



EDUCATION

Middle school in New Jersey going cell-phone free

Toni Yates reports on a middle school in New Jersey that is now cellphone-free.
By Eyewitness News

April 4, 2019 6 O'Clock News

<https://abc7ny.com/education/middle-school-in-new-jersey-going-cell-phone-free/5229503/>

The screenshot shows a news website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the 'EYEWITNESS NEWS abc7NY WABC-TV' logo on the left, a 'WATCH VIDEOS' button in the center, and location indicators for 'New York City' and 'New Jersey' on the right. A red banner at the top right contains the text 'LIVE: Democrats running for president add'. Below the navigation bar, on the left side, are social media sharing options: 'SHARE', 'TWEET', and 'EMAIL'. The main content area features the article title 'Middle school in New Jersey going cell-phone free' under the 'EDUCATION' category. Below the title is a video player showing a news anchor in a suit and a female reporter in a brown dress, both in a studio with a city skyline background. The video player includes a 'Pause' button, a progress bar showing '00:20' out of '02:03', a volume icon, and a small inset showing the time '6:13' and temperature '58°' along with the 'abc 7' logo.

PLAINFIELD, New Jersey (WABC) -- A middle school in New Jersey is now cellphone-free.

Principal Kevin Stansbury at Maxson Middle School in Plainfield says test scores were down, discipline was high, and students' ability to learn was being impacted.

So the school decided it needed a phone-free environment and bought special pouches where students can lock away their cell phones for the day.

The ultimate goal was to increase student engagement, have fewer class distractions, and allow for more interaction between students and teachers.

"I got more focused and my grades went up," said one student.

Stansbury has worked in the district for many years but this is his first year at Maxson and he came with a plan.

"I saw that our suspensions were kind of high in years past, discipline referrals very high and our test scores were very low," he said. "And so in kind of reviewing and looking, I saw such a connection to the cell phones."

He got the OK for the school board and parents, and a little pushback from his students, who were hesitant at first about not being able to use their phones. But after a few days, they began to support the program.

"We have people who are starting to read books now that normally don't read books," said Leo, an 8th grader.

Teachers, who also lock the phones away, concur. "I don't have to constantly tell them to put your phone away, put your phone away," said science teacher Mia Cummings. "And as soon as they walk in, they want to learn. They're intrigued with what we're learning today."