



Holly Area Schools

Excellence in Action!

March 20, 2024

Dear Parents and Students of Holly Area Schools,

At Holly Area Schools, we are committed to providing a world-class education that helps prepare our Bronchos for success. I'm reaching out to start a dialogue with our families about the impact smartphones have on student mental health, social behavior, and academic performance.

Smartphones have become a central part of our lives, offering unparalleled access to information, communication, and entertainment. However, the unintended consequences of their pervasive use among our children and teenagers cannot be overlooked.

This communication is the first in a series I'll be sharing with you focused on youth mental health. Recent findings, including those detailed in the video, ["Eye-opening look at the hold smartphones have on kids"](#), highlight the urgent need for awareness on this issue.

The video brings to light several critical concerns:

- **Extensive Usage:** Many children use their smartphones excessively, even during school hours and late into the night. This affects both their sleep patterns and their ability to concentrate and perform academically.
- **Notifications and Distractions:** The constant barrage of notifications from social media apps and messaging platforms significantly contributes to distraction, reduced attention spans, and a constant need for digital validation. These apps are designed to keep users engaged as long as possible, often at the expense of real-world interactions and activities.
- **Impact on Mental Health:** The compulsive use of smartphones and exposure to social media can lead to feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. This may contribute to a sense of isolation and inadequacy among our youth.

We urge parents to engage with their children on this topic and set a positive example that encourages moderation and balance. Follow this link to learn about some of the [best parental control apps](#) to monitor smartphone use at home.

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Here are a few questions to get our collective conversation started:

How much time does your child/teen spend on their device daily?

Researchers have found that smartphones have become a “constant companion” for young people spending a median of 4.5 hours per day on their phones, with the maximum amount of time reaching 16 hours.

Does your child/teen use their smartphone during late-night hours, especially between midnight and 5 a.m.?

A recent study found 60% of youth use their smartphones overnight — between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. — on school nights.

Have you noticed an impact on your teen’s sleep patterns, ability to concentrate on school work, and level of anxiety and stress?

More than 50% of kids get 237 notifications per day — while some receive as many as 4,500 every day, according to a recent study. About 23% of these notifications occurred during school hours.

As partners with our parents, we care about our students’ mental health, academic performance, and social skills. Working together, we can help ensure our children can harness the benefits of technology without falling prey to its pitfalls. We believe that through education, understanding, and cooperation, we can guide our youth toward a more balanced and healthy digital life.

Sincerely,

Scott M. Roper, Superintendent
Holly Area Schools