

## Grades improve when cell phones banned in schools, but expert says distraction not the problem

### Transcript

This new study by the London School of Economics is getting the attention of school systems all across the country. Scores improved over all, but the biggest difference was in kids who usually struggle.

Texting, tweeting, trying to get to the next level of Candy Crush, all while the teacher is talking. A new study by the London School of Economics says it's a recipe for slumping test scores. Check out these marks. Grades improved 6.4% overall when cell phones were banned, but underachievers saw an even bigger spike. Their grades improved by 14%. This new study says banning phones increases productivity so much it's equal to adding an hour to every school week. The sampling was broad: 130,000 students from 91 schools all across England. But cellphone supporters don't buy it.

"I don't think the issue is whether they should have the cell phone or not have the cell phone." [Liz Willen, Editor, The Hechinger Report]

Liz Willen is the editor of the Hechinger report and a mother of students in New York City Public Schools, where the mayor just lifted a cell phone ban enforced for a decade.

"What this study is telling you is something that we kind of already know. Teenagers are distracted. If they have their cell phones, they're going to text their friends instead of listening to the teacher. But what if the teacher is engaging in a fascinating lesson that requires them to be actively involved in their own learning and utilizing their cell phone." [Willen]

And for many parents the reason is a little less scientific. They just want to be able to reach their kids during the day.

"Maybe they forgot a really important form and they're not allowed to go on a field trip. I don't want to chat with them in school, but I do need them to have that cell phone for their after-school activities and for everything else." [Willen]

Right now this is a huge debate across the country even individual cities go back and forth on their stance. For example, the mayor of New York City just lifted a 10-year ban. Now each school can set its own rules. The difference in test scores there still remains to be seen. At the NOW national desk, I'm Anne McNamara