**The Buzz Around Town: Should elementary school students have cell phones?**

In our September Buzz poll, we asked you if elementary school students should have cell phones. 17% of respondents answered "yes" and 83% answered "no." Here's what you said:

**Yes**

Not all elementary students should have cell phones; however some elementary-school-age students may need to be able to contact their parents/guardians and/or 911 in an emergency situation, and should be able to feel in control of their situations. I believe having a phone gives students that control. My child, for example, has severe food allergies. When she has gone to after-school and summer camps in the area, many providers have asked me to exempt them, in writing, from administering medicine to my child, should she need it. That means that if my daughter was having an allergic reaction, she would be completely on her own, at age 9, to determine a) if she was in fact having a reaction or just feeling ill; b) if the seeming reaction warranted Benadryl or epinephrine; c) if she was physically capable of giving herself a shot of epinephrine and then able to call 911, which is standard protocol if you use an Epi-Pen. Do I want my child to be able to get emergency help if no adult is willing or able to help her? Yes, I do. Do I think a cell phone, at school or camp, will allow her to do that, via a call or a text? Yes, I do.
*A mom*

My daughter doesn't have one yet but I am planning to buy one for her. I feel like it would benefit all of us, considering our busy schedule. It will be used to update each of us of our whereabouts.
*Gail, mom of 2*

With technology it is an extra way to keep up with your kid but I feel it should not be turned on at school.
*Huntspon. Mother of three.*

Most elementary school-aged children use their cell phones to play games--rarely to call parents. If the question was, should elementary school students have game-boy type devices (to play games), I think the answer would be a resounding "no." We, adults, sometimes confuse our concern about communication and connectivity with how and why the children use the "cell phone."
*Beverly Adams*

My daughter has a cell phone for safety reasons.
*Afton*

My son is going into 6 and we just moved to Charlottesville at the start of 5 grade. he was out sick one day and the school never called me. I called the school and had it fixed. well the next time he was out, I didn't get a phone call until the end of the school day. He is 11 and a bus rider, if something happen to him getting on the bus, I would never know he was not in school until the end of the day. They don't call bc of the high school kids might skip a class and they call kids who miss class. SO they don't care about young kids missing school, just older ones who skip class. So yes my son will have a cell phone, I will fight for him to have one in school. during class he knows to put it away.
*Michelle B., Charlottesville*

My third grader has a cell phone (not a smartphone) to use only for emergencies and to call her family members. It was an extra older phone we had laying around the house, so we let her have it. We are making sure she is responsible enough to keep track of the phone as she becomes more independent over the next year.
*Diana W., Scottsville*

**No**

young children absolutely do not need cell phones and they serve as a distraction to other kids
*Nina's Mom*

I do not think students should have cell phones until they are driving! A supervising adult will likely have one.
*Jessica, Mommy of 3 cellphone-less kids, Crozet*

There are new studies showing that electronics need to be more limited to encourage normal child development.
*C Icenhour Mom of three*

Why would an elementary child need a cell phone? To text? Play games? They are developing soo many ways, mentally and physically. What would the purpose be? I have seen too many kids with rude behavior because they want to text, or use their phone when not appropriate. Or play games while all the other kids stand around and watch.
*Mother of 2 in Crozet.*

There are few scenarios in which I would support a child of elementary age having a cell phone. If parents are divorced or living apart, and there is no land line in the home, then it would make sense. Elementary children need lots of developmentally appropriate physical activity and mental engagement. Today's children already utilize a plethora of technological devices, sometimes to the detriment of their physical and social development. Get the kids outdoors to play and explore. The cell phones can wait!
*Karla K., educator and parent of two adult children*

If my kids aren't with me, they'd be with another responsible adult who has phone access. Although my child doesn't have one, a few of my daughter's elementary school friends communicate via texting with itouchs. I've been sad to see their abandonment of creative play for use of this device. It's never too late though for parents to set a good example for limiting phone use when around others and teach proper phone use etiquette.
*Mother of 3 children*

If your elementary school student is somewhere without a parent with a cell phone, there is an issue.
*Mother of Many*

Absolutely not!! The question should be: Why would a parent buy a cell phone for their child? A child in elementary school has no need for a cell phone and please don't say they need one in case of an emergency. They should never be anywhere alone for it to be an emergency!!
*Lisa, Mother of a 3 and 8 yr old*

No children should have cell phones! It is a distraction. They are in school to learn not to text, surf the net, face book or make phone calls. If they need to call a parent they can go to the office like we did as children. These devices are enabling us all.
*Mother of girls*

Elementary students have access to the office phone, nurse's phone, teacher's phone, etc. if they need to contact home or if home needs to contact them. If they are not in school, it should be the parent's responsibility to know where they are, how to get in touch with them if they are at a friend's house, and to teach the children their home phone numbers. Technology for younger children becomes a distraction and decreases face-to-face social skills.
*Teacher*

I think a cell phone is helpful when the child is old enough to go out on their own, to the store, movies, etc. Middle school seems like a more appropriate time.
*Mom of 2 elementary kids*

I believe that children are too prone to be on technology based machines all day as it is and would just be more so with a cell phone. There should be enough adults out there with cell phones for their use without having their own.
*Debby J, mother of 3 and grandmother of 1*

Who could they possibly have to call that they couldn't call on the house phone or a parent's cell phone. Having their own smart phones could allow young kids easier access to unsupervised time on the internet which is unwise. Being constantly plugged in to their friends also fuels the FOMO (Fear of missing out) issue and doesn't allow kids to have time away from the peer pressures of childhood. I want to let my kids be kids for as long as possible without the pressure of a cell phone!
*Jocelyn, Charlottesville, mother of two boys*

An elementary aged child should never have need of it they should never be left alone. They should always be in the company of an adult.
*Vivian, mother of two.*

Children in Elementary should be around responsible adults who can place calls for them in in case of emergencies.
*Marga F., Charlottesville, mother of two girls*

There is no need for a child to have a cell phone in school. They are there to learn and I feel a phone is distracting. A cell phone is a luxury and truly not a necessity for learning.
*Troy grandmother*

My elementary school children aren't old enough to be somewhere without an adult, who would be carrying a cell phone. They also aren't expected to be responsible enough to carry something so expensive.
*Rebecca, mother of two children*

Are you serious? Parents should know where their elementary school students are, not rely on cell phones. This only leaves younger students open to distractions and possible bullying/abuse.
*Mother of 2 elementary school aged children*

If they do have one it should not go to school with them. I personally think anyone under the age of 13 is too young to have their own phone.
*Mom in Ruckersville*