
cell phones in school

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To: publiccomment@mcpsmt.org

Hello,

I recently received the survey sent out to parents regarding cell phones in school. I noticed that it asked whether my child uses their personal device for medical reasons. While my child currently doesn't, I am a pharmacy intern and I spend a lot of time talking to patients who use their personal devices for diabetes or other conditions. I think you would be very surprised how many teachers refuse to hear or consider that that is the case. Particularly substitute teachers, who don't know the student. I have had patients try to use their phone for medical reasons -- approved under current policy -- and had their phone confiscated, interfering with urgent medical problems.

My concern is that a stricter policy would only increase the frequency of this situation. Especially as the policy is first implemented, I worry teachers will get in the mindset of "cracking down" on devices and refuse to let the students explain. Many teachers reflexively view student attempts to explain as proof of disobedience or disrespect and don't really listen to what they have to say. Any sort of "medical exception" in your policy -- whichever policy you settle on -- will need to be accompanied by *extensive* training, including training provided to substitute teachers. If possible, I would recommend every class have a roster of students with medical device exceptions that is prominently available to the teacher, but completely private from classmates. Students with such exceptions should also have another staff or faculty member they can appeal to in a timely manner to receive access to their device if their teacher wrongly confiscates it.

Thank you,
J. Blaine Foster
