

My name is Abigail Marsh. I speak as a Maryland public school parent and a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Georgetown University who [specializes in socio-emotional development in adolescents](#).

I am convinced the evidence is clear that cell phones must be banned in K-12 school settings from bell to bell.

First, phones interfere with learning. They create a constant distraction. The average student receives [50 notifications every day during school](#). Test scores have plateaued or [dropped](#) since the introduction of phones. Students are learning less, as would anyone constantly distracted while trying to listen, read, and concentrate. Teenagers *cannot be taught to manage this distraction* because their [brains are not yet developed](#) enough.

Second, phones interfere with social and emotional learning. What is sadder than a table full of teens sitting [silent and hunched over phones](#) when they should be talking and laughing together? Passing period and lunch are when teens get the majority of their daily opportunities to practice social and emotional skills, which can **only** be learned through practice. Employers now report recent many college graduates [can't make eye contact](#) in a conversation. Guess why?

Third, phones interfere with safety. Fights and vandalism in schools are coordinated via phone and then filmed and [posted to social media](#) on phones. Removing the phones cuts down on both fights and vandalism, as a [Today Show episode](#) about DCPS's Hardy MS recently reported.

Fourth, this is an equity issue. Top regional private schools already [ban phones](#) bell to bell. Maryland public school students will be left further behind their more privileged peers in terms of their academic outcomes and socio-emotional development unless Maryland leaders take action.

Fifth, this is what teachers want by overwhelming margins! [83% of teachers](#) in a recent NEA poll want phones banned bell-to-bell.

Our teachers know the right answer. Schools around the world, including those in [27 U.S. states and the District of Columbia](#) have banned phones bell to bell. Lawmakers in these states have recognized that it is far past time we stopped permitting technology companies to run what is in effect a massive, uncontrolled, profit-driven experiment on our children that is, according to a [growing body of scientific evidence](#), causing significant and widespread harm to their cognitive abilities, educational outcomes, and mental health.

Don't let Maryland public school students get left behind.

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