

June 17, 2006

Cellphone Ban in Class

To the Editor:

Re "School Cellphone Ban Brings, Yes, a Lot of Talk in the City Council" (news article, June 15):

When it comes to cellphones in schools, the mayor, the schools chancellor and now the New York City Council may have dialed the wrong number.

As a former New York City high school principal, I banned the use of beepers and cellphones. Similar to the military's "don't ask don't tell" policy, our policy was don't show and we won't take it.

The decision to ban cellphones in schools should be made at the school level.

Principals must have autonomy to make this decision. The mayor, the chancellor and now the City Council must stop micromanaging schools.

While the adults fight over this latest political battle, children will continue to be underserved by an educational system that doesn't seem to dial the right number.

What a shame that our attention is so misdirected.

Bernard Gassaway

Jamaica, Queens

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The writer is the former principal of Beach Channel High School and senior superintendent of alternative schools and programs for New York City.