

Teacher versus Student Opinion: Cell Phones and Other Electronics Devices in School 1

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by

Megan Ryer

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The Educational Leadership Faculty

Northwest Missouri State University Missouri

Department of Educational Leadership

College of Education and Human Services

Maryville, MO 64468

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Abstract

Recently at Maple Park High School, located in the South Kansas City School District<sup>1</sup>, a research project was implemented to determine the effectiveness and usefulness of electronic devices in the classroom. The researcher provided a survey to both willing teachers and students asking their opinions about cell phones and other electronic devices, i.e. iPods, in the school setting. The survey included questions about the use of various electronic devices, how distracting and useful these devices were, and whether or not either party thought that they should be allowed in school. Questions were similar in design for both parties. Furthermore, data was collected from the survey and proved that teachers and students felt the same about the use of these devices in the classroom. They also felt the same about the distractibility of the devices in the classroom and on how efficiently they can be used as a teaching tool. Overall, at Maple Park High School, both teachers and students agreed that cell phones and other electronic devices should not be banned in the school setting.

<sup>1</sup>The name of the high school and school district used in this research study has been changed from its current name.

## Introduction

### *Background, Issues and Concerns*

At Maple Park High School, located in the South Kansas City School District, the school policy allows the use of cell phones and other electronic devices to be used in the discretion of the teacher of the classroom. Cell phones and electronic devices, i.e. iPods, are permitted at all times throughout the school day, especially in the hallways and at lunch; nevertheless, once a student enters a classroom, they are only allowed to use their device in relation to the teacher's rules. Cell phone and electronic device use in the classroom is an important topic to study because it is essential to realize how student's achievement is affected and whether or not these devices are really a necessary asset for students to have access to. Not having all attention on the material at hand can be a distraction for the student, other students, and the teacher. It can be crucial for learning capability and may therefore need to be eliminated. Consequently, in order to create a successful and thriving classroom for teacher and students alike, research has been conducted on whether or not cell phones and other electronic devices should be banned in school. In the following research to be discussed, students and teachers were given a survey about the capacity of cell phones and other electronic devices being used in classrooms throughout Maple Park High School.

### *Practice under Investigation*

An effective classroom environment is imperative to have in a successful classroom and being able to create effective rules of the classroom for students to abide by are a part of this. Teachers need to limit as many distractions as possible in order to provide the best learning environment for their students. Therefore, determining whether

or not to allow cell phones and other electronic devices in the classroom could verify why some students may lack attention and focus on the task and content they are learning about. In addition, it could also explain student's achievement. This research study considers implications of whether or not both teachers and students believe that cell phones and other electronic devices are necessary to have in the school setting.

#### *School Policy to be Informed by Study*

Maple Park High School's cell phone policy permits cell phone use based on teacher discretion. In this research study, it is investigating whether or not students should be allowed to use their cell phones in the classroom based upon teacher and student opinion.

#### *Conceptual Underpinning*

Incorporating classroom rules, policies and procedures into a classroom management plan can inhibit students to excel. Therefore, it is important for teachers to incorporate proper classroom rules for this to happen. According to Dr. William Glasser, implementing clear rules and consequences is imperative for student learning. It is also important for teacher's to not sway from these guidelines and strictly adhere with them. However, in relation to permitting cell phone and other electronic device use in the classroom room or not, it is crucial to understand the affect this rule may have upon students and their academic performance. In addition, this rule could also affect student behavior and distractibility. Teachers need to understand whether or not cell phone and other electronic device use does have an affect so they can follow a beneficial rule. Therefore, the first step to take in this understanding is by getting opinions from both teachers and students alike about these devices.

*Statement of the Problem*

Cell phone and other electronic device use in the classroom has become an increasing problem with the advancement of technology. Students are hooked constantly to their phones as a mean for communication; yet, this poses a distraction for everyone around them. Not only are student's using phones for communication, but they can also be a resource for cheating and other behavior problems. In addition, because of cell phones and other electronic devices, i.e. iPods, students may exhibit decreased attention on the content being learned by focusing on their phone. The use of cell phones in the classroom needs to be studied in order for teachers to know what rules to use to promote successful learning.

*Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to determine the differences or similarities seen between teacher and students about cell phone and other electronic device use in the classroom. It will help resolve the issue of whether or not cell phones and other electronic devices should be banned in the school setting.

*Research Question(s)*

In this study, the research question states, "Is there a difference between teacher opinion and student opinion based upon whether or not they should be allowed to use cell phones and other electronic devices in the classroom?"

*Null Hypothesis(es)*

In this study, the null hypothesis states, "There is no difference between teacher opinion and student opinion based upon whether or not they should be allowed to use cell phones and other electronic devices in the classroom."

### *Anticipated Benefits of the Study*

The anticipated benefits of this study are in hopes of discovering whether or not cell phone and other electronic device use in the classroom is being seen as a negative or positive tool. Based off of the results, information can be gained and shared with teachers, administrators, and district personnel so they can promote the most beneficial classroom management strategies.

### *Definition of Terms*

- SMS messaging: short-message-service; a text messaging service component of phone, web, or mobile communication systems that uses standardized communications protocols to the exchange information between fixed line or mobile phone devices.
- iPod: a portable digital media player and hard drive from Apple Computer.
- ASP: A Statistical Package; it is a powerful Windows based software that is exceedingly easy to learn and use. This software contains a large array of statistical routines and a complete data management system.

### *Summary*

In this research study, it compares the opinions between teachers and students and whether or not cell phone and other electronic device use in the classroom is necessary. The study was conducted at Maple Park High School in suburban Kansas City, Missouri. At Maple Park High School, cell phone use is implied by the discretion of the teacher. Therefore, data was collected from a survey provided to willing teachers and students about the use of a variety of electronic devices and whether or not they should be

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allowed. Questions provided to teachers and students were similar, but not always identical. Moreover, the study was configured after collecting the data from all completed surveys. This data was analyzed using a descriptive analysis. It was concluded that teachers and students felt the same about the use of cell phones and other electronic devices in the classroom. They also felt the same about the distractibility of the devices in the classroom and on how efficiently they can be used as a teaching tool. Overall, at Maple Park High School, both teachers and students agreed that cell phones and other electronic devices should not be banned in the school setting.

### Review of Literature

Technology is ever changing and with the invention of mobile wireless communications and advanced music technology, people of all ages now have resources accessible with the touch of a button. The majority of today's teenage student has both a cell phone and a music player, i.e. iPod, which is readily available to use in their high school setting. School districts have begun to implement cell phone and other electronic device policies in order to promote and maintain high student academic achievement. However, is this policy absolutely necessary? This is something that researchers have begun to study in order to showcase to educators what avenue to best travel in relation to cell phones and other electronic device use.

Cell phones and other electronic devices, i.e. iPods, have increasingly become a much greater distraction in the current classroom. A once limited item in the hand of a teenager is now something that all have. Yet, there are several ways for teachers to deal with the issue of disruptive cell phone usage. Many teachers have proclaimed their want for cell phones to be banned. However, cell phones are everywhere; students are able to play games, check e-mail, and take pictures, which all leave lesser attention to the material being presented during class (Gilroy, 2004). Still, Gilroy (2004) explains that students seem to believe that this has no effect on their academic achievement. What they don't understand is that it is hard for any human to concentrate fully on two things at once.

Therefore, most cell phones and other electronic devices can be seen as a huge distraction within the classroom. Even though most can be used with headphones to help



students eliminate excess noise and allow them to focus, sometimes students end up emitting noise that is much louder than necessary. Anderson (2001) describes the effects of having a noisy classroom from either being from those things that can be prevented or from those that cannot be prevented, and cell phone and music player noise can definitely be prevented. Most teachers talk for over six hours a day and their voices may become strained from having to talk over large amounts of background noise, for example, loud iPod songs. Anderson (2001) explains that background noise is related to low student achievement and students that work in noisy conditions have lower attention span, less ability to focus, and tend to create more behavior problems.

However, “living in the now” with cell phones, has limited students need for planning in the future and keeping a high academic regiment. Richtel and Wollan (2011) provide several student accounts showcasing how they believe technology has been getting in the way of their schoolwork. For instance, one such female student had sent over 27,000 text messages in a month and blames these text messages for getting in the way of completing her homework (Richtel & Wollan, 2011). Richtel and Wollan (2011) explain the viewpoint of neurologists, where they believe that focusing too much energy on technology, such as the internet or cell phones, is not beneficial; down time and rest is needed away from these tools in order to be successful. Still, even though schools promote technology to better student’s advancement in the future, teen’s need to be aware of what is the most important thing to focus on. In addition, parents can help play a role in the cell phones students have by limiting what they are able to do on them (Gilroy, 2004). Gilroy (2004) implies that since cell phones will be around for a while, it is going

to be a great effort to get students, teachers, and administrators all on the same boat in any cell phone policy.

Furthermore, resilient school policies are best created by looking at research collected from a variety of outside school policies and practices. In relation to cell phone policies and procedures, Obringer and Coffey (2007) provide a way to evaluate administrators' perceptions of cell phone issues and related policies. A survey was conducted based on the information gained through a literature review, panel of experts on the topic, and the implementation of a small pilot study at the researcher's university (Obringer & Coffey, 2007). Furthermore, the data shared from this research was collected through a survey that was mailed randomly to 200 high school principals throughout the United States (Obringer & Coffey, 2007). Over 50% of these administrators returned the survey which allowed findings to be examined thoroughly in: (1) high school policies, (2) parental support of these policies, (3) teacher's use of cell phones, (4) student disciplinary actions, and (5) misuses of cell phones by students (Obringer & Coffey, 2007).

While this being said, creating and implementing a consistent and successful cell phone and electronic device policy is something that all school districts need to consider as technology evolves. There are several suggestions that need to be taken into consideration of how to deal with students who use their cell phones during class. School districts need to take into account things that should and should not be done when creating a policy. For instance, Rosevear (2010) suggests using the same phrase each time a cell phone needs to be taken away so students know the procedure. In addition,

Rosevear (2010) also explains not to play favorites and to provide the same consequence with each student. Other helpful tips to include when creating a consistent policy is to make sure before a teacher takes a phone, that it is off, teachers need to be a cell phone role model, and teachers should also be creative with consequences (Rosevear, 2010). If teachers can be consistent and stick to some of these techniques, the policy will be sound and the classroom will become a less distracting place.

In continuation, with a consistent cell phone and electronic device policy that keeps cell phones in the school setting, it is important to take a positive approach to implementing these devices in the classroom. Teachers are striving to get administrators on board to allow students to use cell phones in the classroom since school funding for supplies is becoming more and more limited (Ferriter, 2010). Ferriter (2010) suggests several simple tricks to breaking the negative connotation of cell phones in the classroom by, (1) making them visible, (2) showcasing a convincing application of cell phones in the classroom, and (3) using cell phones to replace necessary supplies. By following these strategies, administrators may be more open to new ideas.

Student's cell phones could save schools money and become useful tools, taking the place of once expensive resources. With the implementation of cell phone usage in the classroom, they can end up being used as a beneficial resource. Students and teachers have recently become huge users of wireless technologies; including, PDA's and SMS (short-message-service), also known as text messaging, messaging through mobile wireless cell phones (Kim, Holmes, & Mims, 2005). Rosevear (2010) explains that cell phones can be used to help teach summarizing and language through SMS. Cell phones

in high school will also get students ready for future endeavors in the college setting. Scornavacca, Huff, and Marshall (2009) discuss the impact of using cell phones in classrooms at the university level and take into consideration the implications of using SMS, too. “Classroom Feedback Systems,” such as clickers, have not been proven beneficial (Scornavacca et al., 2009). Moreover, with the new system called, TEXT 2 LRN, students are able to send, via SMS, questions and/or comments about the lecture being taught at that moment, along with providing a quick and easy way for teachers to survey or quiz students on information (Scornavacca et al., 2009). This system provides students and staff another communication resource, but does not relatively allow students to gain more knowledge by using this technology. Scornavacca et al. (2009) suggest that using cell phones in classrooms as a tool would increase active participation and help decrease distractions, such as texting a friend in another room. Even though the uses are different between students and teachers, both are deemed beneficial by providing mobility and reachability (Kim et al., 2005). This would be relevant in both the high school and college setting. Kim et al. (2005) suggest that schools need to take advantage of these technologies and implement them into their classrooms to better help prepare their students for future success.

On the other hand, cell phones and other electronic devices are still seen by some as a burden in and outside of the classroom. Thompson and Cupples (2008) describe how cell phones can have a negative effect on a student’s spelling, grammar, and communication skills while also frequently disrupting classroom learning time. Furthermore, Pierce and Vaca (2008) provide information relating to a study that was

developed to explain the differences between teenagers that use communication technologies, and those that don't. The study included 517 high school students who had completed a self-report survey. The survey showed that 75% of these adolescents used MySpace and had a cell phone, and that more than half of them also had an IM account (Pierce & Vaca, 2008). Those that used all three of these technologies had significantly lower grades than teens that did not (Pierce & Vaca, 2008). The study also revealed that teenagers, who used these technologies when working on their homework or when procrastinating on their home to use these technologies, reported having lower grades. The research found that many students text message frequently during class and even text message sometimes during a test (Pierce & Vaca, 2008).

In conclusion, will technology advancements here to stay. It is important for school and their districts to establish a cell phone and other electronic device policy that is best for that school. Whether or not cell phones are banned or not, administrators and teachers need to make sure that their students are getting the best education possible. Teachers need to be educated on how cell phones can be used in the classroom successful in order for them to remain a substantial and effective part of the classroom.

## Research Methods

### *Research Design*

A survey was provided to teachers and students at Maple Park High School about their opinions on electronic device use in the classroom. The teacher survey was provided through [www.surveymbuilder.com](http://www.surveymbuilder.com) and was sent through district e-mail. Teachers were allowed to complete the survey on a volunteer only basis and the data from the survey was confidential. The student survey was provided to the researcher's classes through pencil and paper. Students were allowed to complete the survey on a volunteer only basis and the data from the survey was confidential. The collection of this survey data will be analyzed through a descriptive analysis. Using an Alpha level of 0.25, significance will be determined and the null hypothesis will be challenged.

### *Study Group Description*

Data, which includes the results from both the teacher and student surveys, was collected from teachers and students that volunteered to take the survey at Maple Park High School. Teachers from all content areas were able to take the survey; they were a mixture of both male and female teachers. Students from 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade in the researcher's classes were able to take the survey; they were a mixture of both male and female students. The survey was given during the spring semester to both teachers and students.

### *Data Collection and Instrumentation*

Data was collected from both the teacher and student surveys provided. Those that volunteered to take the survey contributed to the data.

*Statistical Analysis Methods*

The data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel and ASP to determine the differences, if any, of cell phone and other electronic device use in the classroom based upon teacher versus student survey outcomes. A descriptive analysis was conducted using the variables.

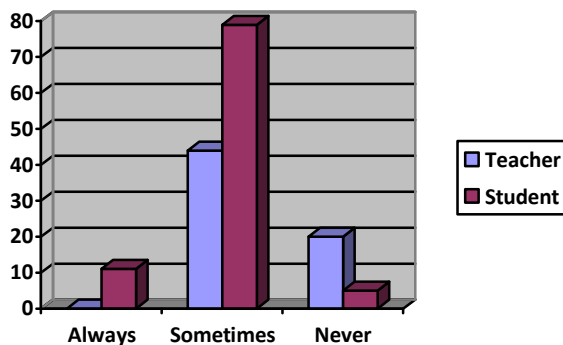
Findings

**Question #1**

*Teacher Survey:* Do you allow students to use their cell phones in class?

*Student Survey:* Do your teachers allow you to use your cell phone in class?

Survey Taker	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teacher	0	44	20
Student	11	79	5



<b>Mean</b>	5.5	61.5	12.5
<b>Median</b>	5.5	61.5	12.5
<b>Maximum</b>	11	79	20
<b>Minimum</b>	0	44	5
<b>Stan. Dev.</b>	7.78	24.75	10.61

After comparing the data from both the teacher and student survey, in relation to the question asking about cell phone use in the classroom, it was revealed that 64 teachers and 95 students answered the question. 44 teachers sometimes allowed their students to use their cell phones in class, while 20 never did. Furthermore, 11 students shared that their teachers always let them use their cell phones in class, 79 explained that they sometimes got to, and 5 said that they were never allowed. The data also showed that



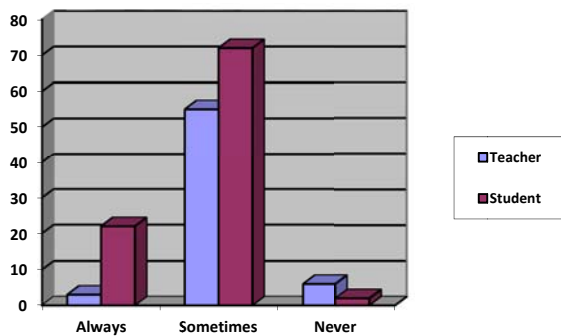
none of the teachers said that they always allow cell phone use in their classroom, while 11 students said that was untrue. Overall, based upon the survey average, both teachers and students were sometimes allowing and/or using cell phones in the classroom.

**Question #2**

*Teacher Survey:* Do you allow students to use their music players, i.e. iPods, in class?

*Student Survey:* Do your teachers allow you to use your music players, i.e. iPods, in class?

Survey Taker	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teacher	3	55	6
Student	22	72	2



<b>Mean</b>	12.5	63.5	4
<b>Median</b>	12.5	63.5	4
<b>Maximum</b>	22	72	6
<b>Minimum</b>	3	55	2
<b>Stan. Dev.</b>	13.44	12.02	2.83

After comparing the data from both the teacher and student survey, in relation to the question asking about music player, i.e. iPod, use in the classroom, it was revealed that 64 teachers and 96 students answered the question. 3 teachers always allowed music player use in the classroom, 55 sometimes allowed their students to use their music players, while 6 never did. Furthermore, 22 students shared that their teachers always allowed them to use their music players in class, 72 explained that they sometimes got to,

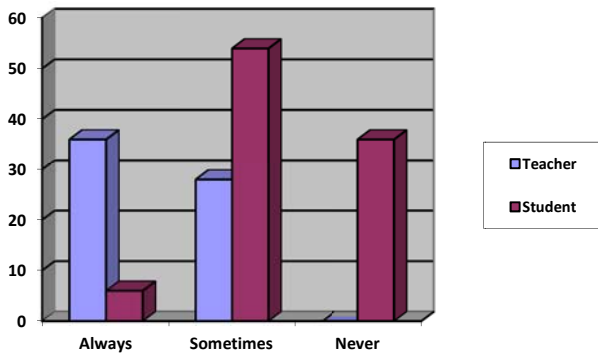
and 2 said that they were never allowed. Overall, based upon the survey average, both teachers and students allowed and/or were using music players, i.e. iPods, sometimes in the classroom.

**Question #3**

*Teacher Survey:* Do you think cell phones cause a distraction in class?

*Student Survey:* Do you think cell phones cause a distraction in class?

Survey Taker	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teacher	36	28	0
Student	6	54	36



<b>Mean</b>	21	41	18
<b>Median</b>	21	41	18
<b>Maximum</b>	36	54	36
<b>Minimum</b>	6	28	0
<b>Stan. Dev.</b>	21.21	18.38	25.46

After comparing the data from both the teacher and student survey, in relation to the question asking about whether or not cell phones cause a distraction in the classroom, it was revealed that 64 teachers and 96 students answered the question. 36 teachers always thought cell phones were a distraction in the classroom and 28 felt that they sometimes were a distraction. Furthermore, 6 students shared that they always felt that cell phones were a distraction and 54 explained that they sometimes felt they were a distraction. None of the teachers felt that cell phones were never a distraction. In

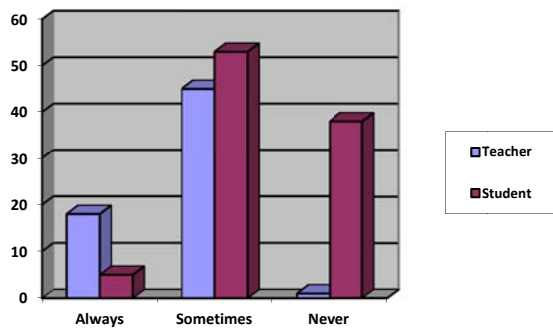
contraire, the data showed that 36 students thought the opposite. Overall, based upon the survey average, both teachers and students believed that cell phones can sometimes cause a distraction in the classroom.

**Question #4**

*Teacher Survey:* Do you think music players, i.e. iPods, cause a distraction in class?

*Student Survey:* Do you think music players, i.e. iPods, cause a distraction in class?

Survey Taker	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teacher	18	45	1
Student	5	53	38



<b>Mean</b>	11.5	49	19.5
<b>Median</b>	11.5	49	19.5
<b>Maximum</b>	18	53	38
<b>Minimum</b>	5	45	1
<b>Stan. Dev.</b>	9.19	5.66	26.16

After comparing the data from both the teacher and student survey, in relation to the question asking about whether or not music players, i.e. iPods, cause a distraction in the classroom, it was revealed that 64 teachers and 96 students answered the question. 18 teachers always thought music players were a distraction in the classroom, 45 felt that they sometimes were a distraction, and 1 felt that they never were. Furthermore, 5 students shared that they always felt that music players were a distraction, 53 explained that they sometimes felt that they were a distraction, and 38 said they never were.

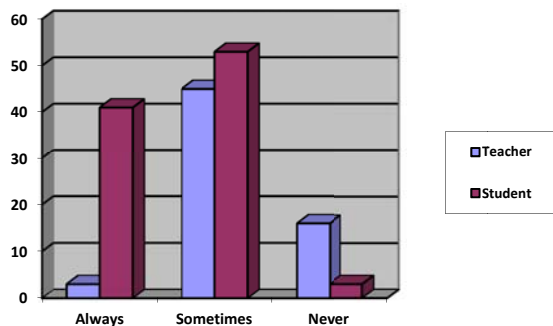
Overall, based upon the survey average, both teachers and students believed that music players, i.e. iPods, can sometimes be a distraction in the classroom.

**Question #5**

*Teacher Survey:* Do you think cell phones can be used as an efficient tool in class?

*Student Survey:* Do you think cell phones can be used as an efficient tool in class?

Survey Taker	Always	Sometimes	Never
Teacher	3	45	16
Student	41	53	3



<b>Mean</b>	22	49	9.5
<b>Median</b>	22	49	9.5
<b>Maximum</b>	41	53	16
<b>Minimum</b>	3	45	3
<b>Stan. Dev.</b>	26.87	5.66	9.19

After comparing the data from both the teacher and student survey, in relation to the question asking about whether or not cell phones can be used as an efficient tool in the classroom, it was revealed that 64 teachers and 97 students answered the question. 3 teachers always thought they could be used as an efficient tool in the classroom, 45 felt that they sometimes could be used efficiently, and 16 felt that they never could be. Furthermore, 41 students shared that they always felt that cell phones could be used as an efficient tool, 53 explained that they sometimes felt this way, and 3 said they never could

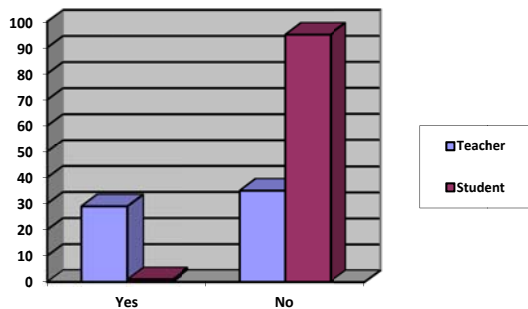
be. Overall, based upon the survey average, both teachers and students believed that cell phones can sometimes be used as an efficient tool in the classroom.

**Question #6**

*Teacher Survey:* Do you think cell phones should be banned in school?

*Student Survey:* Do you think cell phones should be banned in school?

Survey Taker	Yes	No
Teacher	29	35
Student	1	95



<b>Mean</b>	15	65
<b>Median</b>	15	65
<b>Maximum</b>	29	95
<b>Minimum</b>	1	35
<b>Stan. Dev.</b>	19.80	42.43

After comparing the data from both the teacher and student survey, in relation to the question asking about whether or not cell phones should be banned in school, it was revealed that 64 teachers and 96 students answered the question. 29 teachers agreed that cell phones should be banned, while 35 believed that they should not be. Furthermore, 1 student believed that cell phones should be banned in the school setting, while 95 disagreed greatly that they should not be. Overall, both teacher and students believed that they should not be banned.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the survey proved that there is not a significant difference between teacher and student opinion on whether or not electronic devices, specifically cell phones, should be banned in the high school setting. The null hypothesis is not to be rejected. The majority of both teachers and students believed that cell phones should remain an asset accessible to students in the classroom. Overall, for each question asked of both teachers and students, the average survey responses of both parties were in favor of the same answer. However, there was a difference between the number of teachers that believed that cell phones caused a distraction in the classroom in opposition to how students felt about their distractibility. This research study did not support the conceptual underpinning that consistent rules, policies, and procedures need to be put in to place in order to eliminate misbehavior and distractibility of students. Teachers, specifically, with their inconsistent classroom rules based around the cell phone policy, had an overwhelming response that even though electronic devices are distracting they do not want them to be banned in the school setting.

Furthermore, in order to gain greater knowledge and information about this topic, further research should be gained. The data collected through the survey provided at Maple Park High School was a step in the right direction; however, there is a wide variety of possibilities of where this research study could continue. In consideration to the conceptual underpinning, it is important that rules, policies, and procedures are consistently followed in order to create positive classroom management, limit distractions, and promote academic achievement in the classroom. At Maple Park High

School there is not a consistent policy put in to place for students to adhere to relating to cell phones and other electronic devices. Therefore, this study could next work on coming up with a strategy of implementing a consistent policy and then providing the survey again, while not banning cell phones quite yet. Next, it would also be helpful if all teachers would be able to take part of the survey process, along with giving all students within the school the opportunity to take the survey. It would be a good idea if the district had a consistent policy; therefore, it would be beneficial for all high schools within the district to complete the survey as well. In continuation, research could also be conducted based upon the achievement level students receive for those that are able to use cell phones in the classroom and for those that are not. A comparison of how these devices may actually change academic achievement in individuals would be valuable to study. In addition, data could also be collected on the usability of cell phones in the classroom and the tools that are offered out there that utilize them as a liaison. Overall, digging a little deeper into the way cell phones and other electronic devices affect how teacher's classrooms are managed would be informative, not just about what teachers and students think of them. Continued research will help districts establish a consistent policy to follow that will benefit not only students, but teachers too.

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