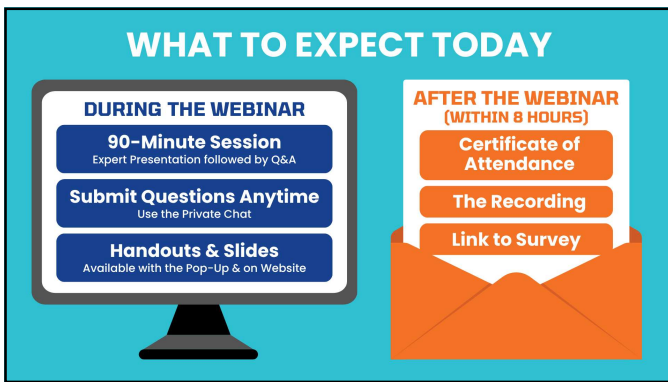
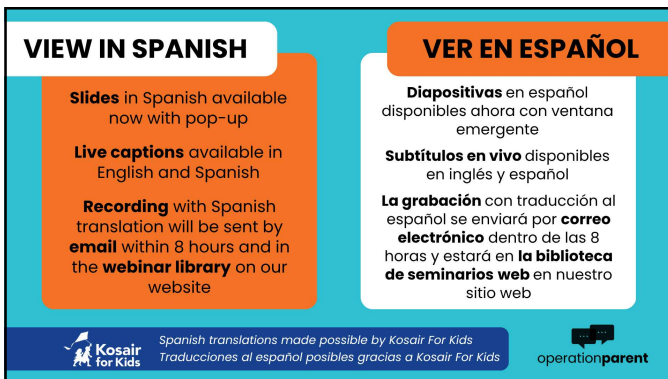




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OUR MISSION:
To empower parents and caregivers to have casual, courageous conversations with their kids.

Operation Parent, Inc. is a recognized 501(c)(3) charitable organization with federal tax ID #20-3857612

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LET'S KEEP HAVING
CASUAL
COURAGEOUS
conversations

UPCOMING WEBINARS

Sept 29

The Brain We're Building:
How Screens, Substances & Stress Shape Youth Wellbeing
Dr. Kristin Gilliland
22 Forever

If you're with us live use the pop-ups for quick registration!



operationparent.org/webinars

5

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Phones at School, Habits at Home:
A Pediatrician's Perspective

Molly O'Shea, MD, FAAP
Ashley Horne
Center of Excellence: Social Media and Youth Mental Health
American Academy of Pediatrics

6



Ashley Horne, MA
Senior Manager

- Ashley has served AAP for 8 years.
- She joined the Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health team in 2022.
- She manages the Center's development of resources and communication efforts.
- Wife and Mom to two sweet children (3 and 8)
- Loves trying new cheeses!



7

Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health

Our mission is to help children and teens use social media in healthy ways by providing trusted information, resources, and support for families, educators, pediatricians, and other professionals.



Educated over 28,000 clinicians, educators, parents, and youth



Get Your Questions Answered on Social Media and Youth Mental Health

Whether you're a parent asking a question about your child's mental health, a healthcare provider looking for evidence-based resources to support your practice, or a professional seeking information on managing social media use, our platform offers a wealth of resources and a question-and-answer portal to help you and your team.



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75,000 new visitors to our website each month!



8

Molly OShea, MD, FAAP



- Dr. OShea is a practicing Pediatrician for over 30 years while focusing on Integrated Behavioral Health for 20 years.
- Ambassador to COE
- Early Adopter of Tech
- Four Adult Kids
- Daredevil cook and New York Times Games player



9

Key Takeaways

- 1 Describe how phone and media use can impact school performance, focus, bullying, and student well-being, and understand some of the different phone policies being implemented in schools across the country.
- 2 Learn how to recognize signs of Problematic Media Use (PMU) and mental health concerns related to phone and media use, including challenges that may appear at home after the school day ends.
- 3 Identify helpful resources and strategies to support youth and families in developing healthier media habits, including Conversation Starters, the Calm Toolbox, and the 5 Cs of Media Use.

10

Why This Matters Now

95%

Teen Smartphone Access

About 95% of U.S. teens have access to a smartphone

~50%

Always Online

Nearly half say they are online 'almost constantly'

Phones arrive at school in backpacks and pockets every day. Parents, teachers, and pediatricians share the same questions: **How is this affecting learning, friendships, and mental health — and what should we do about it?**



11

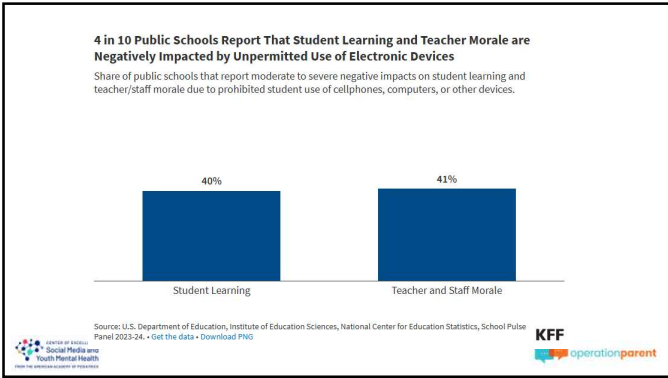
SECTION 1

Phones, Learning, and the New School Policies

What the research says about phones in the classroom — and how schools are responding



12



13

Phones in the Classroom

The Distraction Problem

- **Notification Overload**
A typical teen receives dozens to hundreds of notifications a day, many during school hours.
- **Silent but Distracting**
Even a silent phone in the pocket pulls attention — anticipating messages competes with working memory.
- **Task-Switching Costs**
Switching between class and phone reduces comprehension and retention.
- **Teacher Reports**
Teachers consistently report phones as a top classroom distraction.



The Benefits

- **Schoolwork**
Checking assignment deadlines and grades.
- **Schedule Changes**
Sports or activity schedule changes and updates.
- **Communication with Teachers**
Clarify assignments and scheduling extra help.

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14

Phones and School Performance

Lower Grades

Heavy in-class phone use is associated with lower grades, reduced note quality, and poorer test performance in multiple studies.

Illusion of Competence

Multitasking during learning creates an illusion of competence: students feel productive while encoding less.

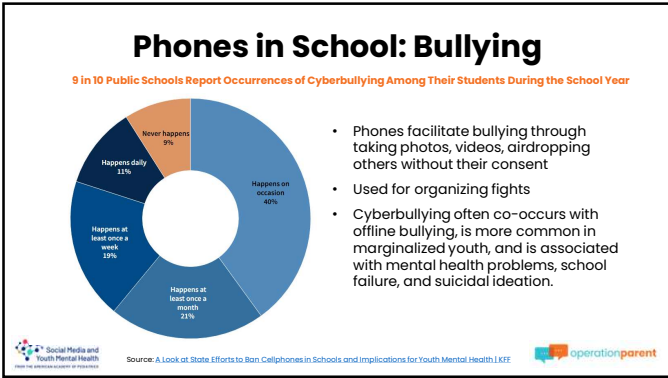
Policy Impact

Restrictive school policies have been shown to cut students' school-day phone time by about **40 minutes** and social media time by about **30 minutes**.



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15



16

CYBERBULLYING

Phones, Bullying, & Social Conflict

Phones can extend social conflict into every corner of the school day – group chats, photos taken without consent, exclusion in real time.

Some studies find online harassment persists or shifts outside school hours when phones are restricted – bans alone don't teach digital citizenship.

Spain Study: Ages 12–14

After phone bans in two regions of Spain, reports of bullying dropped **15–18%** among 12–14-year-olds.

Spain Study: Ages 15–17

Bullying dropped **10–18%** among 15–17-year-olds after the same bans.

17

Phones and Student Well-Being

Sleep Disruption

Heavy social media use is strongly associated with disrupted sleep patterns among teens. Which results in focus and attention issues at school.

Cyberbullying Exposure

Increased phone access correlates with greater exposure to cyberbullying during the school day.

Anxiety & Depression

Symptoms of anxiety and depression are associated with heavy social media use in adolescents.

Social Skills Practice

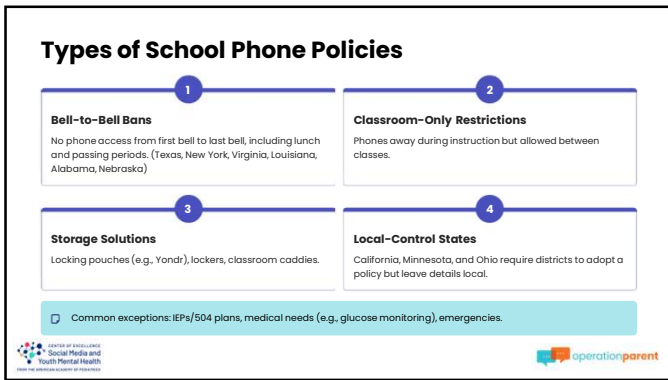
School is where teens practice face-to-face social skills – phones at lunch and between classes can crowd out that practice.

Well-being effects of school policies are still being studied; associations are clearest for **sleep** and **displacement of in-person connection**.

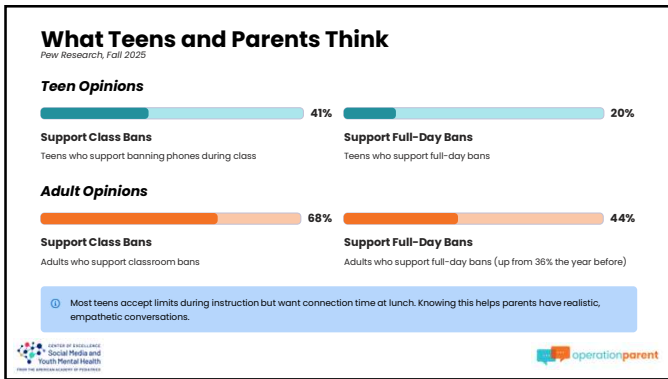
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21

Pros and Cons

Bell-To-Bell	Classroom Only	Storage Solutions
+ Less Teacher Responsibility - Emergency Communication Concerns	+ Allows for Communication - Concerns for Bullying and Distractions	+ Reduced Access - Pouches are Expensive and Breakable

22

How States Are Doing It

STATE SPOTLIGHT

Most laws include **funded storage solutions** and **parent-communication plans** so families can still reach the school office.

New York

Largest state with statewide bell-to-bell smartphone restrictions — "Distraction-Free Schools."

Georgia

Banned personal devices for grades K-8 under the Distraction-Free Education Act.

Missouri

Statewide ban beginning the 2025-26 school year.

23

What the Research Shows: An Honest Summary

⚠ The evidence is genuinely mixed.

Positive Findings

Some studies show improved focus, reduced bullying, and better student mental health after bans.

Null Findings

A large UK study (SMART Schools) found no significant differences in mental health, physical activity, sleep, or grades between restrictive and permissive schools.

One key reason for mixed results: "bans" vary enormously — bell-to-bell vs. class-only, pouches vs. pockets — making comparison across studies difficult.

24

Recent evidence from Australia

- After phone removal at schools, students reported higher concentration and attention, improved listening and communication, more classroom engagement with teachers, and less time spent worrying about social media.
- Over 1200 students in grades 7–12 with a phone ban were compared to a group without a ban. The groups did not differ significantly in terms of problematic phone use, academic engagement, and school belonging; **students who were heavier social media users reported having a harder time complying with phone bans.**

How do we support kids who struggle with new policies?

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Benefits May Take Time



A national Stanford-affiliated study of schools using lockable pouches tracked outcomes over three years, revealing that benefits take time to emerge.

A national Stanford-affiliated study of schools using lockable pouches found phone use dropped immediately — but in year one, disciplinary incidents rose and student well-being dipped.

By year three, discipline returned to baseline and well-being improved.

✓ **Lesson for families:** Expect an adjustment period. Pushback at first does not mean the policy is failing.

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26

New Research: Parent-Reported School Phone Policies

Connection Between Parent Contact and Phone Policy Violation

- National survey of 2,500 parents about their experiences with school phone policies
- Majority of parents reported their child's school has a school phone policy, but there was variance in how restrictive the policies are
- Most parents frequently contact their children on their smartphone during the school day, either once daily (25%) or more (38.5%)
- **There appears to be a connection between regular or frequent parent contact via phone and phone policy violations**
- **Key Takeaway:** Involving parents in the development and implementation of a policy is critical for success



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Main Questions Parents Have

How to communicate during an emergency?

How can we improve day-to-day communication and activity planning?

How are students supported when introducing a new policy?

What type of discipline is applied when students struggle with a new policy and break it?



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Bottom Line on School Policies

Helpful Support, Not a Cure-All

School phone policies are a helpful environmental support — they reliably reduce in-school distraction.

Implementation Matters

Effects on mental health and grades depend on implementation, consistency, and what happens after the bell.

Families Amplify Benefits

Families amplify the benefits when home habits match school expectations.





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29



SECTION 2

After the Bell — Problematic Media Use and What Shows Up at Home

Recognizing when media use becomes a problem



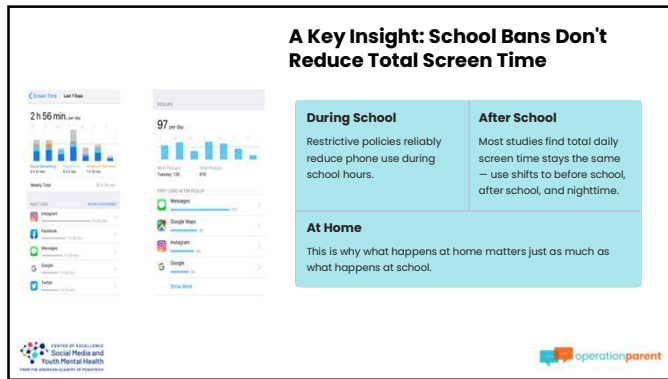
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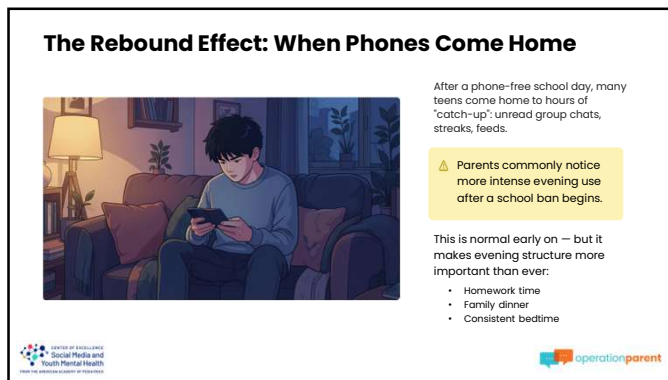


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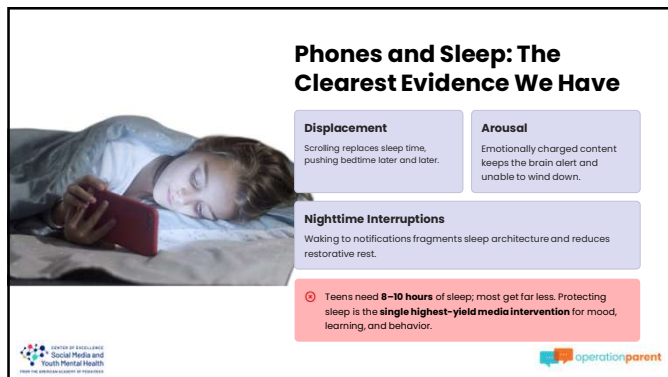
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Phones and Homework

Studying with a phone within reach reduces focus even when it's untouched — researchers call this **"brain drain."**

Each notification check costs several minutes of refocusing time, compounding across an entire homework session.

Simple fix with big returns: Phone in another room during homework blocks, with planned breaks to check in.



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Phones and Family Life

What Gets Crowded Out

Phones can displace conversation, play, outdoor time, and boredom — which fuels creativity and emotional development.

The Right Goal

The goal isn't zero screens; it's making sure media doesn't displace what kids developmentally need.



Family meals — a powerful protective factor for teen mental health — are increasingly interrupted or skipped because of devices (kids' and parents').

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What Parents May Notice at Home



Homework Delays

Homework taking longer with the phone nearby due to constant task-switching.



Bedtime Drift

Later bedtimes and harder wake-ups becoming a regular pattern.



Shorter Fuses

Intense reactions around transitions — especially when asked to put the phone down.



Withdrawal at Home

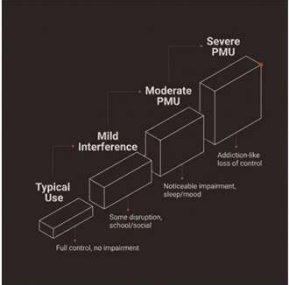
Less talk at dinner; retreating to bedrooms with devices.

None of these alone signals a disorder — but patterns deserve attention.

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What Is Problematic Media Use (PMU)?

PMU is media use that **interferes with a child's daily functioning** — school, sleep, relationships, activities — and that the child struggles to control. It exists on a spectrum, from mild interference to a pattern resembling behavioral addiction.

PMU is defined by **impairment and loss of control**, not by hours alone.

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Signs of Problematic Media Use

 Loss of Control Can't stop despite wanting or agreeing to.	 Preoccupation Media is all they think and talk about.
 Loss of Interest Dropping sports, friends, hobbies they used to love.	 Withdrawal Intense anger, anxiety, or despair when access is removed.
 Deception Hiding use, secret accounts, lying about time online.	 Escape Using media as the only way to soothe difficult feelings.

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PMU vs. Normal Teen Behavior

Loving the phone, preferring friends to family, and grumbling about limits are **developmentally normal**. Worry more when use causes **real impairment**:

- Falling grades
- Lost friendships
- Abandoned activities
- Chronic sleep loss
- Rage out of proportion when limits are set

Two Key Questions to Ask

"What is media **displacing**?"
"Can my child **stop** when they need to?"

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Mental Health Red Flags Connected to Media Use

Mood Worsening After Scrolling
Especially social comparison content — feeling worse about oneself after being online.

New or Increased Anxiety, Irritability, or Sadness
Emotional changes that correlate with increased media use patterns.

Signs of Cyberbullying
Dread around notifications, sudden account deletion, distress after being online.

Exposure to Harmful Content
Self-harm, disordered eating, extreme dieting content.

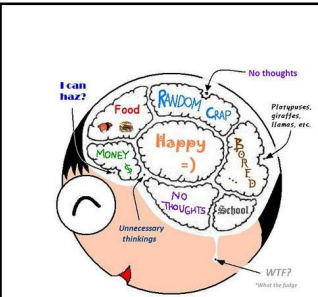


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Any talk of self-harm warrants immediate professional support —
988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988).



40



Why Teens Struggle to Self-Regulate: The Developing Brain

The adolescent brain's **reward system** (dopamine-driven, highly sensitive to social feedback) matures years before the **prefrontal cortex** (impulse control, future planning).

Platforms are engineered for that gap: infinite scroll, streaks, likes, algorithmic feeds.

✓ This is a **design problem meeting a developmental window** — not a character flaw in your child.



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41

When and How to Seek Help

 **Talk to Your Pediatrician**

If media use is causing functional impairment, your pediatrician can screen with validated tools (e.g., PRIUSS, Problematic Media Use Measure) and assess for underlying anxiety, depression, ADHD, or sleep disorders that often drive PMU.

 **AAP Q&A Portal**

The AAP Center of Excellence Q&A Portal lets parents and clinicians ask media-related questions and get expert answers. The portal includes a library of 120+ previously asked questions.

 **Act Early**

Earlier conversations are easier conversations. Don't wait for a crisis to seek guidance.



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42

It's not all red flags!

5 GREEN FLAGS YOUR TEEN'S SCREEN USE IS GOING WELL

- They're strengthening friendships**
Tech helps them stay connected to people they care about.
- They're creating, not just consuming**
Playlists, videos, design—exploring interests and skills.
- They're using tech as one tool of many to cope**
Music, connections, or distractions—tech is not the only strategy.
- They're exhibiting self-awareness**
They can put tech down and balance other parts of life.
- They engage with meaningful content**
Stories, shows, and ideas that actually move them.

Courtesy of Partners at Spark and Stitch



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43

SECTION 3

Strategies and Resources for Healthier Habits

The 5 Cs, Conversation Starters, the Calm Toolbox, and your Family Media Plan





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44

The 5 Cs of Media Use

The AAP's framework for thinking about media — beyond just counting minutes. Five questions every family can use to size up whether media is working for — or against — their child.

Child

Communication

Content

Calm

Crowding Out





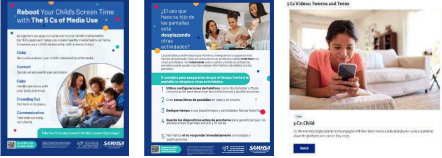
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45

Dive Deeper: 5 Cs of Media Use Resource Hub

- Posters available to **download in 5 languages** (English, Spanish, Arabic, French, Chinese and Vietnamese)
- Short **video clips** about different age groups and media use





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46



The Calm Toolbox

☐ Create a personal menu of 4–5 go-to strategies, practiced when calm, so they work when upset. Especially valuable after school phone bans.



Slow Breathing
Simple breathing exercises to activate the calm response.



Drawing or Journaling
Creative expression as emotional processing.



Music & Movement
Music, stretching, and stepping outside.



Talk to Someone
Reaching out to a trusted person for connection.



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The Calm Toolbox: Healthy Ways to Cope With Stress



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47

Conversation Starters

Ready-to-use prompts for talking with tweens and teens about technology, designed to open dialogue, not interrogate.

What's the funniest thing you saw online today?

Has anything online ever made you feel worse about yourself?

What would you do if a friend was being targeted in a group chat?





Best used in low-pressure moments:
car rides, walks, cooking together.

Available in English & Spanish!



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Family Media Plan

Available in English & Spanish!



Build a Family Media Plan

The AAP's free tool at [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org) helps families set personalized, written agreements.

- 1 Set Screen-Free Times & Zones**
Meals, the hour before bed, bedrooms overnight.
- 2 Set Expectations by Individual (parents included!)**
Tailored to each child's age, maturity, and needs.
- 3 Agree on Consequences**
Consequences decided in advance – no surprises.
- 4 Revisit Annually**
Review each school year and whenever the school policy changes.

Made **WITH** your teen, not handed **TO** them – buy-in is everything.



49

For Even More Resources: Look at Today's Handouts!

Available now in **pop-up** and at [operationparent.org/webinars](https://www.operationparent.org/webinars)

- One-page of our favorite expert-backed resources
- Family tips for balanced social media use
- Navigating school phone policies
- The good and bad of social media use

Check out our Resources!

pop.org/socialmedia

- SMA Portal**
A collection of questions, answers, and resources to help parents and teens navigate social media safely.
- Youth-Led Digital Design Guide**
A guide to help teens create digital content that is safe, respectful, and fun.
- Motivational Interviewing for Family Media Habits**
A guide to help parents and teens work together to change media habits.
- Early Childhood Development Screen Time Toolkit**
A guide to help parents and providers support healthy media use for young children.
- Social Media case Scenarios for Providers**
A guide to help providers address social media issues with patients.
- Building Media Skills for Children 10 and Under**
A guide to help parents and providers build media skills for young children.

On Resource Page
Calm Teacher
AAP Family Media Plan
Common Sense Media

50

So, what can parents do?



51

Practical Home Strategies That Work



Charge Phones Outside Bedrooms

Charge all phones — including parents' — outside bedrooms overnight. No exceptions.



Phone-Free Homework Blocks

Device in another room during homework, with planned breaks to check in.



Device-Free Family Meals

Keep family meals device-free — the highest-value 30 minutes of your day.



Delay Smartphones for Younger Children

Start with limited, supervised access when possible.



Model It

Kids do what we do, not what we say. Parents set the tone.



52

Make Home and School Work Together

If Your School Restricts Phones

- Hold a steady, brief evening structure — rebound use is normal at first; expect a multi-week adjustment.
- Resist rescuing teens from the discomfort of disconnection — that discomfort builds tolerance.
- Use school-office channels for daytime logistics instead of texting your teen (every parent text undermines the policy).





53

So, what can schools do?



54

If Your School Is Still Developing Policy

Pediatricians and the AAP recommend:

- Clear, consistently enforced policies
- Storage solutions provided
- Developed with parent and student input
- Keep the focus on the goal: increase attention to learning



55

Schools

- Kids use tech for lots of positive reasons
- Involve students in the discussion to come up with a solution.
- Focus on the objective—attention to instruction—not the phone per se as you discuss the solution.
- Provide support for kids for gap filling
- Communicate with parents and have plans in place



56

So, what can communities do?



57

Communities

- Encourage kids to play/hang out in the neighborhood by assuming the best in them.
- Ask teens to help so they feel a part of the community.
- Investment in third places beyond sports programs that are driven by THEIR interests
- Create art and music opportunities



58

Resources

Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/>

Common Sense Media: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

National Parent Teacher Association: <https://www.pta.org/home/family-resources>

American Psychological Association: <https://www.apa.org/topics/social-media-internet>

Sesame Workshop: <https://sesameworkshop.org/>

The Mental Health Coalition: <https://www.thementalhealthcoalition.org/>

Bullying Resource Center: <https://bullyingrecoveryresourcecenter.org/>

59



<https://www.aap.org/socialmedia>

Email: socialmedia@aap.org

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LinkedIn:
<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/center-of-excellence-on-social-media-and-youth-mental-health/>



60



61



62



63

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FREE DOWNLOAD OF THE

connection
COLLECTION

conversations

in the car

time together

family dinner

resources

64

LET'S KEEP HAVING
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The Brain We're Building:
How Screens, Substances &
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Q&A TIME!

Submit your questions through the private chat.
We will answer as many as possible, but may not get to every question.

YOUR QUESTIONS HELP MAKE THESE
CONVERSATIONS MEANINGFUL

66

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