



## **RESOLUTION OF THE ALASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT**

in support of Resolution on Restricting the Use of Cellular Devices During School Hours

### **Resolution 09-2024**

**Whereas** the alarming effects of the use of electronic communication devices, specifically cellphones, on students' ability to maintain attention and engagement in classrooms, negatively impacting their capacity to gain and retain knowledge, as evidenced by research from the *Journal of Educational Psychology (2017)*, which found that students distracted by mobile phones performed significantly worse on learning assessments compared to those without such distractions; and

**Whereas** the documented increase in inappropriate behaviors, including cyberbullying, harassment, and the dissemination of inappropriate content, facilitated by the unregulated use of cellular devices in school settings, with data from the *Cyberbullying Research Center (2020)* showing that 34% of students have experienced cyberbullying and that the availability of mobile phones during school hours can exacerbate these incidents; and

**Whereas** multiple states, including but not limited to Alabama, Connecticut, Indiana, Minnesota, Delaware, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Louisiana, South Carolina, Arizona, Florida, Ohio, and Oklahoma, have instituted programs, pilot programs, or recommended the restriction or limitation of cellphone use in public schools to combat these issues and foster a more focused learning environment; and

**Whereas** while restricting the use of cellular devices is necessary to protect the educational experience, it is equally important to ensure that parents and guardians can contact their children through traditional school communication methods in cases of wellness checks, medical concerns, or emergencies; and

**Whereas** the growing body of research indicating that excessive use of cellphones during school hours can contribute to mental health issues, such as anxiety, social isolation, and increased stress among students, with a study published in the *Journal of Adolescence (2018)* linking frequent mobile phone use with heightened symptoms of anxiety and depression among teenagers; and



**Whereas** the implementation of such restrictions should prioritize maintaining an open line of communication between students and their families during legitimate emergency situations;

Let it be resolved that the State Board of Education hereby:

1. **Encourages** all educators, administrators, and relevant school entities to recognize and address the negative impacts of cellphone use in classrooms on students' learning, social development, and overall well-being, supported by findings from *Computers in Human Behavior (2016)*, which demonstrate that banning mobile phones in schools resulted in improved learning, particularly among low-achieving students; and
2. **Calls for the development** of a comprehensive model policy to be written by the Department of Education and Early Development prohibiting the use of cellular phones and other electronic communication devices during class hours, except in cases of emergency or when explicitly allowed by an instructor for educational purposes; and
3. **Urges** Alaska's local school district governing boards to formally review and consider implementing such policies, with clear guidelines for disciplinary measures in cases of non-compliance; and
4. **Requests** that all staff members in supervisory roles, including teachers, administrators, and support personnel, actively enforce the policy, if adopted, and ensure that students adhere to the restrictions, while also providing clear alternatives for emergency communication with families; and
5. **Encourages** the establishment of designated times and spaces, such as lunch breaks or specific periods, where students may responsibly use their cellular devices under appropriate supervision, recognizing the importance of balancing restrictions with students' need for personal communication; and
6. **Further recommends** local school boards to periodically review the effectiveness of the policy by conducting surveys among students, parents, and faculty, as well as analyzing its impact on student performance, classroom behavior, and mental health outcomes, adjusting the policy as needed. A longitudinal study from the *American Psychological Association (2019)* supports this review, indicating that students in schools with cellphone restrictions showed lower levels of stress and higher levels of academic achievement; and
7. **Supports** providing professional development for educators on managing the integration of technology in a way that enhances learning while minimizing distractions, and offering



students guidance on responsible digital habits. Research from *Pew Research Center (2018)* found that students who received education on responsible phone usage were better able to self-regulate their device use, improving focus and reducing distractions in class.

**Be it further resolved that the Department of Education and Early Development should support:**

- All individuals in a supervisory or administrative capacity to uphold and enforce this policy, if adopted.
- Exceptions for medical conditions or other specific needs will be accommodated upon formal request.
- Schools communicating clearly with parents and guardians about alternative methods to contact their children during school hours for emergencies or urgent situations.

This resolution is proposed in the interest of fostering an environment conducive to learning, safety, and the holistic development of students, supported by substantial research demonstrating the positive impact of restricting cellular device usage during school hours.

**References:**

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- Cyberbullying Research Center. (2020). *Cyberbullying victimization rates among middle and high school students*. Retrieved from <https://cyberbullying.org/>
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- Pew Research Center. (2018). *Teens, Social Media & Technology: The effects of educational programs on responsible mobile device use*. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/>
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