



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Letter to Your Principal: Cell Phones

Effective Application Leads to Great Value



Claim and Focus

The writer engages the reader with context surrounding the topic (“technology at your fingertips”) and narrows to a clear and specific claim that is developed fully throughout the essay (“Cell phones, when applied correctly, can actually be of great value to students in our schools”).



Support and Evidence

The most relevant and appropriate evidence is cited appropriately throughout the response, citing evidence from all four provided sources. All evidence is fully explained and supports the claim. A counterclaim is clearly acknowledged and the author begins to do work to refute it (“Even with all the phone use positives, some people still argue against it”).



Organization

The essay is effectively structured to progress the argument forward. Related ideas are linked by varied transitions (“In many places,” “Furthermore,” “Even with,” “In summary”) that help show connections between claim, evidence, and counterclaim.



Language and Style

The essay demonstrates a clear and definitive perspective on the topic (“The world has new technology nearly everyday, and we should teach learners to keep up with the changes and use the best tools available”) with an appropriate command of conventions throughout. The word choice and sentence structure that is employed engages the reader while maintaining a formal style and objective tone.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

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Dear Principal Jones,

It is the 21st century, technology is available at everybody's fingertips, and answers to the toughest questions are simply a search away from Google. Our planet is packed to the brim with new phones that make our lives easier, and newer and better versions come with each year. Yet in the classroom environment, where they are most beneficial, students in schools are deprived of these useful instruments. Allowing students to use their phones openly provides a real world atmosphere and makes them available to their parents who might need to contact them. Cell phones, when applied correctly, can actually be of great value to students in our schools.

Our current generation of children grows up alongside phones, to begin with. Many schools where these children go have a goal to "Make Learners for the 21st century," as the video in Source 1 states. Allowing students to use their phones creates students who may take advantage of the current technology, but in a positive way. In the classroom students can use their phones by manipulating them into tools that help them do their work. Some devices are calculators, recording data for projects, and plentiful resources for research. In the real world, many jobs don't have limits on using phones in these ways. If the work gets done well, it shouldn't matter what tool you use. If this unsaid rule is how the real world works, why shouldn't we start teaching students this now? The world has new technology nearly everyday, and we should teach learners to keep up with the changes and use the best tools available.

Allowing students to have their phones during school also means that parents now have a faster way to reach their children. In many places, because of the arbitrary rule that phones are banned in schools, students are deprived of immediate contact with their parents. Only New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio removed the prohibition, agreeing that "it was important for parents

to be able to easily contact their kids" (Source 4). Parents should be able to reach their child at any time. If your child left an important document like a permission slip at home, a parent does not want to spend time trying to reach their child through the office at the school. They would much rather send out a simple text and be able to get their child's answer in seconds.

Furthermore, I can also assure you from personal experience that phones are an enormous advantage in the school environment. Whenever I require a math calculator I can just take out my phone and finish a worksheet in record time. Using my phone for internet searches, I can finish projects in other classes early with all the research I can do without even needing to go to the library. I can also use my phone to turn in work for any class at any time, which means I don't have to worry about losing any of my work if it was on actual paper. When schools and students see phones "as a learning tool, not just a toy for entertainment" (Source 4), students will have more of an opportunity to use them to their advantage and succeed.

Even with all the phone use positives, some people still argue against it. Many schools claim that removing the ban will distract students, using their phone for "text-messaging or phoning friends during class time" (Source 3). They believe that keeping the classroom as a "no phone zone" will make students more productive. A recent study from London School of Economics supports their claim stating that, "schools with cell phone bans get better test scores" (Source 2). On the other hand, it states what countless people already know. Getting distracted comes naturally to everyone, and especially to the students. When they are bored, they will text their friends during class or play games. However, if schools give students an opportunity to use their mobile phones for classroom purposes, they could be shocked by the positive result.

In summary, schools should be aware that allowing cell phones will create learners of the 21st century — and with cell phones acting as tools it is cost-effective for the school — and allowing parents to contact their children in an emergency situation. Lifting the ban will make phones a productive tool for a learning environment.

Sincerely,

A Student for Change