Unplugged & Engaged:
K–12 Roadmap for Massachusetts



BIRCh Center
Behavioral Health Integrated Resources for Children

Unplugged & Engaged:
K–12 Roadmap for Massachusetts

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K–12 Roadmap

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K–12 Roadmap for Massachusetts' Statewide Phone Ban

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Introduction

Dear Superintendents, Principals, and Educators,

Given what we know about what is best for youth and as our state is considering a mandate for a bell-to-bell phone-free environment in schools, we recognize that this shift may represent more than just a logistical change—it is a significant cultural transition for our students, staff, and families.

This is not about restricting devices; it is about trying to create a safe space in the classroom where youth can engage with each other, adults, and their learning. We are moving toward a model of "Digital Respite," intentionally creating time throughout the school day where students are free from the dopamine loops of social media and the anxieties of constant digital connectivity. The goal is to foster an environment where deep work, spontaneous interaction, and social-emotional growth can thrive.

This roadmap, Unplugged & Engaged, is designed to be your partner in this process. It does not provide a "one-size-fits-all" solution, but rather a structured approach to decision-making, implementation, and sustainable improvement. Whether you are leading a large urban district or a smaller rural school, the following framework will help you move from initial compliance to a deeply embedded culture of engagement, all the while informing and empowering key stakeholders (students, families and staff) in the process.

This is a collective effort. By anchoring implementation in empathy, restorative practices, and clear communication, schools will meet a possible state mandate but also enhance the well-being and academic potential of the students we serve.

We invite you to use this guide as a living resource, one that you can adapt to the unique needs of your community as we embark on this journey together. *To this regard, this resource was last edited in September 2026; it may be updated as specifics of state policy and expectations evolve.*

This toolkit is intended to support local implementation of a cell phone ban. Districts should adapt all procedures to align with local School Committee policy, collective bargaining agreements, legal counsel, district operational needs, and current legislation.

We also encourage you to utilize the Massachusetts Cell Phones & Social Media in Schools Toolkit which was developed by the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office. This toolkit provides practical guidance for districts, including model cell phone policies, strategies for building community norms, communication resources, and digital media literacy recommendations to support successful implementation of school phone policies.

Implementation Guide

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- ***The Decision-Making Prompts:*** Use these to facilitate meetings during phase 1.
- ***The Fidelity Matrix:*** Use this to standardize walkthroughs and ensure your leadership team is looking for the right data.
- ***The Family & Community Resources:*** Use these templates to ensure that the "Why" behind the policy is communicated clearly to parents well before the first day of school.

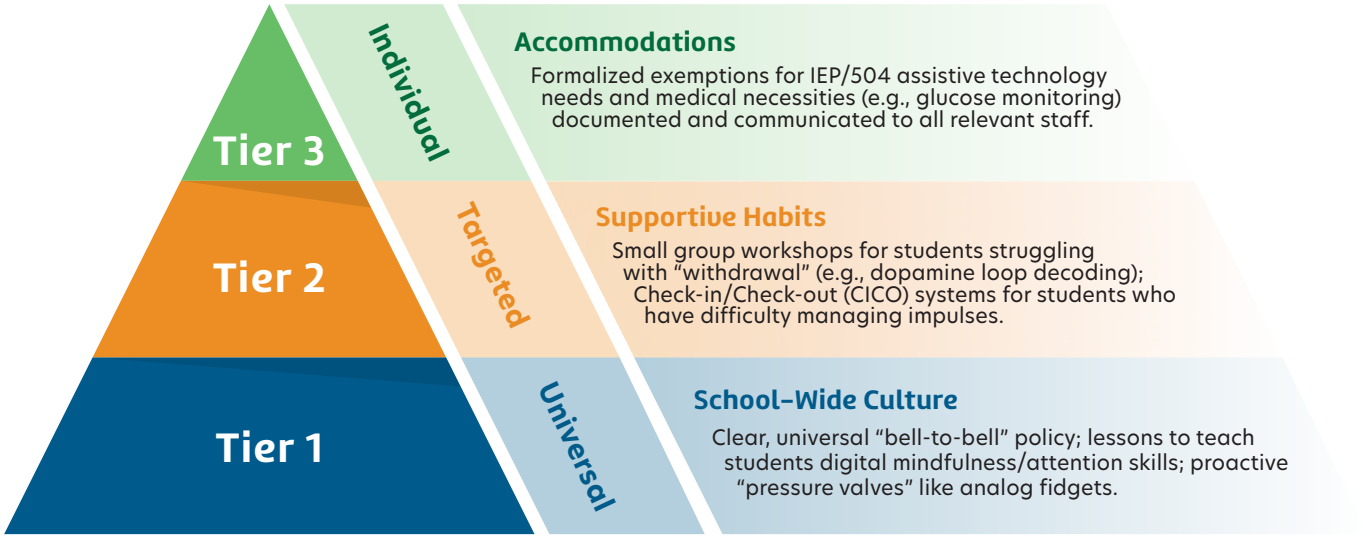
This roadmap is designed to move your school from *compliance*—simply enforcing a ban—to *engagement*, where the absence of phones is replaced by a richer, more connected school experience.

PHASE 1 | Possible time frame: Spring

- Decision-making logistics:
  - ***Finalize storage:*** Establish whether your school/district will use Yondr pouches, secure classroom cabinets, or assigned lockers.
  - ***Establish communication channels:*** Define the primary system (e.g., App/ SMS/Email) for family alerts and ensure the Main Office is equipped to handle emergency calls to provide parents with peace of mind.
- Communicate with families and teachers (see Phase 1: School Leader Resources).
- Pilot: Schedule "Phone-Free Friday" throughout Phase 2, Part 1. This allows you to test your collection/distribution logistics and identify friction points before the Phase 3 rollout.

PHASE 2, PART 1 | Possible time frame: June

- Communicate with families and teachers (see Phase 2, Part 1: School Leader Resources).
- Conduct "Phone-Free Friday" throughout Phase 2, Part 1. This allows you to test your collection/distribution logistics and identify friction points before the Phase 3 rollout.
- Consider how bell-to-bell phone-free policy will impact existing MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports). Policy should be integrated into your existing MTSS framework to address behavioral needs proactively rather than reactively.



PHASE 2, PART 2 | Possible time frame: August

- Communicate with families and teachers (see Phase 2, Part 2: School Leader Resources).
- Train staff (see Phase 2, Part 2: Educator Resources).

PHASE 3 | Possible time frame: Fall

- Communicate with families and teachers (see Phase 3: School Leader Resources).
- Conduct Flash Walkthroughs to monitor fidelity of implementation (see Data, Fidelity & Monitoring).
- Hold Social Connection Week.
- Share Impact Report(s) on positive impact of cell phone ban.
- Teach Wellness Workshops to promote digital wellness skills in students.
- Share Safety and Communication Wallet Cards with families.
- Using data, structure and provide tiered supports.

PHASE 1 – SCHOOL LEADER CONTENT

FAMILY LETTER

Dear Families,

As we look toward the INSERT school year, I am writing to share an important update regarding a new initiative. To promote student learning and mental health, [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will implement a "bell-to-bell" phone-free policy effective INSERT DATE. This transition is based on what we know is best for kids and current consideration of a statewide cell phone ban in schools by the MA state legislature. Our district ban will not allow students to use personal electronic devices—including smartphones, smartwatches, and earbuds—throughout the entire school day, including lunch and recess.

Why this change? This shift is not about "taking away" a device; it is about giving back six+ hours of childhood each day. We are joining a global movement—from Florida and Virginia to the United Kingdom and Norway—driven by compelling evidence of the transformative power of phone-free environments:

- **Academic gains**: A study by the London School of Economics found that banning phones led to a 6.4% increase in test scores, equivalent to an additional week of schooling. For underachieving students, scores jumped by 14%.
- **Reduced bullying:** In Norway, smartphone-free schools saw a significant drop in bullying and a decreased need for psychological counseling. Similarly, research in Spain noted a reduction in social comparison stressors when digital distractions were removed.
- **Revitalized connection:** Schools like Ballard High School in Kentucky report a cultural "reset," seeing a 67% surge in library book checkouts and a revival of face-to-face interaction during lunch and social periods.
- **Mental well-being:** As psychologist Jean Twenge has documented, the "always-on" culture is linked to soaring teen anxiety. We will provide a necessary "respite" to protect our students' mental health.

Our implementation and partnership: We recognize that shifting away from constant connectivity is an adjustment. To ensure a smooth transition, [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] is currently finalizing our specific logistics:

- **Storage and security:** Students will be required to store personal devices during the school day. We will utilize [INSERT STORAGE METHOD, E.G., YONDR POUCHES / ASSIGNED LOCKERS / CLASSROOM CADDIES].
- **Safety and communication:** We are committed to ensuring a reliable way for families and students to connect. We will use [INSERT PRIMARY COMMUNICATION CHANNEL, E.G., SMS ALERTS / EMAIL] for updates. For personal emergencies, please call the Main Office at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].
- **Medical and learning needs:** Exceptions will be granted for medical necessity (e.g., glucose monitoring) and documented IEP/504 accommodations. Please contact [INSERT OFFICE/CONTACT PERSON] to finalize an exemption plan.

Next steps: This transition will be most successful when schools and families work as a united front. In order to prepare, we will:

- **Community Town Hall:** Join us on [INSERT DATE/TIME] at [INSERT LOCATION/LINK] to discuss our strategy and see a demonstration of our storage hardware.
- **Soft Launch Pilot:** On [INSERT DATE], we will conduct a "Phone-Free Friday" to test our protocols before the full Fall rollout.

If you are interested in learning more about promoting healthy technology habits at home, check out resources from CommonSense Media and Boston Children's Digital Wellness Lab:

CommonSense Media:

- Family Tech Planners
- Family Guides
- Family Media Agreement
- Offline and Off-Screen Activities

Digital Wellness Labs:

- Family Guide to Digital Wellness
- Family Guide to Teaching Kids and Teens Essential Digital Skills
- Family Guide: 5 Strategies for Setting Digital Media Boundaries and Guidelines for Kids
- Family Guide to Creating Shared Media Use Agreements
- Family Guide to Media Literacy & Social-Emotional Learning

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME]
[INSERT TITLE]

COMMUNITY SLIDES

SLIDE 1: Welcome & Title

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME / DISTRICT] The Digital Wellness Bridge: Preparing for a Phone-Free INSERT TIME PERIOD

- Subtitle: A Community Partnership for Student Focus and Well-being.
- Presenters: [INSERT NAME & TITLE].

SLIDE 2: Best Practices and Consideration of a Statewide Cell Phone Ban

What is changing?

- What we know about the impact of access to personal tecnology use at school on learning and current consideration of a statewide cell phone ban in schools by the MA state legislature.
- The Scope: Includes smartphones, smartwatches, and earbuds.
- The Timeline: Full implementation begins [INSERT DATE].
- Our Goal: To move beyond compliance and focus on the restoration of the social-emotional and academic environment.

SLIDE 3: Why This Change? (The "Six-Hour Respite")

This shift is not about "taking away" a device; it is about giving back six hours of childhood and learning each day.

- We are joining a global movement—from Florida and Virginia to the United Kingdom and Norway—driven by compelling evidence of the transformative power of phone-free environments.
- Our Mission: Protecting student focus and mental health by creating a "digital boundary" during the school day.

SLIDE 4: Evidence-Based Benefits: Academics & Connection

Proven outcomes from phone-free schools:

- Academic gains: A study by the London School of Economics found that banning phones led to a 6.4% increase in test scores, equivalent to an additional week of schooling. For underachieving students, scores jumped by 14%.
- Revitalized connection: Schools like Ballard High School in Kentucky report a cultural "reset," seeing a 67% surge in library book checkouts and a revival of face-to-face interaction during lunch and social periods.

SLIDE 5: Evidence-Based Benefits: Well-being

Supporting the whole child:

- Reduced bullying: In Norway, smartphone-free schools saw a significant drop in bullying and a decreased need for psychological counseling.
- Reduced social pressure: Research in Spain noted a reduction in social comparison stressors when digital distractions were removed.
- Mental well-being: As psychologist Jean Twenge has documented, the "always-on" culture is linked to soaring teen anxiety. We will provide a necessary "respite" to protect our students' mental health.

SLIDE 6: Logistics: Storage & Security

How it will work at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]:

- The Method: We will utilize [INSERT STORAGE METHOD, E.G., YONDR POUCHES / ASSIGNED LOCKERS / CLASSROOM CADDIES].
- The Routine: Devices will be secured at [INSERT TIME, E.G., 8:00 AM] and returned/ unlocked at [INSERT TIME, E.G., 2:30 PM].
- Staff Role: Our teachers will focus on instruction rather than restricting devices.Slide 7: Safety & Communication

SLIDE 7: Safety & Communication

Staying connected without the distraction:

- Emergency Protocols: During critical events, silence is safety. Phones can jam networks and distract students from life-saving instructions.
- School-to-Home: We will use [INSERT SYSTEM, E.G., SCHOOLMESSENGER] for real-time alerts to families.
- Reaching Your Child: For personal emergencies, call the Main Office at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]. We will ensure you are connected immediately.

SLIDE 8: Exceptions & Inclusivity

Supporting every student's needs:

- Medical Necessity: Exceptions are strictly honored for health monitoring (e.g., glucose levels).
- IEP/504 Accommodations: Documented assistive technology needs will be met.
- Action Step: Please contact [INSERT OFFICE/NAME] by [INSERT DATE] to finalize an exemption plan for your child.

SLIDE 9: The Roadmap: Phase 1, INSERT TIME PERIOD

Preparing for a "Soft Landing":

- [INSERT DATE]: Pilot "Phone-Free Friday" to test collection and distribution.
- [INSERT DATE]: Student-led assemblies regarding digital wellness.
- [INSERT DATE]: Final policy handbook distributed to all families.

SLIDE 10: Discussion & Next Steps

We are a united front for your child's well-being.

- Q&A: [INSERT MODERATOR NAME].
- Resources: Take a "Family Conversation Guide" on your way out.
- Closing Thought: Together, we are creating a safe, focused environment where every student can thrive.

FAMILIES: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS GUIDE

Our Phones-Free Transition

We understand that shifting away from constant connectivity requires an adjustment for students and families alike. This guide addresses common questions regarding our cell phone ban and how [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will support your child through this change.

1. How will I reach my child during the school day?

While students will not have access to personal devices, our school remains a fully connected hub.

- For Emergencies: Please call the Main Office at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]. We will immediately locate your child and provide a private space for them to speak with you.
- For Non-Emergencies: You may email your child's teacher or leave a message with the front desk. We will ensure messages are delivered during non-instructional time.
- Student Access: Students who need to make an urgent call home may use school landlines located in [INSERT LOCATION, E.G., THE MAIN OFFICE OR GUIDANCE SUITE].

2. Is my child safer having a phone during an emergency?

National school safety experts advise that personal cell phones can actually increase risk during a crisis:

- Distraction: Students may miss life-saving instructions from staff while looking at their screens.
- Network Jamming: Hundreds of simultaneous calls can overwhelm local cell towers, preventing first responders from communicating.
- Silence is Safety: In "lockdown" scenarios, the sound or light from a vibrating phone can give away a student's location.
- Our Protocol: We will provide real-time updates to families via [INSERT SYSTEM, E.G., SMS ALERTS/EMAIL] as soon as the situation is secure.

3. What about medical needs or learning accommodations?

We strictly honor exceptions for health and accessibility.

- Medical Monitoring: If your child uses a phone for glucose monitoring or other health needs, they will be granted a specific exemption.
- IEP/504 Plans: If a device is a documented requirement for a student's learning accommodation, its use will be permitted as outlined in their plan.
- Next Step: Please coordinate with [INSERT CONTACT PERSON/OFFICE] to ensure your child's exemption is on file.

4. How will the phones be stored?

To ensure consistency and fairness, we will use [INSERT METHOD: E.G., INDIVIDUAL YONDR POUCHES / SECURE CLASSROOM CABINETS].

- Security: Devices remain on campus and are the responsibility of the student to secure at the start of the day.
- Collection/Return: Devices are secured at [INSERT START TIME] and released at [INSERT END TIME].

5. Why is this a "bell-to-bell" ban including lunch?

Our goal is to revive the social fabric of our school. Data show that when phones are removed during lunch, face-to-face socialization increases and library engagement jumps by as much as 67%. We want to give students a "digital break" to eat, talk, and move without the pressure of social media.

6. How can I support this transition at home?

We are a united front for your child's well-being. You can help by:

- Setting Expectations: Discussing the "Why" (mental health and focus) rather than the "Rule."
- Planning Ahead: Finalizing after-school pickup plans or appointment times before your child leaves for school in the morning.
- Modeling the Boundary: Refraining from texting your child during school hours, which puts them in the difficult position of choosing between a parent's text and school policy.

TEACHER SLIDES

SLIDE 1: Welcome & Mission

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]: INSERT TIME PERIOD Implementation Empowering Teachers through the Phone-Free Transition

- The Vision: This is not about adding a new administrative task; it is about restoring the classroom to a place of instruction and connection.
- Our Commitment: Administration will carry the primary burden of policy enforcement so you can focus on teaching.

SLIDE 2: The Phone Free Ban

What you need to know:

- What: A district "bell-to-bell" ban on personal electronic devices (phones, smartwatches, earbuds) by INSERT DATE.
- Scope: This applies to the entire school day—including lunch, recess, and passing periods.

SLIDE 3: Why This Matters for Your Classroom

Research-backed benefits for educators:

- Reduced "Policing": Uniform school-wide policies eliminate the "collective action trap," where individual teachers are forced to negotiate rules class-by-class.
- Instructional Freedom: Research from Virginia and Florida shows that phone-free policies lead to a "renewed sense of freedom" for teachers, with significantly less time spent on redirection.
- Academic Surge: The London School of Economics study found an 8x higher impact on underachieving students when distractions were removed.

SLIDE 4: Impact on School Culture

Beyond the Lesson Plan:

- Peer Interaction: Schools in the UK and Norway report increased eye contact, stronger peer relationships, and a "reset" of social skills during unstructured time.
- Bullying Reduction: Norway's national study showed a significant drop in bullying and a reduction in social comparison stressors when real-time messaging was removed from the building.
- Engagement: Ballard High (KY) saw a 67% increase in library checkouts, proving that students return to analog resources when digital ones are unavailable.

SLIDE 5: Logistics & Storage Protocols

How we will handle the hardware at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]:

- Storage Method: Devices will be stored in [INSERT METHOD: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / ASSIGNED LOCKERS / CLASSROOM CADDIES].
- Collection: [INSERT PROTOCOL: E.G., ADVISORY CHECK-IN / FIRST PERIOD ENTRY].
- Distribution: [INSERT PROTOCOL: E.G., DISMISSAL STATIONS / HOMEROOM RELEASE].

SLIDE 6: Managing Exceptions

Honoring Legal Requirements:

- Medical Needs: Students with a medical note (e.g., glucose monitoring) are permitted device access.
- IEP/504 Plans: Devices used as documented assistive technology remain allowed.
- Digital Literacy: Some lessons may still integrate technology; however, this will be strictly through [INSERT SCHOOL-ISSUED DEVICE, E.G., CHROMEBOOKS], not personal phones.

SLIDE 7: Our "Soft Landing" Strategy

Phase 1/INSERT TIME PERIOD Preparation Phase:

- The "Soft Launch": We will conduct a Pilot Day on [INSERT DATE] to test our distribution logistics and identify friction points.
- Unit Zero: INSERT TIME PERIOD, we will provide you with "Unit Zero" lessons to teach students foundational discussion skills and digital mindfulness.
- Admin Support: If a student resists, follow the "Rules are Rules" script. Call [INSERT OFFICE/CONTACT], and a member of the leadership team will collect the device within minutes.

SLIDE 8: Teacher Scripts & Response

Handling Resistance with Restorative Language:

- The Prompt: "We are following the state mandate to protect our learning time. Please place your device in [STORAGE]."
- The Response to Resistance: "I understand this is a change, but my focus is on your learning. I will call the office to help resolve this so we can get back to class."
- The Goal: Shift the conflict away from the teacher-student relationship and onto the school-wide policy.

SLIDE 9: Next Steps & Feedback

We are in this together.

- Staff Audit: Please submit feedback on the proposed storage locations by [INSERT DATE].
- Next Meeting: We will review the "Digital Wellness Bridge" curriculum on [INSERT DATE].
- Final Thought: Stricter policies lead to happier teachers. Let's work together to make INSERT SCHOOL YEAR our most focused year yet.

PHASE 1 – EDUCATOR RESOURCES

K - 5 SLIDES

SLIDE 1: Something big is coming...

- The big news: Next year/INSERT TIME PERIOD, our school is becoming a "Phone-Free Zone."
- The mission: We are making more room for playing, talking, and learning together!
- Our goal: To make sure every student has a happy, focused, and "connected" day.

SLIDE 2: Why are we doing this?

- More focus: When we put the screens away, our brains get stronger at thinking and solving puzzles.
- More friends: We want to hear your voices and see your smiles!
- More fun: Students in other schools who put their phones away are reading more books and playing more games together during lunch.

SLIDE 3: What does "phone-free" mean?

- The rule: Phones, smartwatches, and earbuds stay "Off and Away" from the first bell to the last bell.
- The change: This includes the hallway, the cafeteria, and even the playground!
- The new normal: We are joining kids all over the world (and all over Massachusetts!) who are doing the same thing.

SLIDE 4: Where will the phones go?

- Our plan: In the morning, you will put your devices in [INSERT STORAGE METHOD: E.G., A LOCKED POUCH / A CLASSROOM HOTEL / YOUR BACKPACK].
- Safe and sound: They stay there all day while you learn, and you get them back the second the school day is over.
- Checking the time: Don't worry! We are putting [INSERT: NEW WALL CLOCKS / TIMERS] in every room so you always know when it's time for lunch and recess!

SLIDE 6: Learning New "Superpowers"

- Super attention: Learning how to focus on one thing at a time (it's like a workout for your brain!).
- Face-to-face power: Practice looking at friends when they talk and learning how to "read" their happy or sad faces.
- The "Calm Down" Kit/Corner: Instead of scrolling when we feel nervous, we'll learn deep breathing and creative projects.

SLIDE 7: Safety & Staying in Touch

- Need to call home? You can use the school phone in [INSERT LOCATION].
- Emergency Info: Your families will get special messages from the school on their phones so they always know you are safe.
- The goal: To make school a place where you feel safe, calm, and ready to learn.

SLIDE 8: Let's Get Ready Together!

Summer Challenge:

- **Practice "unplugging:"** This summer, try spending 1 hour a day with no screens at all.
- **Ask questions:** We are here to help you get ready for our best school year yet.
- **Final thought:** We can not wait to see what you can do when you're fully "plugged in" to our school community!

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6 - 8 SLIDES

SLIDE 1: The [INSERT DATE] Reset

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]: Preparing for a Phone-Free Campus

- The mission: Shifting from "Digital Distraction" to "Real-World Connection."
- The why: To protect your focus, your mental health, and your right to learn without constant notifications.
- The change: Starting INSERT TIME PERIOD, we are becoming a "bell-to-bell" phone-free environment.

SLIDE 2: Why This? Why Now?

Giving Back Six Hours of Your Day.

- Schools across Massachusetts and the world are moving to a phone-free model.
- Global results: Students in the UK and Norway who went phone-free saw higher test scores and reported lower rates of bullying.
- The "respite": As psychologist Jean Twenge notes, the "always-on" culture is exhausting. We are providing a break from the social pressure of your pocket.

SLIDE 3: The Impact on Your School Experience

What happens when the screens go away?

- Real connection: At one high school, students didn't just stop scrolling—they started talking. Library checkouts jumped by 67% and school spirit increased.
- Brain gains: Research shows that even having a phone near you takes up "bandwidth" in your brain. Without them, your ability to focus on complex tasks increases by over 6%.
- Less drama: Without instant access to social media during the day, school-day bullying and social comparison decrease significantly.

SLIDE 4: Logistics: Where Does the Tech Go?

Storage & Security at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]:

- The method: We will use [INSERT STORAGE METHOD: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / CLASSROOM CADDIES / ASSIGNED LOCKERS].
- The scope: This includes smartphones, smartwatches, and all wireless earbuds (like AirPods).
- The process: Devices are secured at [INSERT START TIME] and released at [INSERT END TIME]. They stay with you/in your locker, but they remain "off and away" all day.

SLIDE 5: Transitioning This [INSERT TIME PERIOD]

How we are preparing you for the rollout:

- The Tech Audit: Notice how many times you reflexively check your phone today. We're going to work on breaking that "dopamine loop."
- New tools: We are stocking up on [INSERT: PHYSICAL CALCULATORS / WALL CLOCKS / LAB TIMERS] so you don't need a phone for classwork.
- The Feedback Interview: We want your input. What do you use your phone for most? Music? Keeping time? We will find school-approved alternatives for those needs.

SLIDE 6: Developing New "Life Skills"

Middle School is for building your foundation:

- Tolerating boredom: Believe it or not, boredom is where creativity starts. We'll practice "noticing" exercises to build your focus.
- Extended attention: We want to help you reach a "Flow State"—that feeling when you're so into a project or game that time flies by.
- Direct communication: Practice reading body language and tone of voice—skills that are often lost in a text message.

SLIDE 7: Safety & Emergencies

Keeping you safe and connected:

- The facts: During a crisis, safety experts say phones are a distraction. Silence and listening to staff instructions are the most important things you can do.
- Family contact: Your parents will receive real-time updates through [INSERT SYSTEM]. If you have a personal emergency, the office phone is available.
- Medical needs: If you use a device for a medical reason (like glucose monitoring), you will have an approved plan to use it safely.

SLIDE 8: The Vision

A school day designed for YOU.

- The Goal: A campus where lunch is for talking, hallways are for laughing, and classrooms are for learning—without a screen in the way.
- Next Steps: Join the [INSERT STUDENT ADVISORY GROUP] to help us plan "Phone-Free" activities for next year.
- Closing: Let's work together to make [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] a place where we truly connect.

9 - 12 SLIDES

SLIDE 1: The INSERT DATE Shift

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]: Transitioning to a phone-free campus

- The mission: Reclaiming our focus and prioritizing mental health over the "always-on" digital culture.
- The context: Schools across Massachusetts and the world are moving toward a ban on personal electronic devices during the school day.
- The objective: Moving from a culture of distraction to a culture of engagement and high-level learning.

SLIDE 2: Why Now? The Evidence for Change

This isn't about control; it's about your cognitive performance.

- Academic gains: A study by the London School of Economics found that phone-free environments increased test scores by 6.4%, providing the equivalent of an extra week of productivity per year.
- The "Brain Drain" Effect: Research shows that simply having a smartphone within reach—even if it's off—reduces your "available cognitive capacity."
- Social restoration: One high school reported a 67% surge in library engagement and a total "reset" of face-to-face social culture during lunch and passing periods.

SLIDE 3: Mental Health & The Digital Respite

Protecting your "attention budget."

- Lowering the pressure: Research in Norway and Spain found that phone-free schools saw a significant drop in bullying and social comparison stressors.
- Anxiety reduction: Psychologist Jean Twenge has linked constant connectivity to rising rates of teen anxiety and sleep deprivation.
- The goal: Providing a six-hour "digital break" to help you regulate your nervous system and focus on real-world connections.

SLIDE 4: Logistics: Hardware & Storage

How it will work at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]:

- The storage method: We are finalizing the use of [INSERT METHOD: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / ASSIGNED SMART-LOCKERS / SECURE CLASSROOM CADDIES].
- The policy: Devices (phones, smartwatches, and wireless earbuds) must be secured from the first bell until the final bell.
- Ownership: You maintain possession of your device, but it must remain inactive and secured throughout the school day.

SLIDE 5: Transitioning INSERT TIME PERIOD

How we are prepping for the "INSERT TIME PERIOD Rollout":

- The Tech Pivot Audit: We are currently auditing classrooms to ensure you have the analog tools you need, such as [INSERT: SCIENTIFIC CALCULATORS / WALL CLOCKS / PHYSICAL STOPWATCHES].

- The exit interview: We want to hear from you. What are your concerns? What digital tools do we need to provide via [INSERT: CHROMEBOOKS/MACBOOKS] to ensure you aren't at a disadvantage?
- Soft launch: We will hold a "Phone-Free Friday" on [INSERT DATE] to test logistics and distribution.

SLIDE 6: Developing Competitive Skills

High school is about preparing for what's next.

- Extended attention (flow): Deep work is a "superpower" in the modern economy. We want to help you build the stamina to stay in "Flow State" without being interrupted by notifications.
- In-Person communication: Professional success depends on reading non-verbal cues and body language—skills that are degraded by constant digital text.
- Stress management: We will be introducing "Coping Mechanisms" that don't involve a screen, such as deep breathing, nature, and physical movement.

SLIDE 7: Safety & Emergency Protocols

Clear communication is the priority.

- Emergency safety: Safety experts note that in a crisis, silence is vital. Phones can distract from life-saving instructions and overwhelm emergency networks.
- Real-time alerts: Families will receive instant updates via [INSERT SYSTEM].
- Access: If you need to contact home for an emergency, the Main Office and Guidance Suite phones are available.
- Legal Exceptions: Documented medical needs (e.g., glucose monitoring) and IEP/504 accommodations will be strictly honored.

SLIDE 8: Your Voice in the Bridge

Let's build the "Digital Wellness Bridge" together.

- Student agency: We want to work with the [INSERT STUDENT COUNCIL/LEADERSHIP GROUP] to design the rollout.
- The outcome: A campus where you are more focused, less stressed, and more connected to the people around you.

PHASE 2, PART 1 – SCHOOL LEADER RESOURCES

FAMILY LETTER

(These suggested resources were initially developed for use to prepare for a fall transition to the phone free ban; however, these can be adapted for use whenever you are beginning your work preparing for the upcoming transition.)

Subject: The Summer Bridge: Preparing for a Phone-Free September [INSERT ALTERNATE TIME PERIOD AS IT RELATES TO YOUR DISTRICT/SCHOOL PLAN]

Dear Families,

As we conclude an incredible school year, we are looking forward with excitement to fall INSERT YEAR. As previously shared, [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will be transitioning to a phone-free campus in alignment with best practices for learning and anticipated upcoming legislation related to a phone ban..

While this shift officially begins in September, the "bridge" to success starts now. To ensure our students return with the focus and social confidence they need to thrive, we are inviting you to partner with us in a "Summer Reset." Below is a roadmap of small, impactful habits you can build together over the next three months.

June – The "Buy-In"

Goal: Shift the narrative from "taking away a phone" to "training for success."

- Ask, don't lecture: Start low-pressure conversations.
  - » K - 5: "What is one fun thing you could do at recess if no one was looking at a screen?"
  - » 6 - 8: "If you couldn't check your phone for 6 hours, how would you feel? Let's figure out how to handle that 'boredom' together."
  - » 9 - 12: "We want to make sure you aren't feeling 'withdrawal' during 3rd period. What's our plan to practice this summer?"
- The Car Console Rule. Designate the car a "Phone-Free Zone" for short trips. This builds 10–15 minute windows of "boredom tolerance" essential for classroom focus.

July – Resetting the Baseline

Goal: Lower dopamine dependency and retrain attention.

- The "Summer Swap": Encourage active habits over passive scrolling.
  - » Swap scrolling for a physical book (retrains linear attention).
  - » Swap solo gaming for board games (builds face-to-face social cues).
  - » Swap texting for meeting at a park (reduces social anxiety).
- The "Wait Mate" Rule. When at a restaurant or in a waiting room, keep phones put away. Practicing "just sitting" without digital stimulation is a critical skill for school success.

August – The Dress Rehearsal

Goal: Mimic the school environment to reduce September anxiety.

- Scenario Planning: Discuss the "What Ifs."
  - » Emergencies: Reassure them: "If there is a real emergency, the school calls me immediately. You are safe."
  - » Morning Routine: Two weeks before school, practice checking phones at breakfast and then putting them in a "Phone Hotel" (a kitchen basket) until lunch.
- The Analog Alarm: Buy a standard alarm clock so the phone can "sleep" in the kitchen overnight rather than the bedroom.

What to Expect in September: When we reunite this fall, [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will be ready to support your student's transition:

- Secure storage: Students will utilize [INSERT STORAGE METHOD: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / LOCKERS] upon arrival.
- Supportive environment: Our staff is trained to help students manage the transition with empathy and restorative practices.
- Open communication: Our office line [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] remains the primary link between you and your child during the day.

If you are interested in learning more about promoting healthy technology habits at home, check out resources from CommonSense Media and Boston Children's Digital Wellness Lab:

CommonSense Media:

- Family Tech Planners
- Family Guides
- Family Media Agreement
- Offline and Off-Screen Activities

Digital Wellness Labs:

- Family Guide to Digital Wellness
- Family Guide to Teaching Kids and Teens Essential Digital Skills
- Family Guide: 5 Strategies for Setting Digital Media Boundaries and Guidelines for Kids
- Family Guide to Creating Shared Media Use Agreements
- Family Guide to Media Literacy & Social-Emotional Learning

By modeling these habits this summer—putting our own phones in the glove box or the kitchen basket—we show our children that we are in this together. Thank you for your partnership in giving our students back their focus, their friendships, and their childhood. Have a wonderful, "unplugged" summer!

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME]

[INSERT TITLE]

COMMUNITY SLIDES

SLIDE 1: The Summer Bridge: Preparing for INSERT TIME PERIOD

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]: Family Engagement Night

- Our mission: a united front to support student mental health and academic focus.
- Tonight's goal: practical strategies for a "soft landing" in INSERT TIME PERIOD.
- The big picture: transitioning from the "always-on" digital culture to a focused school community.

SLIDE 2: Why a Summer Transition?

Resetting the "Dopamine Loop"

- State-dependent learning: the brain attaches habits to environments. If summer is 100% "on," September feels like "withdrawal."
- The goal: to gradually build "boredom tolerance"—the superpower of being able to sit, think, and focus without a screen.
- The partnership: we provide the phone-free environment; you provide the summer training ground.

SLIDE 3: June Strategy: The "Buy-In"

Shift from "Punishment" to "Training"

- The script: ask, don't lecture.
- K - 5: What games can we play at the park without a tablet?"
- 6-12: "How can we make sure you don't feel anxious when you can't check your phone for 6 hours?"
- Car Console Rule. Designate the car as a "phone-free zone" for short trips to build small windows of focus.

SLIDE 4: July Strategy: Resetting the Baseline

Building "Distress Tolerance" through Gradual Exposure

- The "summer swap": replace passive scrolling with active engagement.
- Swap scrolling for a physical book (retrains linear attention).
- Swap solo gaming for board games (builds face-to-face cues).
- The "wait mate" rule: in restaurants or waiting rooms, keep phones put away. Practice "just sitting" without digital stimulation.

SLIDE 5: August Strategy: The Dress Rehearsal

Mimicking the School Day

- The morning simulation: two weeks before school, check phones at breakfast, then put them away in a "phone hotel" (a kitchen basket) for 3–4 hours.
- The analog reset: buy a standard alarm clock so the phone doesn't "sleep" in the bedroom.
- Scenario planning: Discuss "what ifs." "If you forget your gym clothes, you will survive the discomfort. If there is a real emergency, the school calls me."

SLIDE 6: What to Expect in September

Our First Week Logistics at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]:

- Arrival: devices (including smartwatches/earbuds) will be secured in [INSERT STORAGE METHOD: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / LOCKERS].
- Bell-to-bell: this includes lunch, recess, and passing periods.
- Communication: our office is your direct link. Call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] for any family emergencies.
- Exceptions: all medical (e.g., glucose) and IEP/504 needs will be strictly honored.

SLIDE 7: The Most Important Factor: Modeling

The "Mirror Check" Audit

- The reality: parent screen use is the #1 predictor of child screen habits.
- The challenge: adhere to the same rules you set for them during family time (dinner, car, waiting rooms).
- The narrative: "I realized I'm addicted too. We are doing the 'car rule' together. My phone goes in the glove box, too."

SLIDE 8: Next Steps & Resources

We are in this together.

- Take home: pick up the "Unplugged and Engaged Summer Calendar" with daily 5-minute challenges.
- August check-in: look for our "welcome back" email on [INSERT DATE].
- Final thought: we are giving them back their childhood. Let's make it a great one.

THE 10-WEEK UNPLUGGED AND ENGAGED SUMMER CALENDAR

Goal: Build focus, reduce anxiety, and prepare for a phone-free fall at school.

Week	Phase	Challenge	The "Why"
Week 1	June: Buy-In	The Car Console Rule: All phones go in the center console or glove box for every trip under 15 minutes.	Builds "Boredom Tolerance"—the ability to sit without a screen.
Week 2	June: Buy-In	The Notification Audit: Go into settings and turn off all non-human notifications (apps, games, shopping).	Reduces the "phantom vibrate" reflex and constant dopamine pings.
Week 3	June: Buy-In	The Family Interview: Ask: "What is one thing we used to do together that we stopped because of phones?" Do that	Re-establishes the value of face-to-face connection.
Week 4	July: Reset	The Wait-Mate Rule: No phones while waiting (doctor's office, grocery line, or for a table at a restaurant).	Practicing "just sitting" is a prerequisite for classroom focus.
Week 5	July: Reset	The Summer Swap: Spend 30 minutes reading a physical book or magazine before any morning screen time.	Retrains "Linear Attention" (the ability to read a page without clicking).
Week 6	July: Reset	Analog Hour: Pick one hour every day where the whole family puts phones in a "basket" and does something active.	Resets the dopamine baseline for the entire household.
Week 7	July: Reset	Eye-Contact Challenge: Practice looking at the person you are talking to for the entire conversation.	Rebuilds non-verbal communication skills lost to texting.
Week 8	August: Dress Rehearsal	The Alarm Clock Pivot: Buy a standard alarm clock. Phones now "sleep" in the kitchen overnight.	Ensures the brain gets restorative sleep without blue-light interference.
Week 9	August: Dress Rehearsal	The Morning Simulation: From 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM, phones go in the "Phone Hotel" (a basket) to mimic school hours.	Prepares the brain for the specific "State-Dependent" environment of school.
Week 10	August: Dress Rehearsal	The "What If" Walkthrough: Discuss how to find friends at lunch or handle a forgotten lunchbox without a text.	Reduces "First Day" anxiety by having a concrete social plan.

TEACHER SLIDES

SLIDE 1: Mission: [INSERT TIME PERIOD] Implementation

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]: Restoring the Classroom Experience

- The context: Schools across Massachusetts and the world are moving toward a ban on personal electronic devices during the school day.
- The goal: Moving from "restricting devices" to "facilitating focus."
- Our support: Administration will lead the logistics so you can lead the learning.

SLIDE 2: The "Tech Pivot" Audit

What to do before you leave for Summer:

- Identify dependencies: Review your curriculum for any "phone-reliant" tasks (e.g., "Take a photo of the board," "Scan this QR code").
- The redesign: Plan to use [INSERT: CHROMEBOOKS/LMS SYSTEMS] for these tasks or request analog alternatives.
- Supply check: Audit your room for [INSERT: WALL CLOCKS / CALCULATORS / TIMERS]. If you need them, request them by [INSERT DATE].

SLIDE 3: Student Withdrawal & Recovery

What to expect in the first 21 days:

- Dopamine Gap: Expect students to be more restless, impulsive, or "bored" as their brains adjust to lower stimulation.
- "Social Reset": You will see an increase in face-to-face friction as students relearn how to navigate social cues without a screen "buffer."
- The payoff: Research from Norway and the UK shows that after this initial phase, student-teacher relationships and peer cooperation improve significantly.

SLIDE 4: Enforcement: The Unified Front

How we will handle violations:

- Zero negotiation: The policy is school-wide. There are no "opt-out" teachers or periods.
- The script: "This is a phone-free campus to protect your focus. Please put it in [STORAGE METHOD]."
- Administration backup: If a student refuses, call [INSERT EXTENSION]. A building leader will handle the removal of the device immediately to prevent classroom escalation.

SLIDE 5: The "Digital Wellness Bridge" Lessons

Your First Week Curriculum:

- Unit Zero: We will provide 5-minute "Brain Break" and "Attention Budget" activities for your first-period classes.
- The skill focus: Teaching students how to reach a "Flow State"—the ability to stay in a task for 20+ minutes without an interruption.
- Modeling: We ask that staff also model phone-free behavior in hallways and common areas to set the professional standard.

SLIDE 6: Next Steps & Fall/INSERT TIME PERIOD Launch

The Road to Implementation:

- Storage installation: All [INSERT: LOCKERS/POUCHES] will be installed by [INSERT DATE].
- Staff training: Our INSERT DATE PD will focus on "Restorative De-escalation" for phone-related conflicts.
- Closing thought: We are not just banning a device; we are reclaiming the school culture. Let's make INSERT SCHOOL YEAR the year of connection.

PHONE FREE FRIDAY RESOURCES

Phone-Free Friday: Pilot Implementation Kit

Objective: To identify logistical bottlenecks, observe student reactions, and normalize the upcoming change in a controlled, low-pressure environment.

- *Draft Message to Families (send 1 week prior):*

  "At [School Name], we are preparing for the statewide bell-to-bell phone-free transition happening INSERT TIME PERIOD. To ensure a smooth rollout, we are hosting 'Phone-Free Fridays' throughout INSERT MONTH. This allows our staff and students to practice our new storage procedures and experience a day of "Digital Respite." We view this as a test-run for our systems, not a day of discipline. We look forward to seeing how increased presence and focus can transform our school day."

Pre-School Setup

- Ensure every classroom has its designated storage station (pouch, bin, or cabinet) ready to go *before* the first bell.
- Ensure every staff member has the "Neutral Persistence" script printed and visible.
  - *The Script:* "I hear you, [Student Name], but the policy for today is phones in [Storage Location]. What would you like to do?" (Avoid the word "No" and avoid debating.)

During the Day (The "Logistics Check")

- *The "Collection" Bottleneck*: Monitor the first 5 minutes of class. How long does it take for 100% of devices to be stored? If it exceeds 5 minutes, your logistics need adjustment.
- *The "Hot Spots":* Assign non-classroom staff (guidance, deans, coaches) to monitor the "hot spots" (cafeteria, hallways, restrooms) to observe where students congregate and how they react when they cannot check their phones.

The "Engagement Void" (What to do instead)

- *Proactive "Pressure Valves":* Since students are used to phones for dopamine, replace that habit with low-stakes interaction:
- *Cafeteria:* Provide decks of cards, communal board games, or trivia prompts at tables.
- *Transitions:* Teachers stand in doorways to facilitate real-time conversations rather than monitoring phones.

The Fidelity Debrief (The "Friday Afternoon" Meeting)

- *Do not skip this. This data is the foundation for your implementation plan. Use this simple "Keep/Start/Stop" debrief for staff at the end of the day:*

Logistical Question	Yes / No / Needs Work	Notes
Did all students know where to store devices?		
Did we encounter any "bottleneck" (delays > 5 mins)?		
Did we have adequate staff in "hot spots"?		
Did the "Neutral Persistence" script work?		

The Leadership Reflection (The "So What?"):

- *Systemic Failure:* Did we have consistent trouble with collection?
  - » *Action: re-evaluate storage hardware.*
- *Cultural Failure:* Did we have excessive staff-student conflict?
  - » *Action: re-train on Neutral Persistence; clarify the "Why" with students.*
- *Instructional Opportunity:* Did teachers observe an increase in student engagement?
  - » *Action: Collect these success stories to use in the September "Why" campaign.*

Troubleshooting Guide for "Phone-Free Friday"

If this happens...	Do this...
Student refuses to surrender phone.	*Do not escalate.* Remove the student from the group (if possible) or initiate a 1:1 conversation. Use the "Neutral Persistence" script until they comply or it becomes a persistent, individualized issue (MTSS Tier 2).
Families calls the school in a panic.	*Be ready.* Have a pre-scripted response: "This is a trial day to ensure our safety systems work for September. Your child is safe, focused, and learning. We appreciate your patience as we practice."
Student is caught with a second or "hidden" phone.	*Log it.* This is a data point for your policy. Treat as a Tier 1 behavioral reminder for this pilot day.

PHASE 2, PART 1 – EDUCATOR RESOURCES

K - 5 STUDENT SLIDES

Title: Our Big School Adventure: Getting Ready for a Focused Fall/INSERT TIME PERIOD

Slide 1: A Big Change is Coming!

- The news: Starting this INSERT TIME PERIOD, our school is becoming a "Phone-Free Zone."
- The mission: We are making more room for playing, talking, and learning together.
- The rule: Personal phones and smartwatches will stay "Off and Away" from the first bell to the last bell.

Slide 2: Why are we doing this?

- Better brains: When we put screens away, our brains get better at solving puzzles and learning new things.
- More friends: We want to hear your voices and see your smiles, not just the tops of your heads!
- The best part: Students in phone-free schools have more fun at recess and read more of their favorite books.

Slide 3: Your Mission

- The Car Rule: Ask your grownups to keep the car "phone-free" for short trips. Practice looking out the window or talking!
- The "Wait Mate" Challenge: When you are waiting for dinner or at the doctor, try to "just sit" or bring a small toy/book instead of a screen.
- Play outside: Try to have one hour every day where no one in the house uses a screen.

Slide 4: What to Expect in September/INSERT TIME PERIOD

- Safe keeping: When you arrive, you'll put your device in [INSERT STORAGE: E.G., YOUR BACKPACK / A CLASSROOM POUCH].
- New tools: We will have new [INSERT: CLOCKS / TIMERS] in every room so you always know what time it is.
- Emergency contact: If you need to talk to your family, you can always use the school phone in the office.

K - 5 FAMILY LETTER

Grades K - 5: The "Focus Zone" Handout

Today at school, we discussed our transition to a Phone-Free Campus for INSERT TIME PERIOD.

The Goal: We want to give students more room to play, learn, and grow without digital distractions.

What families can do to prepare:

- The Car Console Rule: Designate the car as a "Phone-Free Zone" for short trips to build curiosity and conversation.
- The "Wait Mate" Challenge: Practice waiting at restaurants or appointments without a screen. Bring a book or a small toy instead!
- The Afternoon Reset: Try to have one hour every day where the whole family unplugs to play outside or do a craft.

What to expect when the phone-free rule begins:

- "Off and Away": Personal devices will be stored safely during the day so students can focus on their friends and teachers.
- Safe connection: If you need to reach your child, our Main Office is your direct link.

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6 - 8 STUDENT SLIDES

Title: The INSERT TIME PERIOD Reset: Building Your Focus Superpower

Slide 1: The New Standard

- The policy: Effective INSERT TIME PERIOD, [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] will be a "bell-to-bell" phone-free campus.
- The scope: This includes phones, smartwatches, and all earbuds.
- The goal: Shifting from "Digital Distraction" to "Real-World Connection."

Slide 2: Why This Matters for Middle School

- Less drama: Without instant access to social media, school-day bullying and social pressure drop significantly.
- Better focus: Research shows your "Attention Budget" is much higher when you aren't waiting for a notification.
- The respite: You deserve a break from the "always-on" culture. We are providing six hours of digital peace.

Slide 3: Your Preparation/"Summer Bridge" Strategy

- Reset your baseline: Practice "The Summer/INSERT TIME PERIOD Swap." Replace 30 minutes of scrolling with 30 minutes of a physical book or a board game.
- The "Wait" Rule: Next time you're in a waiting room or a car, don't reach for your phone. Practice "noticing" the world around you.
- Night routine: Get an analog alarm clock. Practice keeping your phone out of your bedroom starting INSERT TIME PERIOD.

Slide 4: Logistics: Day 1

- Storage: You will secure your device in [INSERT STORAGE: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / ASSIGNED LOCKERS] upon arrival.
- Lunch and Recess: The policy includes lunch and recess. This is your time to talk, move, and hang out face-to-face.
- Emergency access: Your parents can reach you via the Main Office at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].

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6 - 8 FAMILY LETTER

Grades 6 - 8: The "Digital Wellness" Bridge

Today, your student learned about our upcoming move to a "bell-to-bell" phone-free environment starting in INSERT TIME PERIOD

The Goal: To reduce social pressure and bullying while increasing academic focus and face-to-face connection. What families can do to prepare:

- Reset the baseline: Encourage your student to swap 30 minutes of scrolling for 30 minutes of "active" focus—like reading, a board game, or a hobby.
- The bedroom boundary: Purchase a standard alarm clock so phones can "sleep" in a common area overnight rather than the bedroom.
- The morning simulation: Practice a 3-hour "unplugged" window during the morning to mimic school hours.

What to expect in INSERT TIME PERIOD:

- Secure storage: Students will secure devices in [INSERT METHOD] upon arrival.
- Supportive Environment: We are prioritizing student well-being and will help them navigate this adjustment with empathy.

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9 - 12 STUDENT SLIDES

Title: Reclaiming Focus: The INSERT TIME PERIOD Digital Wellness Transition

Slide 1: The Transition to a Phone-Free Campus

- The context: Schools across Massachusetts and the world are moving toward a ban on personal electronic devices during the school day. Our school will be phone-free from "bell-to-bell" starting INSERT TIME PERIOD.
- The context: This is part of a national movement to prioritize student cognitive performance and mental health.
- The shift: We are moving from a "restricted" environment to a professional "Focus Zone."

Slide 2: The Science of Your Attention

- The 6.4% Gain: Studies show that phone-free environments increase test scores significantly—the equivalent of an extra week of school.
- Cognitive capacity: Even a phone sitting on a desk—even if it's off—reduces your brain's ability to perform complex tasks.
- Social Restoration: High schools with this policy report a "cultural reset," with students reconnecting during lunch and social periods.

Slide 3: Summer/INSERT TIME PERIOD Preparation: Training Your Brain

- Dopamine reset: Gradually reduce your "screen time" in August. Try to go 3-4 hours during the day without checking your device.
- The "Analog Audit": Ensure you have the tools you need for September (e.g., a physical scientific calculator, a watch, a standard alarm clock).
- Develop "Flow": Practice staying in a "Deep Work" state for 45 minutes this summer—read, build, or create without checking notifications.

Slide 4: INSERT TIME PERIOD/fall: Logistics & Professionalism

- Storage protocol: All devices (including smartwatches/AirPods) will be secured in [INSERT STORAGE: E.G., LOCKERS / SMART POUCHES] for the duration of the day.
- Medical/learning needs: Documented IEP/504 and medical exemptions (e.g., glucose monitoring) will be strictly honored.
- Safety first: In an emergency, silence is safety. We have professional communication protocols to keep your families informed in real-time.

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9 - 12 FAMILY LETTER

Grades 9 - 12: The "Professional Focus" Shift

We met with our high school students today to discuss the new phone ban and our shift to a phone-free campus this INSERT TIME PERIOD/fall.

The goal: To reclaim cognitive "bandwidth" and provide a necessary respite from the "always-on" digital culture.

What Families Can Do This Summer:

- The "Flow State" Challenge: Encourage your student to practice "Deep Work"—spending 45 minutes on a task (reading, building, studying) without checking notifications.
- Scenario planning: Discuss how to handle "What Ifs." "*If you forget your practice gear, how will you handle it without an instant text?*"
- Model the boundary: The best way to support this transition is to model phone-free times during family meals or outings.

What to expect in INSERT TIME PERIOD/September:

- Bell to bell: Students will secure devices (including smartwatches/AirPods) at the start of the day. Devices will be returned at the end of the day
- Reliable safety: In an emergency, our professional communication systems will keep you informed in real-time. Students will have access to school phones if they need to contact home.

PHASE 2, PART 2 – SCHOOL LEADER RESOURCES

FAMILY LETTER

Subject: Reclaiming the School Day: Our K-12 Phone-Free Transition

Dear Families,

Welcome to the INSERT school year! As we open our doors this INSERT TIME PERIOD/fall, [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] is officially implementing a "bell-to-bell" phone-free environment. This shift aligns with aniticpated Massachusetts legislation and our shared commitment to student well-being.

Why this change? This shift is not about "taking away" a device; it is about giving back six hours of childhood each day. We are joining a global movement—from Florida and Virginia to the United Kingdom and Norway—driven by compelling evidence of the transformative power of phone-free environments:

- Academic gains: Research shows that removing phone distractions is equivalent to an additional week of schooling per year.
- Mental well-being: By providing a "digital respite," we are protecting our students from the "always-on" culture linked to teen anxiety and social pressure.
- Revitalized connection: We want our hallways filled with conversation and our playgrounds filled with play, not screens.

The policy: Starting Day 1, the following protocols will be in effect across all grade levels:

- The Scope: All personal electronic devices—including smartphones, smartwatches, and wireless earbuds—must be turned off and stored upon arrival.
- Storage: Students will utilize [INSERT METHOD: E.G., INDIVIDUAL YONDR POUCHES / ASSIGNED LOCKERS / BACKPACK STORAGE] from the first bell until the final dismissal.
- The Standard: This policy applies to the entire school day, including lunch, recess, and passing periods.

Supporting the transition at home: We ask for your partnership in framing this as a positive "reset" for our community.

- The "Car Console" Habit: Practice "unplugging" during short car trips this week to build boredom tolerance.
- The Analog Alarm: Switch to a standard alarm clock so phones can "sleep" in a common area overnight rather than the bedroom.

- The "Do Not Disturb" Partnership: We ask that families refrain from texting students during the school day. This allows students to focus fully on their environment without the pressure of a digital interruption.

Safety and communication: We understand that direct access feels like a safety net, but in an emergency, silence and attention to protocol are our best defenses.

- To reach your child: Please call the Main Office at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]. Our staff will locate your child immediately.
- Emergency alerts: We will continue to use [INSERT SYSTEM NAME] to provide families with real-time updates and instructions during any critical event.
- Medical exceptions: Documented medical needs (e.g., glucose monitoring) and IEP/504 accommodations will be strictly honored.

If you are interested in learning more about promoting healthy technology habits at home, check out resources from CommonSense Media and Boston Children's Digital Wellness Lab:

CommonSense Media:

- Family Tech Planners
- Family Guides
- Family Media Agreement
- Offline and Off-Screen Activities

Digital Wellness Labs:

- Family Guide to Digital Wellness
- Family Guide to Teaching Kids and Teens Essential Digital Skills
- Family Guide: 5 Strategies for Setting Digital Media Boundaries and Guidelines for Kids
- Family Guide to Creating Shared Media Use Agreements
- Family Guide to Media Literacy & Social-Emotional Learning

Thank you for partnering with us to keep our classrooms focused on learning, connection, and the well-being of every student.

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME]
[INSERT TITLE]
[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]

COMMUNITY SLIDES

SLIDE 1: Welcome to a Focused INSERT TIE PERIOD/Fall

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]: Launching Our Phone-Free Campus

- Our commitment: Providing every student with a distraction-free environment to learn, connect, and thrive.
- The context: Schools across Massachusetts and the world are moving toward a ban on personal electronic devices during the school day to foster student learning and well-being.
- Tonight's goal: Clear logistics, answering your questions, and partnering for a successful Day 1.

SLIDE 2: Day 1 Logistics: The Entry Routine

How the "Bell-to-Bell" policy works every morning:

- Arrival: As students enter, they will power down all personal devices (phones, smartwatches, and earbuds).
- Storage: Devices will be secured in [INSERT METHOD: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / ASSIGNED LOCKERS].
- Duration: Devices remain secured from the first bell through the final dismissal, including lunch and passing periods.
- End of Day: Students will [INSERT UNLOCKING PROCESS: E.G., TAP AN UNLOCKING STATION / RETRIEVE FROM LOCKER] as they exit the building.

SLIDE 3: Why "Bell-to-Bell?"

Protecting the Social and Academic Environment

- The "Switch Cost": It takes the human brain an average of 23 minutes to regain deep focus after checking a notification.
- Lunch and recess: These are critical times for developing face-to-face social skills and "unplugging" from digital social pressures.
- The results: Schools that include lunch in their phone-free policy report significantly lower rates of cyberbullying and higher student engagement.

SLIDE 4: Safety & Emergency Protocols

Your most important question: "How do I reach my child?"

- The Main Office: Our office staff is your direct line. Call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] for any family emergency. We will bring your student to a private office to speak with you immediately.
- In-school emergencies: In a crisis, silence is safety. We follow professional protocols to keep students focused on instructions.
- Family alerts: We use [INSERT SYSTEM NAME] to send real-time text/email alerts to families.

SLIDE 5: Medical & Learning Accommodations

Ensuring every student has what they need.

- Medical monitoring: Students who use phones for health needs (e.g., glucose monitoring/Dexcom) will be granted specific exemptions.
- IEP/504 Plans: Documented assistive technology requirements are strictly honored.
- The protocol: These students will use [INSERT SYSTEM: E.G., A DIFFERENT COLORED POUCH / A SPECIFIC DESK TAG] to ensure staff are aware of their authorized use.

SLIDE 6: FAQ – Part 1

"What if my child's device is lost or damaged?"

- Answer: Since students keep their secured devices in their possession (in [POUCHES/LOCKERS]), the risk is minimal. The school follows standard liability protocols for personal property.

"What if I need to tell my child about a change in after-school plans?"

- Answer: Please call the Main Office before [INSERT TIME]. We will deliver the message to your student's classroom.

"Will students still have access to technology?"

- Answer: Yes! We are phone-free, not tech-free. Students will use school-issued [CHROMEBOOKS/LAPTOPS] for all approved academic tasks.

SLIDE 7: FAQ – Part 2

"What about my child's anxiety? They feel safer with a phone."

- Answer: We recognize this transition is a big shift. Our staff, including mental health staff, are available to help students build new coping skills that don't rely on a screen.

"Can they use it just for music during independent work?"

- Answer: No. To ensure a unified environment, personal earbuds and streaming are replaced by [INSERT ALTERNATIVE: E.G., CLASSROOM LOW-FI BEATS / SCHOOL-APPROVED HEADPHONES].

"Is this a punishment?"

- Answer: Absolutely not. This is a cultural investment. We are protecting their "Attention Budget" so they can succeed.

SLIDE 8: The INSERT TIME PERIOD/fall Roadmap

What the next 12 weeks look like:

- Weeks 1–2 (The Adjustment): Focus on routine. Staff will provide "Digital Detox" support and extra social activities during lunch.
- Month 1 (The Reset): We will host a "Social Connection Week" to celebrate new friendships and face-to-face engagement.
- Month 2 (Data Check-In): We will share our first "Impact Report" with families, detailing changes in classroom focus and social climate.

- Month 3 (Wellness Workshop): A family night focused on managing "Digital Stress" at home during the holidays.

SLIDE 9: How Families Can Partner With Us

The "Three Simple Asks" for a successful year:

- The "Do Not Text" Promise: Please refrain from texting your child during school hours. This prevents them from being tempted to break policy.
- The Morning Charge: Ensure devices are charged and ready to be powered down before they hit the school sidewalk.
- The "Check-In" Conversation: Ask your student: "What did you notice today that you would have *missed if you were on your phone?"*

EDUCATOR SLIDES

SLIDE 1: Mission Launch: Day 1 & Beyond

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]: Implementing Our Phone-Free Campus

- The Vision: Moving from "restricting devices" to "protecting the learning environment."
- The Goal for Today: Clear protocols, a unified front, and a roadmap for the first 30 days.
- Our Promise: Administration will handle the high-level enforcement so you can focus on high-level instruction.

SLIDE 2: The Day 1 Entry Routine

The Logistical Foundation

- The Greeting: Every student will be met at [INSERT LOCATIONS: E.G., ENTRANCE A/B] by an admin/staff team.
- The Action: Devices (phones, smartwatches, earbuds) are powered down and secured in [INSERT STORAGE: E.G., YONDR POUCHES / LOCKERS] before entering the hallways.
- Late Arrivals: Students arriving late must check in through the Main Office to secure their device before going to class.
- Staff Role: Simply verify the device is secured as students enter your room. Do not engage in debates; redirect any issues to the "Response Team."

SLIDE 3: The First 5 Days: "Unit Zero"

Setting the Tone in the Classroom

- Day 1: Review the "Attention Budget." Explicitly explain why we are doing this (Mental Health + Focus).
- Day 2–5: Use the 5-Minute Brain Breaks (provided in your toolkit) to help students manage restlessness.
- Modeling: Staff phones must be out of sight in hallways and classrooms. If you must use a device for school business, narrate the action: "I am checking the safety portal on my tablet now."

SLIDE 4: Enforcement & The Unified Front

Consistency is our Greatest Tool

- The Standard: "Bell-to-Bell" means exactly that. There are no "music-only" periods or "reward" phone time.
- The Script: "Our classroom is a phone-free zone to protect your focus. Please put that in your [pouch/locker] now. Thank you."
- Escalation Protocol: If a student refuses:
  1. Provide one calm redirect.
  2. If they persist, contact [INSERT OFFICE/EXTENSION].
  3. The Response Team will remove the student/device to keep your instruction moving.

SLIDE 5: Identifying the "Medical/IEP Pass"

Protecting Student Privacy and Needs

- Visual Cues: Students with authorized medical exemptions (e.g., glucose monitoring) will have a [INSERT IDENTIFIER: E.G., NEON GREEN POUCH / DESK STICKER].
- Privacy: Do not ask students about their medical condition. If they have the authorized pass, their use is permitted for health monitoring only.
- Academic Tech: Remind students that [CHROMEBOOKS/LAPTOPS] are the only approved tech for classroom tasks.

SLIDE 6: What to Expect: The "First Month Friction"

Preparing for Student Pushback

- The "Itch": Expect students to be fidgety and reach for empty pockets. This is a neurological reflex.
- The "Boredom" Stage: Students may complain that class feels longer. Use this as an opportunity to introduce "Deep Work" sessions.
- The Shift: By Week 3, research shows that peer-to-peer socialization increases and "digital drama" during class time drops significantly.

SLIDE 7: Safety & Communication

Keeping it Professional

- Family Contact: If a student needs to contact home, send them to the Main Office or Guidance.
- Crisis Protocol: In any drill or emergency, reiterate: "Silence is Safety." No phones should be out, as they interfere with emergency communication and spread unverified info.
- Staff Updates: Admin will provide a "Policy Pulse" email every Friday in Month 1/ September to address any recurring issues.

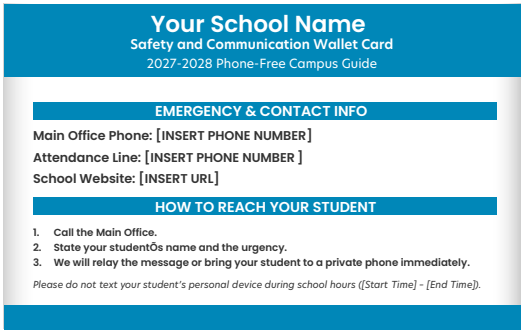
SLIDE 8: The INSERT TIME PERIOD/fall Roadmap: Wins & Data

Measuring our Success

- Month 1/September: Focus on routine and de-escalation.
- Month 2/October: We will survey staff on classroom engagement levels.
- Month 3/November: We will share data with the community (e.g., "30% decrease in tech-related disciplinary referrals").
- Your Voice: Join the Digital Wellness Committee meeting on [INSERT DATE] to help us refine the process.

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION WALLET CARD

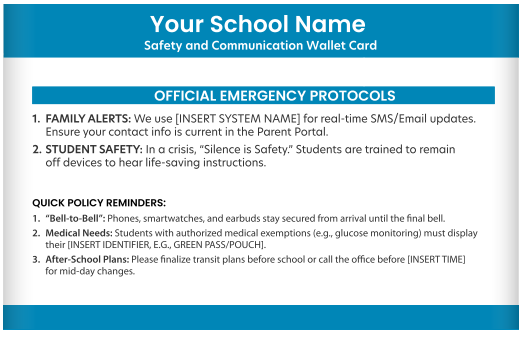
Front Side:



- [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] Safety and Communication Wallet Card
- [INSERT SCHOOL YEAR] Phone-Free Campus Guide
- Emergency & Contact Info:
  - » Main Office Phone: [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]
  - » Attendance Line: [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]
  - » School Website: [INSERT URL]
- HOW TO REACH YOUR STUDENT:
  1. Call the Main Office.
  2. State your student's name and the urgency.
  3. We will relay the message or bring your student to a private phone immediately.

  Please do not text your student's personal device during school hours ([Start Time] – [End Time]).

Back Side: Safety & Logistics



OFFICIAL EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS:

- Family Alerts: We use [INSERT SYSTEM NAME] for real-time SMS/Email updates. Ensure your contact info is current in the Parent Portal.
- Student Safety: In a crisis, "Silence is Safety." Students are trained to remain off devices to hear life-saving instructions.

QUICK POLICY REMINDERS:

- "Bell-to-Bell": Phones, smartwatches, and earbuds stay secured from arrival until the final bell.
- Medical Needs: Students with authorized medical exemptions (e.g., glucose monitoring) must display their [INSERT IDENTIFIER, E.G., GREEN PASS/POUCH].
- After-School Plans: Please finalize transit plans *before* school or call the office before [INSERT TIME] for mid-day changes.

Implementation Tips:

- Distribute at "Back to School" Nights: Hand these out during the INSERT TIME PERIOD/ spring orientation or the week before school starts in September.
- The "Why" Matters: When you hand these to families, explain that this card is not about restricting communication, but about making it reliable. Explain that texting a student's phone is "unreliable" (they may have it stored, or be in a class), whereas calling the office guarantees the message reaches them.
- Digital Version: You may also want to generate a digital version (PDF) for parents/ caregivers to save to their phone's "Favorites" or "Photos" so they always have the

PHASE 2, PART 2 – EDUCATOR RESOURCES

K - 5 FAMILY LETTER

Subject: Welcome Back! Creating a Space for Play and Focus

Dear Families,

I am so excited to welcome your child to our classroom! This year, our room will be a place where we focus on "Eyes Up, Hearts Open." As part of Massachusett's move to phone free schools, I want to share how we will manage technology in our specific classroom.

Our Classroom Focus:

- The Backpack Ritual: For our younger learners, we are practicing the "Off and Away" habit. If your child brings a phone or smartwatch, we will practice making sure it stays "asleep" in their backpack the moment they enter our room.
- Reclaiming Play: Without the distraction of buzzing watches or screens, we will be spending more time on hands-on building, drawing, and face-to-face games.
- Teacher First: I am teaching the students that if they feel sick, sad, or need help, I am their "First Responder." We are building the habit of asking a grown-up for help rather than trying to text home from a device.

How you can help: If your child wears a smartwatch, please help them set it to "School Mode" before they arrive. This ensures they can focus on their friends and their learning without interruptions.

I can't wait to see what we achieve together!

Warmly,

[Teacher Name]

6 - 8 FAMILY LETTER

Subject: A New Rhythm: Our Phone-Free Middle School Experience

Dear Families,

Middle school is a time of incredible social and academic growth. To support this, our classroom is transitioning to a Phone-Free Environment. This isn't just about rules; it's about giving your student a "Digital Reset"—a six-hour break from the social pressures of the online world.

Our Classroom Focus:

- The "Attention Bank:" We will be talking a lot about our "Attention Budget." We'll practice focusing on one task at a time, which helps lower stress and improves memory.
- Social skills: Group projects in this class will focus on active listening and "reading the room." We're trading emojis for real eye contact and conversation.
- Analog support: I have stocked our room with [INSERT: physical dictionaries/ calculators/timers] so students have everything they need to succeed without needing to reach for a phone.

How you can help: Please support our "Bell-to-Bell" policy by establishing a clear dismissal/ pick-up plan with your student before school starts. Since they will not be able to check texts at dismissal, having a "usual spot" helps reduce afternoon anxiety.

Thank you for partnering with me to create a focused, peaceful learning space.

Best regards,

[Teacher Name]

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9 - 12 FAMILY LETTER

Subject: Unplugged and Engaged: Our Phone-Free Partnership

Dear Families,

In the high school setting, we are preparing students for the next step—whether that is college or a career. This year, our classroom will operate under an "Unplugged and Engaged" approach regarding technology. By following our "Bell-to-Bell" phone-free policy, we are training for the "Deep Work" habits required in high-performance environments.

Our classroom focus:

- Deep work sessions: We will utilize focused work blocks where students engage with complex texts and problems without digital interruption. This is a highly valued skill in both higher education and the modern workforce.
- Intentional technology: We will still be using technology! Students will utilize their school-issued [Laptops/Chromebooks] for research and collaboration, but we will move away from the "second screen" distraction of personal phones.

- Managing "The Withdrawal:" I recognize that many students are used to constant connectivity. We will discuss the science of dopamine and focus to help them understand *why* this shift is beneficial for their cognitive performance.

How you can help: The greatest support you can provide is to refrain from texting your student during class hours. If an urgent family matter arises, please contact the Main Office at [Phone Number], and they will ensure your student gets the message immediately.

I look forward to a year of high engagement and outstanding academic results.

Sincerely,

[Teacher Name]

PHASE 3: SCHOOL LEADER RESOURCES

SLIDES FOR STAFF

SLIDE 1: Restorative De-escalation

Implementing the Cell Phone Ban Staff Professional Development: Beginning of school year/ introduction to initial implementation

- Our objective is consistent enforcement of the district-wide ban without escalating classroom conflict.
- The shift involves moving from "phone police" to "focus coaches."
- Tonight's goal includes high-leverage scripts and restorative techniques for digital friction.

SLIDE 2: The Why Behind the Ban

Framing the Law for Students

- Use the "common enemy" strategy by blaming the policy, not the student, to preserve your classroom rapport.
- Emphasize state-wide consistency so students understand every school is following the same rules.
- Position the ban as a "focus gift" that protects their mental health and academic flow.

SLIDE 3: Level 1: The "Soft" Redirect

Catching the Habit Early

- Utilize non-verbal cues like pointing to the storage area or a "phone-free" sign without stopping instruction.
- Provide a "two-minute" grace period at the start of class for a final warning to power down devices.
- Employ low-stakes reminders such as, "I see a glowing pocket; let's get that in the bin so you don't get a referral."

SLIDE 4: Level 2: De-escalating Resistance

When "No" is the First Answer

- Use the "forced choice" technique to offer two paths: "You can put it in the pouch yourself, or I can hold it on my desk until 3:00."
- Avoid the "public grab" by never attempting to physically take a phone; use calm, repetitive verbal commands instead.
- Allow for a "cool-off" period if a student is agitated, giving them 60 seconds to choose their next move while you continue teaching.

SLIDE 5: Level 3: Restorative Conversations

Repairing the Connection After Conflict

- Conduct a "post-incident" check once the student is calm to discuss the root cause of the defiance.
- Practice active listening by asking, "What made it so hard to put the phone away today?" to identify underlying anxieties.
- Engage in a "re-commitment" talk to remind the student that the rule is about their success, not their punishment.

SLIDE 6: Protecting the Teacher's Peace

Systemic support at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]

- Utilize the "admin-on-call" system if a student refuses a direct order twice.
- Ensure uniform documentation in [INSERT SOFTWARE] so the data reflects school-wide trends rather than individual struggles.
- Engage in "hallway huddles" with colleagues to ensure consistent enforcement across the building.

SLIDE 7: Scenarios & Role Play

Practicing the Response

- Scenario A: A student claims an emergency text from a parent.
  - » Redirect: "Have them call the office immediately".
- Scenario B: A student is hiding a phone under their desk.
  - » Redirect: "I can see the light; please follow the state policy now."
- Scenario C: A student refuses to pouch the phone.
  - » Redirect: "I'm moving on with the lesson; I'll check back in one minute for your decision."

SLIDE 8: Final Thoughts & Resources

The Long-Term Win

- Prepare for the "September Surge" by staying consistent for the first 21 days of school.
- Access the "De-escalation Scripts" and "Parent Communication Templates" on the staff drive.
- Remember that we are reclaiming the classroom for deep thinking; thank you for holding the line.

SOCIAL CONNECTION WEEK RESOURCES

Social Connection Week K - 5

Day	School-Wide Activity	Morning Announcement Script
Mon	**The High-Five Highway:** Teachers and 5th graders form a "welcome tunnel" at the entrance.	"Good morning, leaders! This week we are unplugged and engaged. That means our eyes are up and our hearts are open. Today, see how many different high-fives you can give!"
Tue	**Recess Revival**: Set up "play stations" with jump ropes, hula hoops, and chalk.	"Today is Recess Revival! We are putting down the screens and picking up the play. Can you teach a friend a new game on the playground today?"
Wed	**Mixed-Grade Lunch:** Older students sit with younger students to share a story.	"It's time to connect! Today at lunch, we are unplugged and engaged with our 'buddy classes.' Ask a new friend what their favorite book is."
Thu	**Compliment Circles:** Each class starts the day by passing a "compliment ball" around.	"Words have power! Today, look a classmate in the eye and tell them one thing they are great at. Let's stay unplugged and engaged with kindness."
Fri	**The Great Board Game Jam:** 30 minutes of board games or puzzles in every room.	"Happy Friday! We've had an amazing week. Let's finish strong by playing together. Remember, the best connection isn't on a screen—it's right here!"

Social Connection Week 6 - 8

Day	School-Wide Activity	Morning Announcement Script
Mon	**Locker Neighbors**: A 5-minute "icebreaker" window at lockers before first period.	"Welcome back! This year, we are unplugged and engaged. Today's challenge: introduce yourself to the person with the locker next to yours. Real connection starts with a 'hello.'"
Tue	**Table Talk Trivia:** Trivia cards placed on every cafeteria table.	"Lunch is for laughing, not scrolling. Check your table for trivia cards today. See which of your friends knows the most random facts while we stay unplugged and engaged."
Wed	**The "Unplugged" Talent Lobby**: Live acoustic music or art demos during passing periods.	"Notice the atmosphere today! We are filling our halls with music and art. Keep your phones away and your ears open. Let's stay unplugged and engaged with the talent in this room."
Thu	**Human Rock-Paper-Scissors**: A school-wide tournament during advisory/ homeroom.	"It's tournament day! We're proving that you don't need an app to have a competition. Good luck to everyone in the Rock-Paper-Scissors showdown. Stay unplugged and engaged!"
Fri	**Community Canvas:** A giant roll of paper in the gym for a collaborative mural.	"Final day of Connection Week! Head to the gym to add your mark to our Community Canvas. We are a stronger school when we are unplugged and engaged together."

Social Connection Week 9 - 12

Day	School-Wide Activity	Morning Announcement Script
Mon	**The Coffee House Reset:** Soft music in the cafeteria and "conversation starter" napkins.	"Students, as we adapt to the new district-wide policy, remember the goal: we want you unplugged and engaged. Today, use the 'starter napkins' in the cafe to talk about something other than the weekend."
Tue	**Sidewalk Symposium:** Clubs set up outdoor "mini-booths" to recruit and chat.	"The best way to beat the scroll is to find your tribe. Check out the Sidewalk Symposium today. Get involved, get active, and stay unplugged and engaged."
Wed	**Analog Gaming Lounge:** Decks of cards, Spikeball, and chess sets in the courtyard.	"Wednesday is for the 'Analog Lounge.' Put the phones in your lockers and head to the courtyard for some real-time competition. Let's stay unplugged and engaged."
Thu	**Future Focus Panel:** Seniors visit underclassmen to talk about "life beyond the screen."	"Connection means mentorship. Today, our seniors are sharing insights on navigating high school. Listen in, ask questions, and stay unplugged and engaged with your future."
Fri	**The "Blackout" Pep Rally:** A high-energy rally celebrating the "culture of presence."	"We made it through week one! Today we celebrate our community. We are reclaiming our focus and our friendships. We are unplugged and engaged, and the energy in this building is proof!"

IMPACT REPORT TEMPLATE

Elementary School (K - 5)

Subject: Our First Month "Unplugged and Engaged" at [INSERT SCHOOL NAME]

The Big Picture: Since the implementation of the new district-wide cell phone policy, our campus has undergone a visible transformation. By removing digital distractions, we have cleared the space for the most important work of childhood: play, curiosity, and face-to-face social discovery.

Our Observations of Impact:

- Recess Engagement: Our staff has observed a [INSERT PERCENTAGE/OBSERVATION, e.g., 30% increase] in students participating in organized group games like tag, soccer, or imaginative play.
- Classroom Stamina: Teachers in grades [INSERT GRADES, e.g., 3–5] report that students are showing improved "listening stamina" during read-alouds and direct instruction.
- Social Problem Solving: We have noted [INSERT DATA, e.g., a decrease in office referrals] related to digital conflicts, allowing more time for positive character building.

The "Unplugged" Win of the Month:

- "[Insert a brief 1-2 sentence anecdote about a specific positive moment, e.g., seeing a group of students start a new club at lunch or a student who expressed they felt less distracted.]"

Our Commitment: We are proud of how our youngest learners have stayed unplugged and engaged. Thank you for supporting this transition by ensuring devices remain in backpacks or at home.

If you are interested in learning more about promoting healthy technology habits at home, check out resources from CommonSense Media and Boston Children's Digital Wellness Lab:

CommonSense Media:

- Family Tech Planners
- Family Guides
- Family Media Agreement
- Offline and Off-Screen Activities

Digital Wellness Labs:

- Family Guide to Digital Wellness
- Family Guide to Teaching Kids and Teens Essential Digital Skills
- Family Guide: 5 Strategies for Setting Digital Media Boundaries and Guidelines for Kids
- Family Guide to Creating Shared Media Use Agreements
- Family Guide to Media Literacy & Social-Emotional Learning

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME] [INSERT TITLE]

Middle School (6 - 8)

Subject: Reclaiming the Social Core: An "Unplugged and Engaged" Update

The Big Picture: Middle school is a critical window for developing social-emotional intelligence. One month into our phone-free transition, we are seeing our students move away from the "isolated scroll" and toward active community participation.

The Evidence of Connection:

- Reduced Digital Friction: Since the ban, we have seen a [Insert Percentage, e.g., 40%] reduction in peer conflicts that stem from social media activity during school hours.

The "Cafeteria Hum":

- Staff supervision reports indicate a significant shift in lunchtime culture, specifically [Insert Observation, e.g., students bringing card games or engaging in louder, more consistent conversation].

Increased Activity:

- Participation in our [Insert Name of Club/Intramural Program] has grown by [Insert Number] students this month.

Teacher/Staff Perspective:

- "[Insert a quote from a teacher or counselor regarding the change in classroom atmosphere, e.g., 'The energy in the hallway is lighter; students are actually looking at each other instead of their screens.']"

Next Steps:

We will continue to provide "Table Talk" prompts and lunch activities to keep our students unplugged and engaged as we head into the next grading period.

If you are interested in learning more about promoting healthy technology habits at home, check out resources from CommonSense Media and Boston Children's Digital Wellness Lab:

CommonSense Media:

- Family Tech Planners
- Conversation Guidance
- Family Media Agreement
- Offline and Off-Screen Activities

Digital Wellness Labs:

- Family Guide to Digital Wellness
- Family Guide to Teaching Kids and Teens Essential Digital Skills
- Family Guide: 5 Strategies for Setting Digital Media Boundaries and Guidelines for Kids
- Family Guide to Creating Shared Media Use Agreements
- Family Guide to Media Literacy & Social-Emotional Learning

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME] [INSERT TITLE]

High School (9 - 12)

Subject: Impact Report: Reclaiming the Culture of Presence at [Insert School Name]

The Big Picture: The implementation of the district-wide cell phone ban has allowed our high schoolers to reclaim their "Culture of Presence." By removing the constant pressure of notifications, our students are rediscovering the value of deep work and authentic peer interaction.

Key Impact Metrics:

- Academic Depth: Teachers report that students are engaging in deeper classroom discussions. Specifically, in [Insert Subject Area, e.g., Humanities or STEM], we've seen a [Insert Percentage] improvement in task completion during class time.
- Mental Health & Focus: Our guidance team has noted [Insert Observation, e.g., fewer students visiting the office for "digital anxiety" or "FOMO-related" stress].
- The Commons Effect: Our common areas have shifted from silent rooms of students looking down to vibrant spaces. We've specifically noticed [Insert Observation, e.g., more students studying together or playing chess in the courtyard].
- The "Unplugged" Advantage: By staying unplugged and engaged, our students are practicing the focus and professional "soft skills" that will give them a competitive edge in college and their future careers.

A Note from [Insert Your Name/Title]:

- "[Insert a personal reflection on the transition, e.g., 'I am incredibly impressed by the maturity our students have shown in adapting to this new 'normal'. We are building a more connected campus one day at a time.']"

If you are interested in learning more about promoting healthy technology habits at home, check out resources from CommonSense Media and Boston Children's Digital Wellness Lab:

CommonSense Media:

- Family Tech Planners
- Family Guides
- Family Media Agreement
- Offline and Off-Screen Activities

Digital Wellness Labs:

- Family Guide to Digital Wellness
- Family Guide to Teaching Kids and Teens Essential Digital Skills
- Family Guide: 5 Strategies for Setting Digital Media Boundaries and Guidelines for Kids
- Family Guide to Creating Shared Media Use Agreements
- Family Guide to Media Literacy & Social-Emotional Learning

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME] [INSERT TITLE]

WELLNESS WORKSHOPS

Workshop 1: Elementary (K - 5)

Theme: The Superpower of the "Still Mind"

- Goal: To teach students how to identify and manage the "busy brain" feeling caused by overstimulation.
- The "Unplugged" Concept: Understanding that our brains need "rest time" just like our bodies do.

Core Activities

- The Glitter Jar Experiment: Fill a jar with water and glitter. Shake it up to represent a "digital brain" (fast, blurry, overwhelmed). Let it sit still to show how a "mindful brain" settles.
- Five-Senses Scavenger Hunt: An outdoor activity where students find 5 things they can see, 4 they can touch, 3 they can hear, 2 they can smell, and 1 they can taste.
- The "Boredom Board": Students draw or write one thing they love to do that doesn't require a battery (e.g., drawing, Lego, tag).

Closing Reflection

- "When we are unplugged and engaged, our brains have space to grow. What is one 'superpower' you used today while your screen was away?"

Workshop 2: Middle School (6 - 8)

Theme: Decoding the Dopamine Loop

- Goal: To educate students on how apps are designed to keep them "hooked" and how to reclaim their attention.
- The "Unplugged" Concept: Shifting from "passive consuming" to "active creating."

Core Activities

- The "Notification Audit": Students discuss how they feel when they hear a "ping" (anxiety, excitement, distraction) and compare it to the calm of a phone-free classroom.
- The 10-Minute Challenge: A guided session of "just sitting" or "just sketching" to build tolerance for low-stimulation environments.
- Social Map Making: In small groups, students map out "connection zones" on campus where they have had the best conversations since the ban took effect.

Closing Reflection

- "Being unplugged and engaged isn't about missing out; it's about checking in with yourself. How did your focus change during the 10-minute challenge today?"

Workshop 3: High School (9 - 12)

Theme: Reclaiming Your Cognitive Agency

- Goal: To provide students with the "why" behind deep work and the professional advantages of high-level focus.
- The "Unplugged" Concept: Understanding "Context Switching" and its impact on GPA and mental health.

Core Activities

- The Focus Experiment: A timed task where half the room is "interrupted" every 2 minutes and the other half works in silence. Compare the results and stress levels.
- The "Anxiety vs. Presence" Workshop: A counselor-led session on the correlation between social media use and "compare and despair" mindsets.
- Legacy Planning: Students brainstorm how they want their "campus culture" to look. [Insert student-led ideas like: "Phone-free Fridays" in the senior lounge or "Analog Tournaments"].

Closing Reflection

- "The most successful people in INSERT CURRENT YEAR are those who can control their attention. By staying unplugged and engaged, you are building a competitive advantage. What did you notice about your stress levels during the focus experiment?"

WORKSHOP IMPLEMENTATION TEMPLATE FOR LEADERS

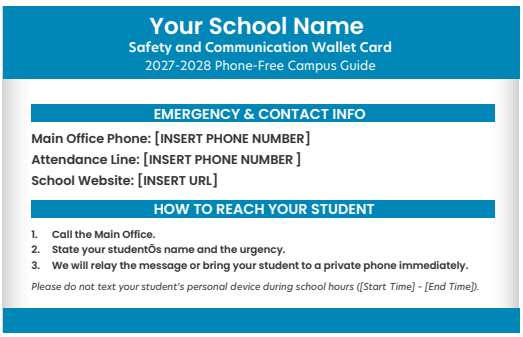
[Use this section to individualize the workshops for your specific campus]

- Date/Time: [Insert Date/Time]
- Location: [Insert Location, e.g., Library or Gym]
- Lead Facilitator: [Insert Name, e.g., School Counselor or Wellness Coach]
- Observation Goal: [Insert specific data point, e.g., "Note how many students can remain focused for 10 minutes without asking for a device."]
- Local Success Story: [Insert a 1-sentence win from your campus, e.g., "Our Chess Club saw 15 new members after the first Wellness Workshop."]

SAFETY AND COMMUNICATION WALLET CARD

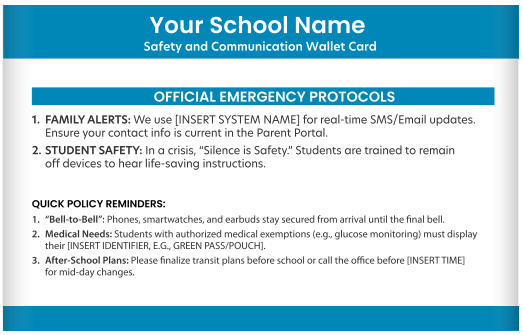
Front Side:

- [INSERT SCHOOL NAME] Family Reference Card
- [INSERT SCHOOL YEAR] Phone-Free Campus Guide
- Emergency & Contact Info:
  - » Main Office Phone: [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]
  - » Attendance Line: [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]
  - » School Website: [INSERT URL]



- HOW TO REACH YOUR STUDENT:
  1. Call the Main Office.
  2. State your student's name and the urgency.
  3. We will relay the message or bring your student to a private phone immediately.

  Please do not text your student's personal device during school hours ([Start Time] – [End Time]).


Your School Name
Safety and Communication Wallet Card

OFFICIAL EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

1. **FAMILY ALERTS:** We use [INSERT SYSTEM NAME] for real-time SMS/Email updates. Ensure your contact info is current in the Parent Portal.
2. **STUDENT SAFETY:** In a crisis, "Silence is Safety." Students are trained to remain off devices to hear life-saving instructions.

QUICK POLICY REMINDERS:

1. **"Bell-to-Bell":** Phones, smartwatches, and earbuds stay secured from arrival until the final bell.
2. **Medical Needs:** Students with authorized medical exemptions (e.g., glucose monitoring) must display their [INSERT IDENTIFIER, E.G., GREEN PASS/POUCH].
3. **After-School Plans:** Please finalize transit plans before school or call the office before [INSERT TIME] for mid-day changes.

Back Side: Safety & Logistics

OFFICIAL EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS:

- Family Alerts: We use [INSERT SYSTEM NAME] for real-time SMS/Email updates. Ensure your contact info is current in the Parent Portal.
- Student Safety: In a crisis, "Silence is Safety." Students are trained to remain off devices to hear life-saving instructions.

QUICK POLICY REMINDERS:

- "Bell-to-Bell": Phones, smartwatches, and earbuds stay secured from arrival until the final bell.
- Medical Needs: Students with authorized medical exemptions (e.g., glucose monitoring) must display their [INSERT IDENTIFIER, E.G., GREEN PASS/POUCH].
- After-School Plans: Please finalize transit plans *before* school or call the office before [INSERT TIME] for mid-day changes.

CELL PHONES IN LOCKDOWNS

Operational Safety: The Role of Mobile Devices in Emergencies

During a school lockdown, our primary objective is to maintain a secure environment by ensuring the building appears unoccupied and that all individuals can hear and follow immediate safety instructions. While the instinct to check a device is a natural response to stress, doing so introduces three specific technical risks that can impact the effectiveness of our safety protocols.

Auditory and Visual Signals: Standard safety protocols require "Lights Out, Sight Out." Even when silenced, modern devices are designed to be detectable.

- Light Emission: In a darkened room, the glow of a screen—even at its lowest setting—is highly visible from a distance or through door windows.
- Acoustic Vibration: A phone vibrating on a hard surface or the high-pitched "ping" of an incoming emergency alert can be heard from hallways, potentially revealing a group's location.

Network Bandwidth and Emergency Response: Cellular towers have a finite capacity for data and voice traffic. During a localized event, the infrastructure can quickly reach its "saturation point."

- Digital Congestion: When hundreds of users attempt to call, text, or stream simultaneously, it creates a "digital traffic jam."

- Prioritizing First Responders: High data spikes can delay or block the digital communication tools used by Police, Fire, and EMS. Keeping the local network clear ensures that emergency personnel have the bandwidth needed to coordinate their response.

The Safety Paradox: Attention and Awareness: Safe navigation of any environment requires "situational awareness"—the ability to perceive and respond to changes in your immediate surroundings.

- Response Latency: Focusing on a screen creates a "tunnel vision" effect. This can lead to a delay in hearing or following quiet, critical instructions from staff or first responders.
- Information Veracity: During a crisis, unverified information on social media can be inaccurate. Focusing on these reports can increase personal stress levels and make it more difficult to remain calm and follow the established safety plan.

Protocol for Families

We recognize that the desire to reach your student during an emergency is an expression of care. To support the school's safety efforts, we ask families to observe the following technical guidelines:

- *Avoid Outbound* Contact: Please refrain from calling or texting your student. An unexpected ringtone or vibration could compromise the silence required by the safety protocol.
- Utilize Official Channels: The school district will provide verified, real-time updates through our mass notification system as soon as information is confirmed.
- Protect Local Bandwidth: By keeping your own outgoing calls to a minimum, you help ensure the cellular network remains functional for the first responders on the scene.

PHASE 3: EDUCATOR RESOURCES

K - 5 STUDENT SLIDES

TITLE: Our Focused & Fun Classroom

SLIDE 1: Welcome to [Grade Level]!

- The Big News: This year, our classroom is a "Phone-Free Zone."
- The Goal: More time for playing, more time for friends, and more time for your amazing brain to grow!

SLIDE 2: "Off and Away"

- The Routine: When you walk in, your phone or smartwatch goes "Off and Away" in your backpack.
- Smartwatches: If you wear one, we put it in "School Mode" so it doesn't buzz while you're working or playing.

SLIDE 3: Why are we doing this?

- Eyes Up: We want to see your eyes and your smiles!
- Hearts Open: It's easier to make new friends when we aren't looking at a screen.
- Brain Power: Your brain is like a battery. Screens drain the battery; learning and playing charge it up!

SLIDE 4: What if I need help?

- Your Teacher is Here: If you feel sick, stay calm—tell me! I am your "First Responder."
- Grown-ups: If your family needs to tell you something, they will call the office, and I will give you the message right away.

SLIDE 5: Let's Practice!

- Activity: "The Backpack Check." (Everyone checks that their device is tucked away and "sleeping.")

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6 - 8 STUDENT SLIDES

TITLE: Reclaiming Your Time: The Digital Reset

SLIDE 1: Welcome to a New Way of Learning

- The Change: We are a "Bell-to-Bell" phone-free campus.
- The Policy: From the first bell to the last bell, phones and earbuds are secured in [INSERT STORAGE: POUCH/LOCKER].

SLIDE 2: The Science of Focus

- The "Attention Budget": Your brain can only focus on so much at once. Even a phone sitting on a desk "steals" some of your thinking power.
- The Switch Cost: Every time you check a notification, it takes about 20 minutes for your brain to get back into "the zone." We want to keep you in the zone!

SLIDE 3: A Break from the Drama

- The Respite: Middle school is a lot! This school day is your 6-hour break from social media pressure, "likes," and group chat stress.
- Real Connection: Lunch and passing periods are now for talking, laughing, and actually hanging out face-to-face.

SLIDE 4: Frequently Asked Questions

- Music? We will have school-approved ways to listen to music during independent work (no personal phones needed).
- Emergencies? The office is the fastest way for your family to reach you. You are never "unreachable."

SLIDE 5: The "14-Day Challenge"

- The Goal: It takes about two weeks to break a habit. The first few days might feel "itchy" or boring. Stick with it—it gets easier, and you'll feel calmer by Week 3!

9 - 12 STUDENT SLIDES

Title: Professional Standards & The Power of Deep Work

SLIDE 1: The New Standard

- The Context: With MA State Law S.2561, we are a phone-free campus.
- The Shift: We are moving from a "distraction-heavy" environment to a Professional Focus Zone.

SLIDE 2: Training for the Future

- Deep Work: The ability to focus on a complex task without interruption is the #1 skill valued by colleges and high-level employers.
- The Goal: We are here to help you build "Focus Stamina." You are training your brain for the world beyond high school.

SLIDE 3: Logistics & Autonomy

- The Process: Devices (including smartwatches/AirPods) are secured in [POUCHES/LOCKERS] at the start of the day.
- Tech for Purpose: We will still use technology! We use [Laptops/Chromebooks] for research and creation, but we are eliminating the "second screen" distraction.

SLIDE 4: Safety & Reality

- Silence is Safety: In an emergency, we need your full attention on protocols, not your screen. Cell use during crises jams networks and spreads misinformation.
- Family Access: You are always reachable via the Main Office. Professional standards mean handling personal business outside of "work" hours.

SLIDE 5: Ownership of Your Day

- The Challenge: Notice how your stress levels change when you aren't tethered to your phone for 6 hours.
- The Outcome: More engagement, better grades, and real social connection. Let's make this the most productive and calm year yet.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES

K - 5 Student Template

Theme: Growing Our "Focus Muscles"

Subject: News from [Insert Grade/Room Number]: We are Unplugged and Engaged!

This month, our classroom has felt like a true community. Without the distraction of [Insert specific device, e.g., smartwatches or tablets], I have seen a wonderful shift in our daily rhythm:

- Deep Listening: During our read-aloud of [Insert Book Title], I noticed [Insert Observation, e.g., 100% eye contact and more thoughtful questions].
- The Joy of Toil: During independent work, students are leaning into "the struggle" of new math concepts rather than looking for a digital quick fix.

- Recess Connections: I've observed [Insert Student Name(s) or Group] starting a new game of [Insert Game], showing great teamwork!

How You Can Support at Home:

- The "Car Console" Rule: Try designating car rides as "talk time" or "window-watching time" to help build the same focus we use in class.
- Analog Evenings: Encourage 20 minutes of "battery-free" play (Lego, drawing, or cards) before dinner to help their brains "reset" from the day.

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6 - 8 Student Template

Theme: Building Social Bravery

Subject: [Insert Subject, e.g., 7th Grade Science] Update: Staying Unplugged and Engaged

Classroom Impact Report: Middle school is all about finding your voice. By following our "Unplugged and Engaged" policy, our students are practicing "social bravery" every day:

- Collaborative Energy: In our recent lab on [Insert Topic], students were [Insert Observation, e.g., talking through problems face-to-face rather than sitting in silence].
- Transition Wins: The 4 minutes between bells have become a time for high-fives and hallway chats. I've specifically noticed [Insert Observation, e.g., a decrease in "head-down" behavior].
- Reduced Digital Stress: I am seeing fewer students distracted by "group chat drama," which has led to a [Insert Percentage/Observation, e.g., much calmer start to the period].

How You Can Support at Home:

- Model the "Wait": Next time you are in a waiting room or restaurant, try "just sitting" for five minutes together without pulling out phones. It builds the "distress tolerance" they need for school.
- Tech-Free Bedroom: Ensure all devices (including ours!) are charged in a common area at night to protect their sleep and mental clarity.

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9 - 12 Student Template

Theme: Reclaiming the Competitive Edge

Subject: [Insert Course Name]: The Power of Presence and Deep Work

The "Deep Work" Advantage: In [Insert Subject], we are tackling complex concepts that require "Linear Attention"—the ability to stay on one train of thought. Our "Unplugged and Engaged" environment is giving your student a massive advantage:

- Cognitive Flow: During our recent [Insert Activity, e.g., Socratic Seminar or Essay Lab], students reached a state of "flow" where they worked for [Insert Minutes] without a single interruption.
- Peer Mentorship: I am seeing more students turn to one another for help with [Insert Concept], building the collaborative skills they will need in college and the workplace.

- Observation: I've noticed a shift in the "Commons" area where students are [Insert Observation, e.g., debating topics or sharing physical books].

How You Can Support at Home:

- The "Focus Block": When your student is doing homework, encourage them to put their phone in different room for 45-minute "sprints."
- The "Mirror Check": Discuss the state-wide ban as a professional boundary. Use phrases like: "I'm working on being unplugged and engaged during dinner, too. Let's keep the phones in the basket."

DE-ESCALATION SCRIPTS

Use these "Restorative Script Cards" to maintain control without creating a "stage" for the student.

- To the "Stealth" User: "I noticed you're checking your digital world. Right now, we're checking in with this room. Let's get that back in its home so your focus battery stays full."
- To the "Emergency" Anxious: "I hear your worry. Let's have the office verify. If it's an emergency, they'll bring you to a private landline immediately."
- To the "Performative" Refusal: "I'm not going to argue. You have a choice to make. I'll check back in 60 seconds." (Walk away immediately to remove the audience).
- To the "Rules Lawyer": "I hear you, but the state mandate doesn't give me that flexibility. I need to follow the policy to keep us all in compliance."

Tactical "Circuit Breakers" for High-Heat Moments

When a student is in a "Fight or Flight" response:

1. Lower your volume. The louder they get, the softer you speak.
2. Open body language. Stand at a 45-degree angle; never chest-to-chest.
3. The Fresh Start. Every morning is a clean slate. Greet the student the next day with a smile: "Yesterday was a high-heat day. Today is a fresh start. I'm glad you're here."

K - 5 Students

Problem: Putting away the phone.

At this level, focus on the "why" (focus) and provide a clear physical boundary for the device.

- Script A: "[Name], we are using our hands for [activity] right now. Please put your phone in your backpack so it can rest. Would you like to do that now, or in 30 seconds?"
- Script B: "I see your phone is out. Our rule is 'Learning First.' Please place it in your cubby so it stays safe. Thank you for following directions."
- Script C: "It looks like that phone is making it hard to focus. Let's put it away for now so you can finish [task]. I'll check back with you in two minutes to see your progress."

Problem: Escalation increased.

At this age, escalation usually looks like a "big feeling" or a tantrum. Keep your voice low and slow.

- Script A: "I can see you're very upset right now. We can talk about the phone later. Right now, let's take a breath. Do you want to sit at your desk or in the quiet corner for a minute?"
- Script B: "It's okay to be frustrated, but it's not okay to [behavior]. I'm going to give you some space. Keep the phone away, and when you're ready to talk, let me know."
- Script C: "I'm not going to take the phone from you. I just need it to stay on the table/in your bag so we can stay safe. Let's focus on cooling down first."

6 - 8 Students

Problem: Putting away the phone.

Middle schoolers are sensitive to peer perception. Keep these interactions quiet and close-proximity.

- Script A: "[Name], I noticed your phone. You know the policy is 'Off and Away.' Please put it in your bag now so we don't have to move to a formal consequence."
- Script B: "I understand it's tempting to check your notifications, but it needs to be put away. If you put it in your locker/bag now, we can move on with our lesson. Can you do that for me?"
- Script C: "Right now, the phone is a distraction to you and those around you. Please put it away. If there is an emergency you're waiting on, let me know, otherwise, I expect it to stay out of sight."

Problem: Escalation increasing.

Middle schoolers escalate when they feel "cornered" in front of peers. Use a neutral, "matter-of-fact" tone.

- Script A: "[Name], I'm stepping back. I don't want this to turn into a bigger issue over a phone. Take a moment to put it away on your own, and we'll check in when things are calmer."
- Script B: "I hear that you're frustrated. I'm not going to argue with you in front of the class. Put the phone face down for now, and we can step into the hall to talk in two minutes."
- Script C: "You're choosing to be upset right now, and I understand it feels unfair. But the rule remains. I'm going to finish the lesson; I expect that phone to be put away by the time I walk back over."

9 - 12 Students

Problem: putting away phone.

High schoolers respond best to directness. Avoid a "parental" tone; use a "colleague" or "coach" tone instead.

- Script A: "[Name], you're out of compliance with the cell phone policy. Please put the device in your bag so we can stay focused on the lab/lecture. Thank you."
- Script B: "I need your full attention on this material. Please put your phone away. I'd prefer not to involve others, so let's solve this right here. Put it away, please."
- Script C: "The expectation is no personal devices during instructional time. Please honor that agreement. If you have a specific reason you need it, we can discuss it at the end of the period, but for now, it needs to be put away."

Problem: Escalation increasing.

High school escalation is often a power play. Stay calm and offer a clear "fork in the road."

- Script A: "I can see this is becoming a confrontation. I'm not interested in an argument. Keep the phone out of sight so we can finish class, or we can involve a third party. The choice is yours."
- Script B: "You're clearly stressed, but raising your voice isn't going to change the policy. Put the phone away now, and we can move past this. If not, I'll have to follow the standard discipline procedure."
- Script C: "I'm going to give you the benefit of the doubt and walk away for a moment. Use that time to put the device away so we can keep the focus on class, not your phone."

RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES

Strategy	Research Basis	Practical Application
The Extinction Burst	Behavior spikes when a "reward" (phone) is removed.	Plan for the Spike: Expect the first 14 days to be high-friction. Use the "Neutral Wall"—remain boring and calm.
Cognitive Offloading	Visible phones drain 10% of IQ as the brain works to ignore them.	The Faraday Option: Use opaque storage (pouches/bins). If they can't see it, the "craving loop" triggers less.
Dopamine Pivot	Digital withdrawal causes irritability and "flatness."	Social Velocity: Replace "likes" with "Turn-and-Talks." Start lessons with 3 minutes of high-energy peer interaction.
Surfing the Urge	Cravings peak and crash within 15–20 minutes.	The Timer Method: "I know it feels urgent. Let's focus for 10 minutes; the 'itch' will change."
The State Shield	Protecting the teacher-student bond.	Externalize Authority: "The State Mandate says no. I'm not risking my license; let's get through this together."

Responsive Strategies

Grade	Focus & Needs	Tiered Strategy	Escalation Script
K - 5	Smartwatches & Play	Use "Parking Lots" for devices. Focus on sensory regulation (weighted lap pads).	"When the watch is in the cubby, then you can choose your center. Do you want to do it, or should I help?"
6 - 8	Social Lifelines	Use "Brown Bags" (stapled on desk). Provide a "Dopamine Menu" (Sudoku/puzzles).	"I understand you're worried. The rule is phones in the pouch." (Repeat calmly as a broken record).
9 - 12	Identity & Autonomy	Phone Hotels with charging. Use 504 accommodations for "Tech Breaks" at the nurse.	"I'm not risking my career for your text. Put it in the hotel or we call the office. It is your choice."

MANAGING DIGITAL WITHDRAWAL

To manage a school's no-cell-phone policy effectively, educators must move beyond simple enforcement and address the neurobiological struggle students face when separated from high-dopamine stimuli. This guide outlines a transition from recognizing withdrawal symptoms to implementing tiered de-escalation strategies. By framing phone use as a sensory and psychological habit rather than mere defiance, teachers can shift from power struggles to proactive regulation, ensuring the classroom remains a space for focused learning and emotional safety.

As you engage with this material, approach each section as a toolkit for different "heat levels" in the classroom. Start by auditing your current environment for the Withdrawal Symptoms listed below; then, select one Level 1 Pressure Valve to implement as a preventative measure this week. As you move into the Level 2 and 3 Scripts, practice the phrasing aloud to build "muscle memory" for high-stress moments. Your goal is to apply these strategies consistently so that the policy becomes a predictable boundary rather than a source of daily friction.

1. Understanding the "Digital Withdrawal"

Resistance is often a physiological response to the absence of constant stimulation. Understanding the "why" behind the behavior helps maintain professional detachment.

Withdrawal Symptom	Classroom Manifestation	Psychological Root
Anhedonia	Low motivation; "this is boring."	The brain's reward system is muted without "fast" dopamine.
Hyper-Reactivity	Snapping at peers; overreacting to small asks.	The amygdala is "on guard" due to increased cortisol (stress).
Phantom Vibrations	Constant checking of pockets or wrists.	The brain is "primed" for a stimulus that is no longer there.
Cognitive Fatigue	Inability to follow multi-step directions.	The effort of inhibiting the urge to check a phone drains focus.

2. Proactive "Pressure Valves" (Level 1)

Effective management begins by addressing the sensory "need" for the device before escalation occurs. These strategies act as a release valve for internal tension.

- Tactile Substitutes: Provide "Analog Fidgets" (putty, velcro under desks, or heavy rubber bands) to satisfy the physical habit of "reaching."
- The 10-Minute Sprint: Use a visual timer. Tell students: "We only need 10 minutes of deep work, then we'll take a 2-minute 'social break' to talk to neighbors."
- Narrative Reframing: Use the term "Unplugged and Engaged." Remind them: "Your brain is practicing how to be the boss of your attention again."

3. Responsive De-escalation (Level 2)

When a student resists, use the "Clinical Mirror" technique: if you remain calm and regulated, the student's nervous system will eventually begin to "sync" with yours.

Lower the "Stage"

- Avoid the Audience: Never argue about a phone in front of the class.
- The "Post-It" Intervention: Place a sticky note on the desk that says: *"Phone in bag = Focus battery 100%. Thank you!"* and walk away.

Use "Neutral Persistence"

- The Broken Record: Do not engage with "Why?" or "But other teachers let us!"
- The Script: "I hear you, but the policy is phones in the bin. What would you like to do?" (Repeat calmly until compliance).

Address "Emergency" Anxiety

- The Safety Pivot: Students often feel genuine panic about being "out of the loop." Offer a professional alternative: "I hear your worry about your mom. Let's have the office verify. If it's urgent, they'll bring you to a private landline immediately."

4. High-Heat Tactics: The Extinction Burst (Level 3)

An Extinction Burst is a temporary spike in the intensity of a behavior just before it stops. This is the "danger zone" where a student may become highly volatile.

- The 60-Second Walkaway: Give a clear choice: "You can secure the phone in the caddy, or I can call for a reset from Admin. I'll give you one minute to decide." Then, move away. Proximity during a meltdown increases the threat response.
- The "Faraday" Compromise: For high-anxiety students, offer a brown paper bag. They staple the phone inside and keep it on their desk. They can "feel" it, but they can't "see" it, bridging the gap between total loss and security.
- Sensory Grounding: If a student is visibly shaking or crying, stop talking about the phone entirely. Say: "Your brain is feeling a big 'itch' right now. Let's try three minutes of drawing to reset."

5. The Restorative "Clean Slate"

Withdrawal-induced outbursts are often followed by intense shame. A student who shouted on Tuesday may be too embarrassed to show up on Wednesday, leading to further truancy or defiance.

- The 24-Hour Reset: Greet the student at the door the next day with a genuine smile.
- The Script: "Yesterday was a 'high-heat' day for all of us. Today is a fresh start. I'm glad you're here."

The Goal: By refusing to hold a grudge, you model the emotional regulation they are currently trying to learn.

MONITORING + SUSTAINING

DATA, FIDELITY, & MONITORING SYSTEM

To move beyond anecdote and achieve meaningful culture shift, leadership must measure both policy fidelity and student outcomes systematically. This document outlines the integrated framework for implementing and sustaining a distraction-free campus environment.

Fidelity vs. Outcome: The Essential Distinction

Success in this initiative relies on understanding what you are measuring. Before analyzing progress, leadership must distinguish between the two core data types:

- *Fidelity Data (Process):* Measures consistency. It asks: *Are we doing it?* (e.g., Are phones in pouches? Are teachers utilizing the standardized script?)
- *Outcome Data (Impact):* Measures effectiveness. It asks: *Is it working?* (e.g., Are office referrals dropping? Are students reporting higher levels of focus?)

Implementation Tip: For the first two months (INSERT TIME PERIOD), prioritize *fidelity*. You must ensure the system is operational before evaluating its ultimate effectiveness. Administrators should conduct daily, non-evaluative "Flash Walkthroughs" (3-minutes).

- *Routine:* Randomly sample 5 classrooms/areas daily, rotating times including lunch.
- *Metric:* Simply record "Storage System Used?" (Yes/No).
- *Threshold:* If adherence is below 85% in any wing/department, provide immediate "in-the-moment" support.

Beyond these first two months, to utilize this framework effectively, apply the "Fold-Back" logic whenever your fidelity or outcome data shows a trend:

- If Fidelity is Low (e.g., Walkthrough scores < 80%): Do not focus on student discipline. Go back to Pillar 1. Re-train staff on the "Neutral Persistence" script and ensure the storage infrastructure is accessible and functional.
- If Outcomes are Negative (e.g., High "Spike" incident codes): Do not increase punishments. Go back to Pillar 2 & 3.

  - » *High General Incidents:* Tier 1 instruction is failing. Go back to teaching "Digital Mindfulness" (e.g., Advisory/Homeroom lessons).
  - » *High Localized Incidents (e.g., Cafeteria):* Environmental setup is failing. Add "analog zones" (games, books) to fill the boredom gap.
  - » *High Chronic Individual Incidents:* Refer the 5-10% of students responsible for the majority of incidents to MTSS Tier 2/3 for individualized "Digital Wellness" coaching.
- To Sustain Momentum: Use Pillar 4 to constantly communicate the "Why." Use the Family Media Agreement templates to shift the conversation from "the school policy" to "our family/community value of presence."

Implementation Pillar	Core Focus	MTSS Alignment	Administrative Logistics & Actions	Fidelity & Outcome Measures
Admin Planning	Building a unified front & operational readiness.	Tier 1: Universal expectations.	Finalize storage logistics; conduct "Soft Landing" pilot; train "Neutral Persistence" scripts.	Fidelity: % of classrooms with established storage.
MTSS Integration	Digital mindfulness & addressing behavioral needs.	Tier 1, 2, & 3: Universal lessons, CICO, & 504/IEP plans.	Implement lessons; establish Tier 2 workshops; formalize medical/IEP accommodations.	Outcome: Reduction in "high-user" incident recidivism.
Data & Fidelity	Identifying "hot spots" & pivoting resources.	Tier 1-3: Data-driven environmental adjustments.	Conduct weekly 3-min walkthroughs; monitor "Spike" incident codes (L-1, L-2, L-3).	Fidelity: Walkthrough scores; Outcome: Incident log trends.
Sustainability	Building culture & family partnership.	Tier 1: Community-wide reinforcement.	Family Media Agreements; celebrate "Analog Wins"; annual culture refresh.	Outcome: Student/Staff sentiment surveys.

Monthly: The "Pulse" Review

At the end of each month, the leadership team reviews the Fidelity Matrix and incident logs to pivot strategies:

- *Fidelity Check:* Are we actually adhering to the policy? If not, stop and retrain staff.
- *MTSS Re-alignment:* If specific students appear repeatedly on incident logs, move them to Tier 2 for a "Digital Wellness" check-in rather than standard detention.

When reviewing quarterly data, use the "Fold-Back" process to determine if you need to return to Tier 1 instruction or escalate support:

Data Trend	Assessment	Required Action
High Incident Rate (General)	Tier 1 instruction is failing.	Return to teaching "Digital Mindfulness" lessons in Advisory/Homeroom.
High Incident Rate (Localized)	Environmental setup is failing (e.g., in the cafeteria).	Add "analog zones" to the hot spot to fill the time/boredom gap.
High Incident Rate (Chronic)	5-10% of students causing 80% of incidents.	Refer to guidance for individualized plans (e.g., parental meetings, habit coaching).

After Year 1, transition the policy from a mandate to a community value.

Summer Bridge (June-August): Send "Summer Reset" guides to families, encouraging modeling of boundaries (e.g., the "Car Rule" or "Wait Mate" challenge) so the school policy feels like a continuation of home values.

Celebrate Analog Wins: Use Impact Report Templates to share successes—such as increased library checkouts or extracurricular participation—to maintain momentum.

Year 2 Refresh: Return to Tier 1 messaging. Remind the community that the goal is to provide a six-hour daily respite to protect cognitive development.

RESOURCES

1. Legal & Policy Frameworks

MA Legislation (S.2561): Known as "An Act to Promote Student Learning and Mental Health," this bill being considered as the legal foundation for Massachusetts schools to implement restrictive device policies, citing student well-being and academic focus.

MA DESE Safe & Supportive Schools: The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides a framework for creating environments that promote behavioral health. Their guidance ensures local policies align with state safety standards.

Massachusetts Cell Phones & Social Media in Schools Toolkit: Developed by the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, this toolkit provides practical guidance for districts, including model cell phone policies, strategies for building community norms, communication resources, and digital media literacy recommendations to support successful implementation of school phone policies.

2. Classroom & Curriculum Tools

Away for the Day: A research-backed initiative created by the Screenagers team that offers a repository of studies, posters, and success stories from schools that have implemented "off and away" policies.

Screenagers Documentary Series: A collection of films and discussion guides that explore the neurobiology of social media, gaming, and the impact of screens on adolescent brain development.

Common Sense Education: A comprehensive, K-12 Digital Citizenship curriculum that addresses online safety, privacy, and the psychological "hooks" designed into modern apps.

3. Home & Community Support

Non-Smartphone Hardware: Devices like Gabb or Pinwheel are "dumb phones" or "protected phones" that offer essential communication (talk/text/GPS) without access to social media or high-dopamine apps.

Digital Control Suites: Apple Screen Time and Google Family Link are software tools that allow for "Downtime" scheduling, which can automate the disabling of non-essential apps during school hours.

Wait Until 8th: A grassroots community pledge that allows parents to band together and commit to not giving their children smartphones until at least the end of 8th grade.

The Anxious Generation: A book and research platform by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt that examines the link between the "phone-based childhood" and the rise in adolescent mental health struggles.

Common Sense Media Reviews: A database that rates apps and media based on age-appropriateness, privacy risks, and "addictive" design features.

Unplugged & Engaged:
K–12 Roadmap for Massachusetts



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