

MAFCSE- Cell phone challenges and being connected!

It is August and most of our schools within the state of Montana will start school within 3 -4 weeks. As educators we look back at our summer and always ask; where did it disappear to. You have either had a second job, attended conferences, workshops, updates, family reunions, weddings or possibly accomplished a major cleaning or purging of ones house. As reality sets in, we have to face the idea of going back to the classroom and getting it prepared for a new batch of students. As I reflect on the past school year, the biggest challenge for me is the Cell Phone. This year I'm going to deal with the dreaded "Cell Phone" in the classroom or not? It is always a hot topic at our teacher meetings and an issue that rarely has a qualified answer. We are all CTE teachers; stressing the use of technology within our classroom but what life skill are we really teaching our youth about Cell phone manners. The debate can be endless but here are a few challenging thoughts on the use of cellphones in our classrooms. The positive: parents peace of mind and having a GPS track on their child, instant answers for the curious at heart (Kahoot of course!), exposed to creative ideas (Pinterest), creating videos for a classroom assignment (Mayhem videos for my Financial Literacy - Insurance), Social learning (Sharing of quality information), and getting a call from your parents to ride the bus home! The negative: Cyberbullying, distraction in the classroom, inappropriate materials, disconnects face-to-face social activities, family time, manners (what is that?), negative attitude, cheating, playing games and total distraction in the classroom. How do we deal with these new challenges within the classroom? Cell phones are not bad or harmful as some teachers think but the problem is that some students use them for the wrong reason and this makes it a daily challenge in the classroom. I agree, we can not all find a solution for the cell phone use but I believe as teachers, we can be creative on how to not make them a daily issue within the learning environment. As we all work diligently getting our classrooms shiny for the new school year, I have gathered a variety of "Cell phone" ideas from FCS teachers that have had success with this nagging problem. These are not solutions but rather suggestions on how to greet our first day of school challenges and set the record straight on the use of a "Handy" (Australian and German talk) within their classroom:

- Cell phone use needs to be enforced within the entire school, it needs to be easy to handle for teachers thus a framework has already been set.
- NO CELL PHONE ZONE everywhere but the cafeteria and media center.
- Communicate with the students, ask them how we can create a learning environment that does not cause stress for the teacher, and for the students, create a contract, have them sign it, as for repercussion- have the students respond to this, put it back into their responsibility for it being abused,
- Create a caddy, similar to a hanging shoe divider, labeled with numbers for students to place their cell phone in as they enter the classroom, if its empty- they are counted absent or tardy, students without a cell phone- slip an index card into the slot that displays a happy face!
- Refer to the caddy as a "Phone Hotel" for a cell phone vacation, NOT a cell phone jail, or label the slots with names of cities to encourage a lesson for Hospitality and Tourism.