

## **NEWS BREAK**

Article: **How a middle school won the battle against cellphones**

Section: **BUSINESS, C7**

Sunday's News Break selects an article from **Sunday, May 5, 2024** of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some teachers might use this as a take-home assignment and others might read and answer the questions in a small group or larger, class discussion.

***\*Please be sure to preview all NIE content before using it in your classroom to ensure it is appropriate for your students.***

### **Standards:**

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1**

- Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

#### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.2**

- Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

### **Objectives:**

Students will learn about how cell phones are distracting in schools and how some schools are changing the dynamic, with new “no cell phones out” on campus rules. What are administrators and teachers seeing? How are students interacting with one another differently? Should this rule be adapted to every middle and high-school across the nation? How do they see themselves reflected in this study? How do they interact with their phones and are they distracting them from making new friends or being less present and/or focused in school?

## Pre-Reading Discussion:



- What do you think the article will be about, using this picture?
- Are there any clues? What can you infer?

## Vocabulary Building:

Read this sentence, what do you think the highlighted words mean using *context clues*? A **context clue** is a word or words that are hints and refers to the sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words.

“Social media was **exacerbating** nearly every conflict among students.”

### ***Exacerbating Guess:***

### ***Exacerbating Definition:***

## Comprehension Questions:

1. When Raymond Dolphin became assistant principal of a middle school in Connecticut two years ago, it was clear to him that the kids were not all right. What was the problem?
2. In December, Dolphin did something unusual-what did he do?
3. The experiment at Illing Middle School sparked objections from students and some parents, but it has already generated what?

4. Dolphin likened prohibiting cellphones to curbing what?
5. About a third of U.S. teens report that they use a social media site how often?
6. How do the Yondr pouches work?
7. Lately, though, its sales to schools have exploded. Last year, the number the number of U.S. schools using the pouches rose to \_\_\_\_\_, said company spokesperson Sarah Leader, more than double the figure in 2022.
8. When students returned to school full time after learning remotely during the \_\_\_\_\_, their relationship to their phones had changed dramatically.
9. Objections from parents fell into three main categories. What were they?
10. The students also know that taking out their phones leads to what?
11. Some students hadn't realized how much their phones diverted their \_\_\_\_\_.

**Discussion Questions (small/large groups), Journal Prompts or Essay Questions:**

**Class Discussion Questions:**

- What surprised (or stood out to) you in the article?
- At first, I thought \_\_\_\_\_, but now I think \_\_\_\_\_?
- What things did you already know from prior experience?
- Do you think a cellphone ban would be effective at your school? Why or why not?
- Are there any situations where you think it might be necessary for students to have access to their phones during the school day? Explain your answer.
- Do you believe that cellphones and social media may be harming children? Why or why not? Give supporting details to strengthen your answer.

***“We have these devices which we know are at best habit-forming and at worst addictive that are increasingly linked to depression and loneliness,” said Susan Linn, a psychologist, lecturer at Harvard Medical School and author of “Who’s Raising the Kids?” “So why would we have them in schools?”***

- Do you agree or disagree with Linn’s statement above? If you have a cell phone, do you see how they can be habit-forming and addicting? Why do you think usage is linked to depression and loneliness?

***Multiple students have told him they feel like they are making more friends. Students confirmed that the disappearance of cellphones has, in turn, stimulated something old-fashioned. “We’ll just find conversation; we***

***figure it out.” Gabe Silver, another eighth grader, echoed that sentiment. When the pouches first arrived, “everyone was miserable and no one was talking to each other,” he said. Now he can hear the difference at lunch and in the hallways. It’s louder. Students are chatting more “face to face, in person,” Gabe said. “And that’s a crucial part of growing up.”***

- Are you seeing this at your school and among your peers-kids really aren’t talking to one another and staring at their phones? Is there “face-to-face” contact in classes, during passing periods, at lunch?

### **Diving Deeper-Journal & Discussion Prompts:**

- Explore the connection between social media use and mental health in adolescents. How can schools address these concerns in a broader way, beyond just limiting phone access?
- Discuss how technology can be a double-edged sword for social interaction. Can limitations on technology use encourage more positive social behavior among students?
- Do you think the arguments for and against a cellphone ban hold true for high school students as well as middle school students? Consider the differences in maturity levels and academic needs between these age groups.
- Should schools be responsible for managing students' technology use outside of school hours, or is this a parental responsibility?
- What is the connection between social media use and mental health in adolescents. What other factors are at play?

News Break is posted to the Web on Tuesday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the print replica for your class, please [register online](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655.  
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