

## **NEW policy for as of October 2022: Electronic Devices (Cell Phone) Policy**

NEW Policy: **Electronic Devices, Cell Phones, and Accessories** – Electronic devices (cell phones, earbuds, air pods, and headphones, smartwatches, and other devices that can create a distraction for the student or teachers) are not to be seen or used during school hours.

### **Consequences:**

When a staff member sees a non-school issued device, the device will be confiscated. Electronic devices that are confiscated will be turned in to the office. Students will be assessed a \$10 fine and will turn in their phone to the school office for the next two school days. If the fine is not paid, the electronic device continues to be turned in each day until the fine is paid.

**Note:** *All fines collected will be used to support the food shelf.*

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### Rationale/Research:

Cell Phones are a major distraction in school, disrupting instruction, learning, and student relationships. There is a growing body of research that indicates the increasing use of smartphones and social media is having a negative impact on children and adolescents. This creates a need for parents and schools to develop rules and policies to help children/students deal with the high and increasing level of technology immersion that is common for most of them. St. Joseph Catholic STEM School believes that a change in policy is needed to benefit both students and the school environment.

The following articles provide information about the impact smartphones and social media/internet can and are having on society – particularly adolescents.

#### [Ledger of Harms](#)

This list of factoids, sorted into categories, attempts to document some of the invisible costs of the race for engagement and growth currently underway by technology platforms. Of special interest is the section titled “The Next Generations,” which lists information specifically related to children, including teens. The Ledger of Harms is one resource on the website of the Center for Humane Technology.

#### [Are Smartphones and Social Media Hurting our Kids?](#)

This article on the Institute for Family Studies website was written by Charles Fain Lehman and originally published by the Washington Free Beacon. It presents evidence on both sides of the discussion about the link between the rise in suicide and depression among teens and the rise in smart phone use and decrease in teen socialization. One of Lehman’s concluding statements is that “a lack of scientific consensus does not mean that no action is merited.” That we do not understand the effect of smartphones on developing brains might recommend more caution—where 95 percent of teens having a smartphone suggests a lack of appropriate restraint.

#### [Smartphones, social media use and youth mental health](#)

This article from the Canadian Medical Association Journal reviews research into smartphones, social media use and youth mental health. These key points from the authors are a good summary of the article’s content:

- *Evidence from a variety of cross-sectional, longitudinal and empirical studies implicate smartphone and social media use in the increase in mental distress, self-injurious behavior and suicidality among youth; there is a dose–response relationship, and the effects appear to be greatest among girls.*

- *Social media can affect adolescents' self-view and interpersonal relationships through social comparison and negative interactions, including cyberbullying; moreover, social media content often involves normalization and even promotion of self-harm and suicidality among youth.*
- *High proportions of youth engage in heavy smartphone use and media multitasking, with resultant chronic sleep deprivation, and negative effects on cognitive control, academic performance and socioemotional functioning.*
- *Clinicians can work collaboratively with youth and their families, using open, nonjudgmental and developmentally appropriate approaches to reduce potential harms from social media and smartphone use, including education and practical problem-solving.*
- *There is a need for public awareness campaigns and social policy initiatives that promote nurturing home and school environments that foster resilience as youth navigate the challenges of adolescence in today's world.*

### Teens and Dangerous Levels of Cell Phone Use

This article by psychologist Michael Ungar is a few years old; however, smartphone usage has only increased since it was written, so we believe his points are still relevant. Among other things, he suggests creating cell-free zones in schools. He also references what Iceland has done in regard to delinquency, drugs and alcohol abuse and suggests that part of the solution to the problem of children's smartphone addiction is "to offer them equally stimulating and socially engaging opportunities to do things that produce the same brain rewards as eight hours staring at a small blue screen." In his studies of resilience over the years, Ungar says "I've been reminded by children over and over again that they actually appreciate structure and reasonable consequences. They like routines and expectations that they can meet. They want genuine attachments and large networks of social relations." He concludes by offering four strategies for parents:

1. Model appropriate cell phone use.
  2. Limit access.
  3. Set routines and structure.
  4. Offer substitutes.
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