

## Persuasion Letter Model

Dear Board of Education,

1. Last month, my father was rushed to the hospital with a heart attack at 9am. Everybody was worried that he wasn't going to live. They took him to Memorial Hospital where he had several more heart attacks. My mom tried to call the school all morning to get in touch with me but the phones were busy every time she tried. I was in biology dissecting frogs while my father was dying.
2. I am writing on behalf of students and parents who want you to rethink the ban on cell phones since this is the major way that parents communicate with their children. Safety is the major concern of parents who want their children to be able to contact them quickly and easily should they find themselves in a perilous situation. At other times, parents need to contact children because of a change of plans. This happens particularly in families where both parents work or where the parents have separated. Sometimes parents need to get in touch with children to let them know that they have to go somewhere else after school.
3. There are many situations, particularly here in California, where children might be potentially in danger and could use the phone to get help. For example, if we had an earthquake or a lockdown, it would be important to contact someone beyond the school without having to go to the office. Or imagine the worse case scenario, a hostage situation, a terrorist situation or a Columbine or Beslan. In New York on 09/11, victims were able to communicate with families for the last time on their cell phones. The man on flight 93 used his phone from flight and let the world know what was happening on the flight. What if he had kept to the rules and observed the ban on cell phone use on planes? We would never have known what happened on the flight.
4. Vincent Mustaro, senior staff associate for policy for the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), has said that many states and boards are currently changing their rules. "School officials around the U.S. began to say that an outright ban was not realistic," Mustaro told Education World. "Parents are encouraging kids to carry phones. One high school principal estimated that 70 percent of the kids in his school had phones. I think the change is connected to school violence and a desire by parents to be more in touch with their kids, and the popularity and availability of phones continues to grow.
5. "There are more important things we want administrators involved in," than policing cell phone possession, Mustaro added.



6. At the same time, CABE is making it clear to school districts that cell phones should not be visible or used during instructional time.
7. I agree that there should be strict rules about cell phone use in schools but would seriously invite you to reconsider the ban on cell phones. Possible guidelines might include that they be off during class time, that they only be used at lunch or during break and after school. Students' phones should be confiscated if they are used during class. Students should know that being allowed to use a cell phone is a privilege that can be taken away from them. If students are found disregarding the rules, then their phones should be confiscated and a parent or guardian must pick the phone up from the AP.
8. I know that there are good reasons for the cell phone ban such as students using them to cheat on tests. Another reason is that they can be used to organize students for illegal activities such as fights, or truancy. Cheating, fighting and truancy have been going on for much longer than students have had cell phones. Kids will always find a way to communicate about these things—cell phones might make this type of communication easier but this type of communication has always gone on and still does without phones.
9. I interviewed 27 students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade about their cell phone use. All but one of these students had a cell phone. Three students did not mind if they were not allowed to bring it to school. Seven said that it was their only way of staying in contact with their parents between the hours of 6am and 7pm since all of their guardians worked. The remainder of the students (16) said that they, and their parents, only used the phone in case of emergency. Students are not the irresponsible, miscreants that some adults think they are. All my friends said they would abide by the guidelines. As my friend, Jessica said, "This is about my safety. I won't play with this privilege."
10. My father is back at home now but he won't be back at work for several more months. I can't imagine how I would feel if he had died and I wasn't at the hospital with my family. Having a cell phone means that I can be contacted in emergencies situations like this. I understand, as do my friends, that this is a privilege that can be taken away and we won't abuse it. But the school system must trust us—otherwise how can we keep ourselves safe?