

SHOULD SCHOOLS REQUIRE STUDENTS TO LOCK THEIR PHONES IN YONDR POUCHES?

95% of high schoolers have a cell phone, so it's not surprising that cell phone use has extended to the classroom, despite widespread concern about phones' effects on children's learning. This concern has manifested in various plans meant to restrict phone use in schools, and the Yondr pouch is a popular option. The Yondr pouch is a fabric pocket with a magnetic locking closure that requires a key to open. This design allows students to carry their phones with them inside the pouch while also preventing them from using their devices. Cincinnati Public Schools introduced these pouches in the 2024-2025 school year, and locking up their phones is a mandatory step for all CPS high schoolers. In cases where a student uses their phone as a medically necessary device (such as for diabetes regulation), they are given a nonlocking Yondr pouch that allows them to access their phone when needed. Still, the pouches are controversial, especially among students. Are Yondr pouches in the best interest of students, or are they an unreasonable breach of student autonomy?



What do you think?

What are the potential harms of cell phones? The potential benefits?

When should schools be able to restrict students' private property?

YES, STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE TO LOCK UP PHONES

Those in favor of Yondr pouches appeal to the need to protect young people. Teens spend an average of seven and a half hours a day using a screen. That kind of excessive cell phone use has been linked to stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep deprivation. Eradicating phone usage during school hours reduces the amount of time a teenager spends in front of a screen, which means there is less time for harm to occur. Cell phones may harm students' physical and mental health, but they are also a huge distraction in classrooms. In fact, according to a Pew Research Center study, 72% of high school teachers say that cell phone-related distraction is a major problem. Students permitted to use phones may spend up to 20% of their time in class checking social media, texting, etc. That distraction is not isolated to the child using their phone; it also impacts the students around them. While a phone ban would not eliminate cell phone use, a Yondr pouch would at least ensure school is a place free of phone-related distractions and harm.

NO, STUDENTS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO LOCK UP PHONES

Those critical of Yondr pouches note that phones can provide some useful benefits even within the school system. For example, phones connect students to their parents or guardians and easily facilitate communication, whether that be about staying after school for a club or a more serious conversation about an emergency. Cell phones also connect students to their social support network and allow them to engage with friends they aren't physically close to. Others note that phones are widely used in daily life, and students must learn how to use that technology responsibly. Restricting student access to phones may inhibit that learning curve. Lastly, Yondr pouches are expensive: CPS spent roughly \$500,000 to get one for every student. Some believe the money could have been used to enhance other programs or hire new teachers.

