



Policy Decisions: Cell Phone Use at School



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EDUCATION

Grade Level

7th-12th

Unit Length

7 Lessons | Content Area:
Cross-curricular

Standards

- SD.1 Identify and frame
- SD.2 Clarify values and objectives
- SD.3 Generate and develop options
- SD.4 Gather and analyze information
- SD.5 Make predictions
- SD.6 Explain and provide the rationale
- SD.7 Reflect and evaluate
- VAR.1 Embrace decisions as opportunities
- VAR. 5 Self-awareness of thought process and behavior

Unit Description

The Structuring Decisions domain teaches processes and skills that can improve our ability to reach decisions that work best for us in both the short and long term.

Students will use a decision-making process to create or revise a cell phone policy for the school community and to explore how policy decisions are made.

Unit Objectives

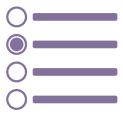
- Students will identify and apply the steps of a decision-making process.
 - Students will develop and propose a cell phone policy for their school community.
 - Students will defend their argument coherently and with evidence.
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Key Concepts

- Framing, clarifying values, generating options, gathering information, predicting, and reflecting

Understanding Actions and Decisions

Lesson #1



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Focus Standard

VAR.5 – Practice and demonstrate self-awareness of thought processes and behavior

Supporting Standard

VAR.1- Embrace decisions as opportunities

Suggested Time

~ 2 hours

Resources

The Social Dilemma (2020)

1 hour 34 minutes

Impact

This lesson guides students to reflect on their usage of technology and social media to establish context for creating a school cell phone policy.

Objectives

- Students will discover how technology influences behavior and decisions, individually and as a society.
- Students will identify how their behaviors and values change in their 24-hour experiment with their cell phones.

Differentiation

- Pose guiding questions during the film to prompt student thinking.
- Create questionnaires so that students can track their thoughts.
- Provide subtitles for the film.
- Highlight any relevant vocabulary words to be reviewed depending on your students' knowledge.

What To Look and Listen For

- Are students able to share and discuss their perspectives on technology and social media?
- Do students demonstrate self-awareness in their usage of technology and social media?

Engage (10-15 minutes)

To open the unit, lead your students in a guided discussion about technology and its impact on our society.

Suggested Questions:

- How is our society benefiting or not benefiting from technology?
 - What factors do you think inform technology policies?
 - Do you think society has changed because of technology? If so, how?
 - Do you think you've changed because of technology? If so, how?
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Apply (Length of movie: 1 hour 34 minutes)

As your students watch the film, stop at certain moments to give your students time to jot down their thoughts, to develop their thinking about technology and its impact on our society.

Reflect (10-15 minutes)

As the movie ends, facilitate a discussion about the students' thoughts and opinions on the technology, social media, and behaviors surrounding them.

Suggested Questions:

- What does your phone usage reveal about how you spend your time/attention?
- What surprised you?
- Given your personal goals and what your definition of success requires of you, how do you perceive your relationship with your phone?

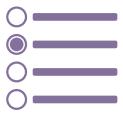
Introduce a 24-hour experiment to your students to notice how their productivity, well-being, decisions, and time management changes when their cell phone behavior changes.

For the next 24 hours, make the following adjustments to your phone:

- Place them in Gray-scale mode.
- Turn off notifications.
- Move 'problem' apps into a single folder, not on the home screen (a problem app would be an app that students spend more time on that they want to/feel good about).
- Deactivate face-id/create manual passcode.

Reflecting on Values

Lesson #2



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Focus Standard

SD.2 – Clarify the values and objectives of the decision makers in a given decision

Supporting Standard

VAR.1 – Embrace decisions as opportunities

Suggested Time

45-60 minutes

Impact

This lesson asks students to reflect on the impact of technology on the school campus, and consider how that should inform and influence decisions regarding the school cell phone policy.

Objectives

- Students will reflect on how technology use does or doesn't align with their values for themselves as individuals and for society.
- Students will recognize the importance of identifying the values influencing their decisions.

Differentiation

- Discuss definitions of the terms "responsible," "citizen," and "social media" to ensure shared understanding.
- Provide chart paper and/or graphic organizers to support small group discussions.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can the students identify how the experiment relates to the theme of the discussions surrounding technology and social media?
- Are students able to articulate how their takeaways from the film and/or the experiment should or should not influence the school cell phone policy?

Engage (15-20 minutes)

Split the students into pairs or small groups to reflect on the 24-hour experiment, and any connections to *The Social Dilemma*.

Suggested Questions:

- How did this experiment go? In what ways did your behavior change?
- What were the impacts on your time, well-being, productivity, and happiness during these 24 hours?
- Given what *The Social Dilemma* suggests about the role of technology in our lives, relationships, and politics, what are the most significant implications for you?

While students discuss, highlight any big ideas on the board about choices, decisions, values, and behavior changes.

Apply (25-30 minutes)

Reconvene as a whole class, and lead a discussion with your students about how *The Social Dilemma* goes beyond the personal and explores the dangers social media's business and advertising model presents to the nation and our politics. The behaviors we have developed using these technologies have been studied, to further influence our values and behaviors, and to push us toward decisions aligned with the tech companies' goals.

Suggested Questions:

- Given the problems identified in the film, how can a citizen engage with social media "responsibly"?
 - How can students in our school engage with social media responsibly?
 - What values do you hold regarding your social media usage, and how may that differ from the values of the tech companies?
 - What behaviors changed when you joined a social media app?
 - Did this film impact how you want to engage with social media? Why?
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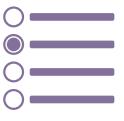
Reflect (10-15 minutes)

Have your students return to their small groups to think about the big picture of cell phone usage across campus.

Suggested Questions:

- Based on your observations and experiences, how would you describe the effects (positive and negative) of technology on campus?
- What factors should we consider when creating a policy for cell phone use on campus? Have the film and/or the 24-hour experiment impacted your thinking on those factors? In what ways?

Understanding Different Perspectives



Lesson #3



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Focus Standard

SD.2 – Clarify the values and objectives of the decision maker in a given decision

Supporting Standard

SD.1 – Identify and frame what a decision is and is not about

Suggested Time

45-60 minutes

Resources

[Question Worksheet](#)

Impact

A policy is written for a group of people who bring different perspectives and values. This lesson helps students to consider different perspectives and values as they begin to think about creating a school cell phone policy.

Objectives

- Students will identify and discuss the importance of their values and objectives for a cell phone policy.

Differentiation

- Make an anchor chart of the different steps of a decision so that students can reference that in future discussions.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can the students identify different perspectives, values, and objectives in the existing cell phone policy?
- Can the students discuss the difference between their own values and the values of the community around a cell phone policy?

Engage (15-20 minutes)

As a class, brainstorm about the stakeholders who might be affected by a cell phone policy, and what different perspectives they may have.

Apply (10-15 minutes)

Assign students to small groups to discuss possible framings of their decision regarding a cell phone policy. They can use the [Questions to Frame Our Cell Phone Policy](#) handout to consider the different stakeholders discussed in *Engage* and their varying perspectives.

They could also list out what different stakeholders may value, or what they'd hope to achieve with a new cell phone policy.

As a whole class, have your students share their thoughts and takeaways from the worksheet. Ask them to prioritize the most important questions to consider as they form a new policy.

Suggested Questions:

- What are the most important questions to consider as you form a new cell phone policy?
 - What competing values or objectives do you see as you make this decision?
 - How can you determine which values or objectives to prioritize?
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Reflect (15-20 minutes)

Ask your students to analyze your school's current cell phone policy, and discuss how it does or does not reflect the different perspectives, objectives, and values they identified today. If your school hasn't established a policy yet, you could find examples from other schools for students to review.

Questions to Frame Our Phone Policy

Use the questions below to discuss different perspectives and potential reactions to a new school cell phone policy.

- Think about how each question could lead you toward different decisions.
- Remember that, while all of these questions can help inform your decision, you want to think about which questions to prioritize, given your values and objectives.

Questions:

- What is our school's current cell phone policy? In what ways can it be improved?
- What would students like to see in a new cell phone policy?
- What would teachers like to see in a new cell phone policy?
- What changes to the policy would help students flourish academically? Socially? Emotionally?
- What changes to the policy would promote a healthy school culture and a strong sense of community?

Generating Options

Lesson #4



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Focus Standard

SD.3 - Generate and develop significantly different and criteria-aligned decision options

Supporting Standard

SD.4 - Gather and analyze information from multiple sources to evaluate decision options

Suggested Time

45-60 minutes

Resources

- [Should You Let Your Kids Have a Cell Phone in School? USA Today, 2020](#)
- [Schools Say No to Cellphones in Class. But Is It a Smart Move? Education Week, 2019](#)

Impact

This lesson helps students generate multiple options for the same decision. Understanding that there are often more than two options to choose from can help students think creatively about different options for the policy they create.

Objectives

- Students will gather information and generate options for the school cell phone policy.

Differentiation

- Have all students read both articles to gather more information and consider multiple perspectives.

What To Look and Listen For

- Do students capture different perspectives in the policies they create?
- Do students use information from multiple sources in the policies they create?

Engage (10-15 minutes)

Have students read one of the articles below to gather additional information before they begin generating options for a new school cell phone policy.

[Should You Let Your Kids Have a Cell Phone in School?](#) (*USA Today*, 2020)

[Schools Say No to Cellphones in Class. But Is It a Smart Move?](#) (*Education Week*, 2019)

Apply (25-30 minutes)

Split your students into pairs or groups to share and discuss the articles above, and begin generating alternative cell phone policies. As they identify options, students should ask, are these options:

- Doable?
- Significantly different from one another?
- Potentially attractive?

They may also want to consider tiered or differentiated policies by grade level.

Reflect (10-15 minutes)

Have each group share the policy options they generated, and their rationale for each option, creating a class list for reference. Discuss similarities and differences in the policies, and whose perspective, objectives, and values are represented.

Predicting Outcomes

Lesson #5



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Focus Standard

SD.5 – Make predictions about the outcomes of each decision option

Supporting Standard

SD.4 – Gather and analyze information from multiple sources to evaluate decision options

VAR.3 – Recognize, practice, and demonstrate active open-mindedness

Suggested Time

45-60 minutes

Impact

This lesson introduces students to predicting possible outcomes for the different options they have generated.

Objectives

- Students will gather information from other stakeholders to make predictions about the outcomes of each decision option.

Differentiation

- To assist students in thinking about multiple policies for cell phones, having other schools' policies as examples can guide inspiration.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can students discuss the possible outcomes for their alternative cell phone policy ideas?
- Can students take new information into account to update their thinking?

Engage (10-15 minutes)

Gather additional information and make predictions about the outcomes of the different cell phone policy options by breaking students into groups to create a list of survey questions to ask different stakeholders, in order to assess their reactions and gather feedback. For example, one group could write survey questions for students, and other groups could write questions for teachers, parents, administrators, etc.

Apply (20-25 minutes)

Have each student reach out to one stakeholder representing their assigned group, using the list of questions they generated to gain insight on their perspective and potential reaction to the policy suggestions.

Reflect (15-20 minutes)

Bring students back together to reflect on the information they gathered from stakeholders, and make predictions regarding their reactions to different policy suggestions.

Suggested Questions:

- What insight(s) did you gain by speaking to other stakeholders?
- Did listening to their perspective shift your thinking in any way? How?
- What predictions do you have for the different options, based on their perspective?
- How would the different options you've generated impact the stakeholders you spoke with?
- Based on what you heard today, what revisions to the options would you like to make?



Explaining and Providing a Rationale

Lesson #6



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Focus Standard

SD.6 – Explain and provide the rationale behind a decision

Suggested Time

75 minutes-2 hours

Impact

It's important for students to be able to communicate a narrative about the reasoning that led them to make a decision. This lesson builds student agency by allowing them to determine the best ways to communicate their decision process and policy with school administration.

Objectives

- Students will draft a new school cell phone policy and a letter to administration explaining their rationale.

Differentiation

- Depending on students' work styles, you could have them draft the policy individually or in small groups first.
- You could have students work together to write one letter or each write individual letters. Allow them to determine the best way to influence the administration.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can students reach consensus on a school cell phone policy?
- Are students able to clearly state the rationale for their decision?

Engage (15–30 minutes)

As a group, review the policy options students have generated, their suggested revisions, and the predicted impact. Given the information they have, ask students to determine the best cell phone policy for the school at this time.

Apply (30–45 minutes)

Have your students work together to draft their suggested school cell phone policy, including any tiers based on grade level or other types of differentiation.

Reflect (30–45 minutes)

Have students write a letter to share with the school administration when they present the recommended cell phone policy. The letter should explain their rationale for the new policy, and the predicted impact of the changes. Allow students to determine the most effective way to submit their policy recommendation and letters to administration for consideration.

Reflecting on Decisions

Lesson #7



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Focus Standard

SD.7 – Reflect on and evaluate a decision-making process, and compare the quality of the process with the quality of the outcome

Suggested Time

45-60 minutes

Impact

Reflecting on their decision-making process helps students determine where change and improvements can be made. In this lesson, students revisit their process and discuss how they can apply the skills and tools they've learned to future decisions.

Objectives

- Students will reflect on steps of their decision-making process and potential improvements for group decision-making.

Differentiation

- You could use the questions in *Apply* for small group discussions, if that would support more meaningful reflection.

What To Look and Listen For

- Do students reflect openly and honestly on the experience of group decision-making?
- How did group decision-making affect the group's community and collaboration?

Engage (15-20 minutes)

Review the school administration's response to the students' letters and policy recommendations.

Suggested Questions:

- What changes were made based on your recommendations?
 - How did your decision-making process affect the outcome in this situation?
 - Are there changes to your decision-making process that could have impacted the outcome?
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Apply (15-20 minutes)

Give students sticky notes to reflect on the group decision-making process. They should answer each question on a separate sticky note. When they're finished, have them stick their responses to each question on chart paper or a wall for a gallery walk.

Suggested Questions:

- How is making group decisions different from making individual decisions?
 - How does it feel to make a decision that impacts a large and diverse group of people?
 - What challenges did you face in designing this policy as a group?
 - What practices in your group decision-making did you find successful?
 - What practices could be improved for making decisions together in the future?
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Reflect (15-20 minutes)

Allow students time to walk throughout the room and read each others' answers to each question. When they're finished, discuss their thoughts on the experience of group decision-making and how it impacts their community and collaboration.