.13913	0.02717	5.12	<.001
Academically Focused Classes	-0.78809	0.14928	-5.279	<.001

Students in Grades 11 and 12, a crucial phase in their preparation for college and career, saw the highest potential for an increase in academic achievement. The study found that after Yondr was introduced, there was a significant increase in improved grades. Before Yondr, 88% of students in Grades 11 and 12 received a 'C' or higher. After Yondr, this number increased by 38% to 91%.

Table 2. Results from Multilevel Logistic Regression Model — Grades 11–12

	Estimate	Std. Error	Z value	Pr(> z )
Intercept	2.0296	0.127	15.987	<.001
Yondr	0.3245	0.0684	4.744	<.001
Academically Focused Classes	-0.5506	0.213	-2.585	0.01

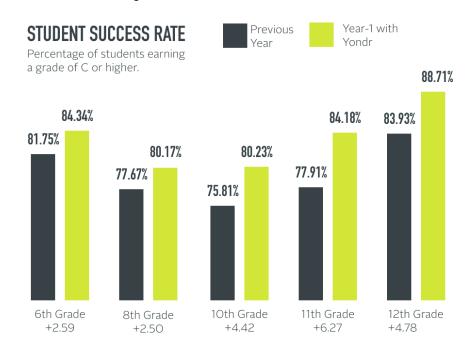
A chi-square test of independence was performed for each grade to further investigate the results from the multilevel logistic regression and the impact of Yondr on the probability of earning a letter grade C or higher, as shown in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Table 3. Results from Chi-Square Test of Independence

Category	Before Yondr Success Rate	After Yondr Success Rate	Percent Change	Success Rate X2	Significant at p < .05
Total Population	80.24%	82.39%	+2.15%	p <.001	Yes
Grade 6	81.75%	84.34%	+2.59%	p = .010	Yes
Grade 8	77.67%	80.17%	+2.50%	p <.001	Yes

Grade 10	75.81%	80.23%	+4.42%	p <.001	Yes
Grade 11	77.91%	84.18%	+6.27%	p <.001	Yes
Grade 12	83.93%	88.71%	+4.78%	p <.001	Yes

Figure 1. Success Rate Pre- and Post-Yondr



Students experience an increase in academic success rate with the Yondr Program. Notably, students preparing to make the transition to college, career, and life are seeing the greatest impact on their overall academic success.

#### THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF YONDR ON STUDENT BEHAVIOR

The data below reflect a comparison of two years, between the pre-implementation and post-implementation of Yondr, at a Grade 6–8 middle school that participated in the study. Behavioral referrals include instances in which a student violates a district behavior policy, resulting in school consequences. Researchers analyzed the number of average referrals by type per month. The results are in Table 4.

Table 4. Behavior Referrals by Month

Referral Type	2022–23	2023–24	Percent Change
Behavioral	302.4	170.2	-43.72%
Technology Use	45.6	24.9	-45.37%
Discrimination/Harassment/Bullying	37.4	24.4	-34.72%
Substance Use	4.0	2.2	-44.44%
Academic Integrity	3.6	2.9	-18.75%

In line with prior research, the study found a significant reduction in the average monthly general behavior referrals (-43.72%). There were also large reductions in the average monthly referrals for technology use (-45.37%) and discrimination/harassment/bullying (-34.72%).

#### SCHOOL STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF YONDR

The third aspect of the study aimed to explore school personnel's perceptions of the Yondr Program. The researchers conducted a 13-question Likert-style survey across four schools. Skip logic was used to tailor questions to respondents; teachers answered 11 multiple-choice questions, while other personnel answered four. Of the 217 respondents, approximately 71% were teachers, 13% were school staff, and the remaining 16% were school leaders.

#### **Key findings:**

- 77% of teachers agreed they noticed a reduction in classroom disruptions caused by phones after the introduction of Yondr.
- 75% of teachers agreed they noticed an improvement in academic performance.
- 74% agreed they perceived their students to be more attentive and actively participating in class.

#### CONCLUSION

The research revealed that schools that partner with Yondr see increased academic success and improved student behavior. Yondr fosters a more focused learning environment, promoting deeper engagement and creating stronger connections between students and educators. Removing phones from classrooms is a crucial step toward cultivating an educational atmosphere where students can truly thrive.

#### **ABOUT YONDR**

Founded in 2014, Yondr is the established industry leader in helping educators around the world create phone-free spaces, serving over 1 million students daily across 21 countries. The Yondr Program is a complete phone-free solution that proactively addresses phone-related challenges and improves student focus, social connection, and academic performance. Yondr was awarded the American Consortium For Equity in Education in 2023.

Learn more at www.overyondr.com.

# STUDENTS SUFFERING FROM DIGITAL OVERLOAD?

Research leaves no doubt: cell phones and social media harm youth mental health and academics.



# **20 MINUTES**

The time it takes for students to regain focus after a nearby cellphone distraction

\*2023 UNESCO Study



The decrease in scores of mathematics students when distracted by phones \*PISA (2022)



### 3 HOURS

The daily social media use that doubles anxiety and depression risks among youth

\*US Surgeon General, 2024



## **68** PERCENT

The percentage of students who report that electronic devices are distracting

\*NIH Study, 2017

### **CELL PHONE REGULATION IS TRENDING:**



have banned phones in school, per the <u>UN's Global Education</u> <u>Monitoring Report</u>, while <u>Arkansas</u>, <u>Florida</u>, <u>Pennsylvania</u>, <u>Virginia</u>, and <u>Indiana</u> lead US states in implementing school phone bans.

### **BUT BANS ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH:**

**Cellphone bans are in place in 77% of schools**. But this high number seems to refer to...any school that tells students they should not use their phone while in class. **That's not really a ban; it's more of an unenforceable wish**.

— Jonathan Haidt, Author and Social Psychologist

# THE YONDR PROGRAM:

### A COMPLETE PHONE-FREE SOLUTION

Since 2014, millions of students have benefitted from a phone-free education with Yondr. Our school partners span 27 countries and all 50 U.S. states.

YONDR SHIFLDS STUDENTS FROM THE NEGATIVE FEFFCTS OF CELL PHONE USE-

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION • SOCIAL ALIENATION • BEHAVIORAL ISSUES • CYBER BULLYING • POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### **PHONE-FREE FOCUS. PROVEN RESULTS.**

Increase in the probability of passing grades.

Decrease in average monthly behavioral referrals.

\*Independent Study Results



Saw a positive change in student engagement.



Saw a positive change in student behavior.



Saw a positive change in academic performance.

\*School Survey Results

Yondr pouches are the best thing that could have happened for this school.

— Nashan Anderson, Poughkeepsie City School District, New York

#### NASRO statement and testimony of support for phone and social media free schools - Executive Director Mo Canady

#### Statements for Media:

According to Mo Canady, Executive Director for National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO), "When students can access their phones during the school day, they are less safe. Not only are they less safe in a school emergency situation, where they should be paying attention to their teacher or first responders' instructions, but they are less safe during ordinary school days. Phones allow for social media drama to unfold, cyberbullying to take place, fights to be planned and privacy violations to occur every school day."

#### Written testimony for legislative hearings:

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) is dedicated to making schools and children safer by providing the highest quality training to school-based law enforcement officers.

NASRO, the gold standard in school-based law enforcement training, is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1991 for school-based police, school administrators, and school security and/or safety professionals who work as partners to protect schools and their students, faculty, and staff members.

I have been the Executive Director of NASRO for the last 14 years and prior to that I was a School Resource Officer for 14 years.

NASRO is extremely supportive of a statewide bell to bell phone and social media free policy for grades k-12. We do not support an exception for emergencies. We know that schools, students and staff are safer when student cell phones and personal devices are not present during the school day. For this reason, if students are allowed to bring personal devices to school they should be securely locked away and inaccessible to the student from the first bell to the last bell of the school day.

We often hear parents say they want to be able to contact their student in an emergency situation such as an active shooter in the school. However, outside communication during this critical time makes students less safe.

In an emergency situation that requires a lock down the following are essential safety procedures:

- 1) Students need to be focused on the adults giving instructions. During this critical time, students need to listen to the teacher and/or first responders for guidance. Messaging or calling their parents who are not in the building could distract students from life saving instructions.
- 2) If in hiding, students need to remain quiet. Noise and/or light from students' phone could alert an assailant to the location where students are hiding.
- 3) Phone lines need to remain open for communication between staff and first responders. If hundreds of students are calling their parents then the communication channels may be overwhelmed and impede necessary communication with first responders.
- 4) Clear access to the school allows for faster response times by first responders. If parents are alerted by students and rush to the school, the extra traffic could potentially block access routes for emergency response vehicles.
- 5) The fewer people approaching the building, the more secure the surroundings. Parents rushing to the school can risk being mistaken as an assailant.
- 6) Schools are equipped to manage emergency communication with first responders and with parents. Misinformation can quickly spread over social media. If students are texting and posting on social media during an emergency situation it could lead to a more hazardous situation.

For the best outcome it is essential for students NOT to be on their phones during a lockdown.

In addition to phones placing students in more danger during emergency situations, they also contribute to a less safe school environment in general. A significant portion of discipline referrals result from students having access to phones and social media during the school day. These concerns include privacy violations, social media drama, cyberbullying, and fights. All of which are significantly reduced in schools that require students to lock up their phones for the entire school day. If students have access at any point during the day, lunch or passing periods for example, then these infractions still occur. Therefore, it is prudent that legislation be passed so all students can have a safe and distraction-free learning environment.



Preparing K-12 and higher education IT leaders for the exponential era

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#### **K-12 EDUCATION**

# Phone Restrictions Make 'Immense Difference' at Boston Schools

More than 30 Boston-area public schools are in the process of restricting student phone use on campus. Students and parents said there were "growing pains," but many are happy with the results.

September 24, 2024 • Grace Zokovitch, Boston Herald





Students Zoey Le and Shaan Dhar at the Eliot School use magnetically sealed Yondr pouches to stow their cell phones during school hours on Sept. 17.

Stuart Cahill/Boston Herald/TNS

(TNS) — As Boston kids and their phones head back to school this year, a wave of new schools are taking a big step to keeps students' attention off their screens and refocus on learning.

Thirty-one Boston public schools have begun or are gearing up to implement systems for students to lock their phones away in "Yondr" pouches throughout the day. Nine elementary schools and four high schools are currently using the pouches, BPS Superintendent Mary Skipper said at the start of school.

Students insert their phones — along with any smartwatches or other electronics — in their issued pouch at the start of the school day, check in to magnetically lock the case, and get to unlock the pouch at the end of the school day.

"It's part of, like, the routine of coming to school," Zoey, an eighth grader at the Eliot school, said of the pouches in s classroom. "You always have to have your Yondr pouch, and if you don't have it, then you usually turn it into the front office. Just part of outine, I just remember I have to check out my notifications and then turn on (c' disturb), or turn it off."

The Eliot School was one of the earliest BPS schools to adopt the Yondr pouches, having used them since returning from COVID.

Ahead of the school year, BPS awarded a nearly \$850,000 contract to Yondr for a three-year "cell phone reduction program" between 2024 and 2027. Under the program, schools with grades five through 12 are able to optionally engage in a community outreach process and opt in to participate in the Yondr program, leading to a slew of new schools following in the Eliot's footsteps in the coming year.

The district's move to reduce cell phone usage follows a state and <u>nationwide push to</u> <u>address the use of cell phones in schools</u>, as spiking usage, social media habits and mental health concerns infiltrate classrooms. Massachusetts education officials addressed<u>incentives for cell phone restriction policies</u> and other steps at the end of the 2022-23 school year.

Rolling out the program, Skipper cited "national trend data and studies, as well as our own experiences in schools," that show the effect of cell phones as a distraction from learning in schools, but said the district is looking to "strike a balanced approach."

Eliot School Director of Operations and former teacher Huijing Wu said many students returned from COVID lock downs with new "strong attachments" to their phones.

"We've had a really big shift in students really being so reliant on their phones," said Wu. "And we've gone from, we're gonna put the phone in the pouch, and we're just gonna hold it like it's our child. They'd walk around and touch the phone, and need to constantly be handling their device. But now kids stick them in their lockers. They're like, 'Yep, it just goes away and it's fine."

Now, she added, some students even forget to unlock them at the end of the day.

Several Eliot students said the pouches have changed the way they interact with kids around them and the social pressure they feel.

⊿'re not able to look at, especially with AI and ChatGPT, they can't access that o₁.

your phones," said Eliot 8th grader Can, who doesn't have a phone. "There's been more and more use of Tiktok and other social media in schools, like recording videos in the bathrooms and stuff like that. I think it's been really good with the Yondrs."

Can said there's "a lot of peer pressure" to a lot of aspects about having a phone in school.

"If everyone is using the phone and say, like you don't have one, you kind of feel misplaced," said Zoey. "Like, 'Oh, I should be on my phone right now.' You should actually just be learning."

Another eighth grader Shaan said students focus more, and are not sneaking looks at their phones in class anymore.

Wu said there were a "few years of growing pains," for students and parents, but the community has really committed. Some families expressed concern about contacting their kids, she said, but as the school facilitated contact when needed their fears lessened.

"We really pride ourselves on creating a safe environment for for all of our community that's here and so really thinking about what's in the best interest for your kids," said Wu. "We're here to learn, and we've managed years without kids having phones to be able to still contact families."

Skipper said the district anticipates additional schools electing to use the program as the year goes on.

Wu said the policy has made an "immense difference" in kids attention and overall engagement in school, as well as decreasing some bullying behaviors.

"Even something like at recess, when I used to help monitor recess, we'd get clusters of kids around a phone," said Wu. "We don't get that. Kids play now. They're having recess right now, if we were to go look, they're playing, like kids are supposed to. Not attached to a device."

# Why some Mass. schools made the call to lock up student phones

September 20, 2023

By Carrie Jung



Salem High School students walk through the halls at the end of a day of phone free classes. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

This article is more than 1 year old.

At the end of a recent school day at Salem High, students walked with their heads up and eyes forward as the sound of conversation echoed through the cinderblock hallways.

It's a far cry from what was the usual school day scenario especially after the pandemic: Junior Rocco Ryan said he'd typically travel the halls looking down at his cellphone, sometimes bumping into his peers.

"Last year, when you were in the hallway, everyone was on their phone looking down," he said.

This year, school district officials in Salem are trying something new to boost student engagement and help break their dependence on cellphones during school hours.

The district has purchased locking sleeves which, when clasped shut, prevent use of the mobile phone sequestered inside. Students can access phones only during lunch and after the day ends. The pouches, designed by a company called Yondr, can only be unlocked using one of several wall magnet devices placed around the school building.



Two Yondr pouches and a locking base. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

Salem High School is one of dozens of schools in Massachusetts implementing strict bans on cellphones and experimenting with new devices to help students break their smartphone addictions. Others schools using the pouches include Chicopee High School and the Elliot K-8 School in Boston. In March, Concord-Carlisle High School began requiring students to store their phones in pocket caddies during each class period.

Not all of Salem High's students were happy with the new policy.

"I was not a fan," said Ryan. "I didn't want to go to school and I was like, 'This is going to be terrible.' "

Fellow junior Taliyah Perrin said some of the strongest outrage came from older students.

"The seniors are like, 'this is against our freedom,'" she said. "'We are adults, we can use our phones' and, 'this is an abuse of power.'"

But after just a week of use, Ryan quickly changed his mind.

"The fact that you have no choice to go on your phone, you have to pay attention in class," he said. "It's going to lead to more success for me, so I don't mind it at all now."

And Perrin said she's gotten to know more classmates so far this year.

"I'm able to talk to people that I don't normally talk to," she said. "Without my phone I've been reading books more, too, and just enjoying school more."

That increased focus and socialization is in line with what district leaders saw after similar cellphone pouches were instituted last year in the middle school. Officials noticed a positive effect once Collins Middle School piloted the pouches last school year.

Guidance counselor Brad Maloon said students weren't socializing with each other as much in the halls after students returned from the COVID-19 pandemic-related school building closures. He described phones as "a social crutch" for kids.

"We were saying we need to get them back on learning full time and not thinking about what text message or Snapchat notification is going to go off in your pocket."

But after the middle school students started locking their phones in these pouches, the change in student behaviors was dramatic.

"People were actually interacting with each other," said Collins Middle School eighth grader Tyri Bascomb. "If it was during lunch, they'd say 'hi' and start a conversation."



Eighth grader Tyri Bascomb opens his Yondr pouch by tapping it on the unlocking base at the Collins Middle School entrance. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

Salem purchased the pouches from Yondr, which has been around for about 10 years. The company started small, mostly serving schools in New York City, but also caters to <u>music events</u> and other spaces. After the pandemic, demand among school districts shot up, said CEO Graham Dugoni.

"It feels like we're running 100 miles an hour to keep up," Dugoni said.

More schools in Massachusetts <u>and elsewhere</u> are considering these devices and others like it because of the growing body of research that shows a correlation between cellphone screen time and teen self-esteem.

According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, <u>about 95%</u> of teens nationwide are on social media, and about a third report being on social media "almost constantly."

In May, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy released an <u>advisory</u> about the effects of social media on youth mental health.

"There is growing evidence that social media use is associated with harm to young people's mental health," Murthy said in a <u>May 2023 press release</u> that accompanied the advisory.

In February, the American Psychological Association <u>published a study</u> showing that when teenagers cut the time they spent online by half, their body image and self esteem improved. And <u>a 2017 study</u> published in the Journal of the Association for Consumer Research showed that even just the presence of a cellphone in someone's plane of vision "may reduce available cognitive capacity," in part because of temptation to use it.

While the cellphone pouches could technically be pried open without the school's wall magnets, Salem Public Schools superintendent Stephen Zrike said he's hopeful that rules around using the pouches will help keep that at bay. Starting this school year, if an educator sees a student's phone out of its pouch during the day, they get one warning. On the second offense, the phone goes to the front office. After that, school officials will get parents involved and confiscate the student's phone.

The restriction on cellphone use hasn't been met with total favor. One lingering concern among some parents has to do with reaching their child in the event of an emergency at school.

"You want to be able to contact your kids," said Melissa Taylor, the parent of an eighth grader. "Parents want to be able to hear from their child if it is a last moment possibility." There's no statewide mandate in place, but state education leaders have encouraged districts to keep experimenting. In July, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced it would distribute up to \$800,000 in grants to support districts interested in implementing cellphone ban programs.

To date, 78 of about 400 Massachusetts districts have applied for funding, including Salem.



Teacher Abby Sherwood talks with a student in her English Language Arts class at Salem High School. (Robin Lubbock/WBUR)

Teachers at Salem High welcome the policy, saying it's helped improve concentration.

"Trying to compete with technology and everything that comes with a cellphone was really hard, and now I feel like I'm just not competing with that," said English Language Arts teacher Abby Sherwood.

Kids seem less distracted by having to keep up with the constant narrative and conversation happening in their online life, she said.

"They're a lot more focused, and the change has been pretty incredible."

This segment aired on September 20, 2023.



Carrie Jung Senior Reporter, Education Carrie is a senior education reporter. More...