

Oct 05, 2015

Should Cell Phones Be Allowed in School?



Should kids be allowed to bring cell phones to school? People around the country have been debating that question. The New York City school district, which is the biggest in the country, used to ban cell phones. Officials there recently ended the ban, saying that phones could help kids and parents stay in touch. But other people argue that cell phones can keep students from learning.

What do you think?

Jan 19, 2015

Should Schools Allow Cell Phones?



Here's one item you won't find in a lot of students' backpacks: a cell phone. That's because many schools don't allow students to bring cell phones to school.

But that's changing. A growing number of cities— including Los Angeles, California, and Miami, Florida—have decided in recent years to allow cell phones in schools. New York City could be next. The city's mayor, Bill de Blasio, wants to make the switch mainly for safety reasons. He says that kids and their parents need to be able to contact each other in case of an emergency.

"It is, for parents, very, very important to know how to reach their kids," de Blasio says.

Many people don't like the idea of cell phones in school, however. Richard Kavesh, a high school teacher in New York City, says phones create too many problems in classrooms. "The last thing [students] need is another source of distraction and a loss of instructional time," he wrote in a letter published in *The New York Times*.

What do you think?

Oct 05, 2015

Should Recess Be Free Time?



Kids at Cathedral City Elementary School in California don't have to spend a lot of time thinking about what to do during recess. Instead, they choose from games like handball or dodgeball that are set up at activity stations. Each activity is supervised by an adult "recess coach." This kind of system, called structured recess, is being used by hundreds of schools across the country.

People who support structured recess say that it helps prevent arguments over what to play. Another big reason for this kind of recess is that every student gets to play. Everyone is welcome to participate in every game, so no one feels left out. "Our motto here is, 'Anyone can play, anytime, anywhere,'" says Matiana Rosales, a recess coach at Cathedral City Elementary. "It decreases bullying."

However, others say recess should be free time. They argue that kids need a break from the structured classes that make up most of their school day. In addition, a leading group of doctors found that kids benefit from having free time to play. A 2012 report from the American Academy of Pediatrics showed that playing freely, without strict guidelines, helps kids develop social skills.

What do you think?

Sep 21, 2015

Should Schools Require Uniforms?



Kids at one public school in Florida are spending less time deciding what to wear these days. Starting this year, students at Groveland Elementary School are required to wear uniforms: tan, navy blue, or black pants (or shorts) and a solid-color polo shirt.

Uniforms have long been the only option for kids in many private schools, but they're becoming more common in public schools too.

One in five elementary schools in the U.S. now require them, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Some people say wearing uniforms is dressing for success. They argue that when everyone dresses alike, students can focus more on schoolwork and less on fashion. Supporters also say that wearing a uniform can boost kids' school spirit.

"It gives them a sense of belonging and a sense of ownership in their school," says Joseph Mabry. He's the assistant principal of Groveland Elementary.

However, some people want to leave uniforms on the rack. For example, the Brunswick County School District in North Carolina voted to get rid of uniforms for this school year. Some parents complained that the uniforms were too expensive. Others argued that kids should be allowed to express their own personal style.

What do you think?

Sep 14, 2015

Should the School Day Be Longer?



The final bell is ringing later for kids at 20 schools in Boston, Massachusetts, this year. Their school day is 40 minutes longer than it was last year. It's part of a national trend to increase the amount of time students spend in class. From 2012 to 2014, nearly 1,000 public schools across the country extended their school days or school years.

The extra time in school is meant mainly to improve students' performance. In 2012, 100 elementary schools in Florida extended the school day by an hour. In one year, those schools saw a boost in students' reading skills and test scores.

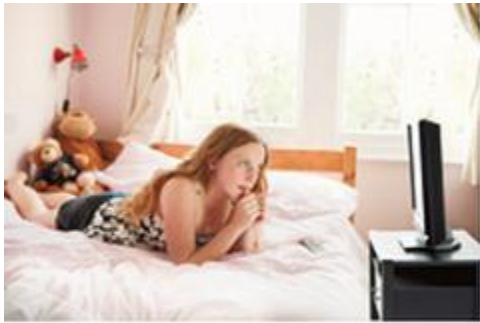
In Boston schools, the new schedule allows more time for art, science, and P.E. Other schools have used some of their added time to extend lunch and recess.

But many teachers and parents don't want to stretch the school day. (Of course, neither do a lot of students!) Critics of the idea say kids will get worn out during the longer days. They also point out that lengthening school days can be expensive, because schools have to spend more on things like electricity and paying staff. In Boston, for example, the switch to longer school days is expected to cost an additional \$12.5 million each year.

What do you think?

Feb 02, 2015

Should Kids Have a TV in Their Bedroom?



When kids want to watch their favorite TV show, many of them head to their bedrooms instead of the family room. According to the American Medical Association, almost two thirds of kids between the ages of 10 and 14 have a television in their room.

This worries some parents and doctors, many of whom think that kids already watch too much TV. A survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that, on average, kids with a television in their bedroom watch one more hour of TV each day than other kids do. Health experts say that too much tube time can lead to obesity and other health problems. Many people are also concerned that having a TV in the bedroom prevents kids from hanging out with friends and spending quality time with their family.

But others think having a TV in the bedroom isn't a bad idea, as long as kids don't overdo it. In one survey, parents said that having separate TVs leads to fewer arguments over what to watch. They also point out that parents can still monitor what their kids watch by using parental controls to block inappropriate shows.

What do you think?

May 11, 2015

Should Kids Have a Later Bedtime in the Summer?



Summer vacation is just around the corner. For many kids, summer means more than having fun in the sun. It also means getting to stay up later.

Many doctors say it's OK to have a later summer bedtime—as long as you can also sleep later in the morning. "The most important thing is that you're getting the sleep that you need," says Jodi Mindell, a sleep expert at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia. She adds, however, that kids should return to their usual sleep schedule a couple of weeks before the new school year begins.

Not everyone likes the idea of later summer bedtimes, though. Some people argue that kids should stick to the same sleep routine year-round so their bodies don't need to readjust to changing schedules. Others say kids should go to bed when they're naturally tired. Sleep experts have found that elementary school students who stay up later than 9 p.m. tend not to get enough rest. A lack of sleep can make kids moody and less focused, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

What do you think?

Mar 23, 2015



Do Kids Need Homework?

A school in western New York has taken the “home” out of “homework.” At the Buffalo Academy of Scholars, students complete independent work during the school day instead of doing assignments when they get home. They’re also required to read for at least 30 minutes each night.

Many supporters of no-homework policies say kids need more free time to play and relax after a long day in school. Others argue that doing a lot of homework doesn’t necessarily help students succeed in class. Meg Keller-Cogan, the director of the Buffalo Academy, says she hasn’t seen enough proof that doing assignments each night helps students get better grades.

Though many kids dream of life without homework, not everyone wants to do away with it. People who support the idea of nightly homework say it’s important for students to practice what they learned during class. They also argue that homework teaches kids how to manage their time and motivate themselves to work hard. Plus, some people say that if kids get in the habit of doing homework at an early age, they’ll be better prepared for high school and college.

What do you think?