# Illinois governor pushes for classroom cellphone ban to boost student engagement



Illinois Governor JB Pritzker is advocating for a statewide ban on cellphones in classrooms, a move aimed at enhancing student achievement, social interaction, and mental health among public school students. This proposal, which is gaining traction across the United States, is set to be endorsed during Pritzker's combined State of the State and Budget address.

The proposed legislation, which has been introduced in both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly, mandates that school districts establish policies prohibiting personal wireless devices during instructional time, although notable exceptions will apply. The regulations also stipulate that devices must be stored securely yet remain accessible, and district policies will be reviewed at least every three years.

The push for such legislation is supported by findings from the Pew Research Center, which indicates that approximately 70% of high school teachers in the U.S. view cellphone distractions as a significant issue in classrooms. According to Martin Torres, Pritzker's deputy governor for education, the initiative has been piloted in at least 10 Illinois school districts with positive feedback. Torres noted, “Students are more engaged, they’re more attentive in class. There’s improved participation in classroom dynamics.”

Pritzker's proposal outlines that cellphones would be prohibited during instructional periods, with exceptions for emergencies, situations approved by teachers, and provisions for students with specific educational needs. The plan allows school districts flexibility in developing tailored policies, and the legislation aims to have these rules in place by the 2026-2027 school year.

In the Peoria school district, where a similar policy has already been implemented, each student is issued a neoprene pouch with a magnetised lock, which can only be opened by teachers or administrators. A survey conducted among 8,000 students from grades 5 to 12 revealed improved focus and engagement, according to Superintendent Sharon Desmoulin-Kherat.

Historically, Illinois has had a fluctuating stance on cellphones in schools, having instituted a ban as early as the 1990s when cellular technology was in its infancy. However, this legislation was rolled back in 2002 as cellular devices became more commonplace and essential for communication.

Meanwhile, a similar cellphone ban has taken effect in the Los Angeles Unified School District, affecting approximately 800 schools. This policy, which became operational on Tuesday, prohibits not only cellphones but also smartwatches and other devices capable of messaging and internet access during school hours. While students can use phones on buses, they are not permitted during breaks or lunchtime.

LA Unified Superintendent Alberto Carvalho confirmed that the majority of schools were prepared for the implementation of this ban, stating that students reported improved concentration since its enforcement. Although the transition may be challenging initially, Carvalho believes it will become more habitual with time.

Parents have displayed mixed reactions. While some express approval of the initiative—citing distractions caused by phone usage—others are concerned about the safety implications, particularly in emergency situations. Despite minor isolated instances of student resistance, the overall compliance rate has been high, with varying methods being employed for securing devices, including magnetic pouches and traditional storage systems.

Concerns have also emerged regarding the ban's impact on learning tools. Some parents highlight how mobile devices have been used for educational purposes, such as recording in music class or documenting scientific experiments. Nevertheless, supporters of the ban point to the benefits of reduced distractions and increased engagement in learning environments.

As these policies unfold in both Illinois and Los Angeles, their effectiveness in achieving the intended goals of enhancing educational focus and improving student mental health will continue to be closely observed.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://san.com/cc/illinois-gov-pritzker-moves-to-ban-cell-phones-in-schools-joining-other-states/> - This article supports the claim that Illinois Governor JB Pritzker is advocating for a statewide ban on cellphones in classrooms to enhance student focus and mental health. It also mentions that the proposal is gaining traction across the U.S.
* <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/09/mobile-technology-and-home-broadband-2020/> - Although not directly mentioned in the search results, Pew Research Center often publishes findings related to technology use in schools. This link could provide context on how cellphone distractions are viewed by educators.
* <https://www.peoriapublicschools.org/> - This is the official website of the Peoria Public Schools district, where a similar cellphone ban policy has been implemented. It could provide more details on their specific approach to managing devices in schools.
* <https://achieve.lausd.net/> - This is the official website of the Los Angeles Unified School District, which has implemented a cellphone ban. It could offer insights into how the district manages and enforces such policies.
* <https://www.illinois.gov/news/Pages/default.aspx> - This is the official news page of the State of Illinois, where updates on Governor Pritzker's proposals and legislative actions can be found. It may provide additional information on the proposed cellphone ban legislation.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This is the source of the original article, providing context on the proposed cellphone ban in Illinois and its implications for education.