



**CITY OF BATH
POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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To: RSU 1 Cell Phone Committee
From: Chief Andrew Booth
Re: Cell phone use in schools
Date: 1/24/24

Members of the committee,

I've been asked to provide a short statement on law enforcement's position on student cell phone use in schools. This topic has been around since cell phone popularity has increased and there are many challenges, changing opinions, and a lack of statistical data to definitively say what the right answer is regarding whether students should be able to have or use cell phones in school.

From a law enforcement perspective, there is some data, mostly anecdotal, that attributes student poor mental health and criminal behavior, such as cyber-bullying, to unregulated cell phone use in schools.

Regarding school safety, there are both pros and cons to allowing cell phone use. The National School Safety and Security Services guidance currently leans towards not being in favor of student free access to cell phones during a crisis for several reasons, these being false information spread, overloading communications, distracting students from listening to teachers/staff and/or following procedures during a crisis as well as causing parents to flock to the school at the first word of a crisis, contributing to any chaos first responders are trying to sort out.

Some of the pros regarding cell phone usage is that they allow students to inform authorities if they see something suspicious and can't immediately inform school staff. We do urge people to "see something, say something."

The bottom line is that cell phone use can adversely affect law enforcement's response to an active threat situation, and I would urge school officials to formulate and strictly regulate a policy on student cell phone use in schools. As for declining mental health and cyber-bullying, both schools and parents play an important role in monitoring children's cell phone and social media use.

Chief Andrew Booth

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