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Phone bans spread across U.S.

ERIC SCICCHITANO
CNHI NEWS

Tyler McBride walked about his middle school classroom in rural Arkansas years ago during a period of silent reading as students sat in quiet, fixated on the texts before them.

But hunched behind one book propped upright on a desk was a student fixated on something else, a smartphone positioned just so that it was hidden. It wasn't hidden quite

well enough.

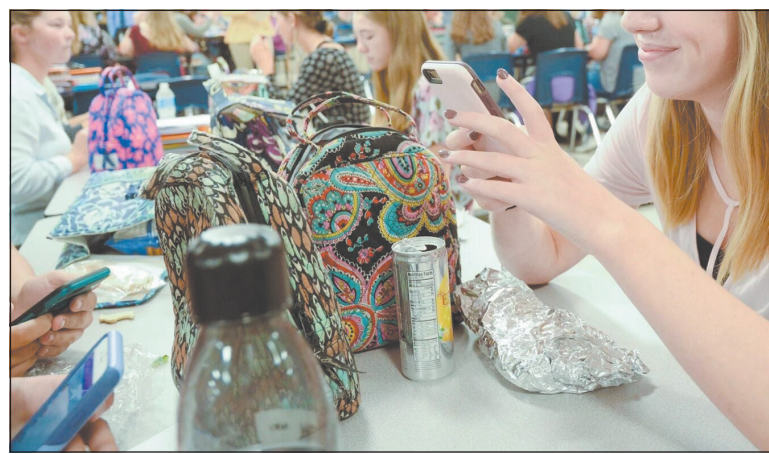
"I can remember the first few years I taught eighth grade and a lot of my students did not have cell phones," said McBride, now a sixth-grade teacher and the senior policy fellow with Teach Plus Arkansas, who began his career in 2012. "Now, I taught eighth grade a couple of years ago, and there were maybe five eighth-graders out of 90 who did not have a smartphone."

Long gone are the days when few students had smartphones and their

internet-capable counterparts in school, such as smartwatches and tablets. The devices have become as commonplace inside classrooms as pencils and paper.

And, with some measure of majority agreement, they've become a major distraction. It spurred action beyond policy implementation at individual school buildings and districts; many state governments adopted phone laws with bipartisan

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CNHI file photo

High school students check their cellphones during a lunch period.

PLANTING SEEDS

Russiaville area students learn to care for a garden

KAITLYNN MYERS
KOKOMO TRIBUNE

The Kokomo-Howard County Public Library Russiaville branch hosts a variety of events throughout the year for patrons of all ages to learn and to grow.

This summer, the library is teaching youth how to learn TO grow.

The outdoor classroom at the library is now home to a garden comprised of all the herbs and vegetables needed to make a salad. Children who attended the event got the opportunity to learn about what types of plants go into a salad and how to properly care for them.

Throughout the summer, the children will be taking care of the garden to watch it grow and prosper. They've been promised a pizza and salad party at the end of the season by Branch Manager Lori Seaman.

Howard County Purdue Extension Educator Mathias Ingle was on hand to offer tips on planting and care of the vegetables, but ended up giving an impromptu lesson on reproduction. Student Toby Upchurch asked why ants lay eggs rather than just having ant babies. Keeping the planting lesson on track, Ingle asked the participants how worms reproduce, because worms are a vital part of any soil.

"I never know what I'm going to get at these," Ingle laughed.

Ingle teaches a variety of programs throughout Howard County, introducing youth to different aspects of agricultural.

On this day, he assisted the children in planting the vegetables, and taught them how to spot how much sun each type of plant needs.

The raised beds the vegetables are planted in are a part of the Nature Explore outdoor classroom at the library.

Throughout the summer, the children will be tending to the garden, weeding it, watering it and when the time comes, helping to harvest.

"This is your garden, after all," Seaman told them at the end of the planting session.

Participating youth included Western Elementary School students as well as some home-schooled students.

For more information on the library and upcoming events, visit the website at <https://www.khctl.org/>.



Rebecca Perkins giggles as she learns to knead the soil.

GALLERY: Visit our website for a gallery with more photos.

Kaitlynn Myers | Kokomo Tribune

Appeals court rejects Indiana media bid to witness executions

CASEY SMITH
INDIANA CAPITAL CHRONICLE

A divided federal appeals court has upheld Indiana's policy limiting who may witness state executions.

The court rejected arguments from news organizations that the restrictions violate First Amendment protections for the press and public.

In a 2-1 decision issued late last week, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit affirmed a lower court's May 2025 denial of a preliminary injunction sought by the Associated Press, the Indiana Capital Chronicle and several other media outlets.

The underlying lawsuit challenges an Indiana law and Department of Correction policy that generally prohibit journalists from witnessing executions.

News reporters are granted access to a designated area outside of the Indiana State Prison but are not permitted to directly witness executions unless they are among five people invited by the condemned inmate.

"On the one hand, plaintiffs make the fair and compelling point that increased scrutiny may lead to more humane and competently administered executions," wrote Judge Michael Scudder. "But ... allowing uninvited strangers with no immediate connection to the underlying crime to watch a prisoner die risks off-ending the dignity of their final moments."

The panel majority expressed skepticism that the U.S. Supreme Court's "experience and logic" test for public access to government proceedings applies to executions. But even assuming it does, Scudder wrote, executions have not historically been "open to the press and general public" and public access does not clearly play a "significant positive role in the functioning" of the process.

The court pointed to a long historical trend away from public executions, noting that Indiana moved executions behind private enclosures in 1852 and that the last public execution in the United States occurred in 1937.

"Executions are different than trials," Scudder wrote. "The public did not merely lose interest in watching them first-hand. Rather, people stopped attending because states passed laws prohibiting them from doing so."

The majority also rejected the news outlets' claim that Indiana's policy violates the First Amendment's Press Clause. Scudder wrote that state law

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