

Students Lobby To Use Smart Phones In Classrooms

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While most teachers believe that cell phones are a distraction in the classroom, a group of 15 students from the Chicago Mikva Challenge are lobbying to change that. The students--who make up the Mikva Challenge Education Council--believe that smart phones would actually help in the classroom by allowing students to conduct on-the-spot internet searches, record lectures to watch later, and look up definitions, among other things. The council will present Chicago Schools CEO Ron Huberman with a report on Sept. 1 further illustrating their ideas.

"We're trying to get teachers and principals to let cell phones be used as an educational tool, not just a distraction," said Carlos Ballesteros, 17, of Phoenix Military Academy, to the Chicago Sun-Times. "We're hoping to change things for the better." The report suggests that CPS teachers integrate online staples like YouTube, Skype, and online games into their teaching, allowing students to watch educational videos, use videoconferencing to hear guest speakers, and play online educational games.

To bring smart phones to every CPS high school student, the report mentions a proposed outside funding plan. Ballesteros noted that without a phone service package, the phones by themselves are not that expensive. Students would also sign a contract pledging that their phones will only be used for educational purposes.

"The students did a lot of complex thinking," Brian Brady, Mikva Challenge's executive director, said to the Chicago Sun-Times. "These young people are trying to start a conversation about how to get young people ready for college in the 21st Century. I think it's a really mature report."