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## No TikTok, no Instagram: Chilean school blocks phones and students rediscover real-world connections

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Posted October 10, 2025

Category: Education/Family

### Listening



### Tutor Preparations

#### Useful Links:

About Colegio Lo Barnechea Bicentenario: <https://lobarnechea.cl/colegios/colegio-lo-barnechea-media/>

#### Related Articles:

<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/news/story/chilean-school-blocks-mobile-phones-to-boost-student-bonding-and-cut-screen-addiction-2786267-2025-09-12>

<https://kz.kursiv.media/en/2025-09-12/engk-yeri-quit-tiktok-look-up-students-in-chile-forced-offline/>

### Warm-up (2-3 minutes)

Ask the warm-up questions below.

- Did you have a phone when you were a student?
- Have you tried not using your phone for a whole day?

### Unlocking Word Meanings (3-4 minutes)

Have the student read the words, definitions, and example sentences below. Confirm their understanding. Use the additional info only when necessary.

1. **pioneering** / ˌpaɪ ɒˈniəriŋ / [pahy-uh-NEER-ing] (adj.) – being the first to do something new, important, or different, and leading the way for others  
*Example:* Dr. Yu's **pioneering** research in medicine helped doctors discover better treatments.  
*Additional info:* The verb form of this word is **pioneer** (ex. A group of doctors **pioneered** a new test for discovering cancer early).
2. **compulsively** / kəmˈpʌl sɪv li / [kuhm-PUHL-siv-lee] (adj.) – doing something too much or too many times because it is very hard to stop  
*Example:* The boy played video games **compulsively**, spending many hours on them and forgetting to do his homework.  
*Additional info:* The adjective form of this word is **compulsive** (ex. He is a **compulsive** gamer, spending so many hours playing that he often forgets to eat or sleep).
3. **stimulate** / ˈstɪm yəˌleɪt / [STIM-yuh-leyt] (v.) – to help something start, grow, or become more active  
*Example:* Teachers often use pictures and stories to **stimulate** children's interest in reading.  
*Additional info:* Some related words are **encourage** and **inspire**.
4. **comprehensive** / ˌkɒm prɪˈhɛn sɪv / [kom-pri-HEN-siv] (adj.) – complete and including many details  
*Example:* The teacher gave a **comprehensive** test that included questions on all the lessons.  
*Additional info:* Some related adjectives are **broad** and **thorough**.
5. **jam** / dʒæm / [jam] (v.) – (in technology) to stop signals or broadcasts from working by blocking them  
*Example:* The army used special equipment to **jam** the enemy's radio signals.  
*Additional info:* In general, **jam** means "to make something unable to move or work."

### Article (5-7 minutes)

Have the student read the article aloud. For the comprehension questions, you may ask them:

- (a) As the student reads the article. Tell them ahead of time when to pause.
- (b) After the student finishes reading the whole article.

Volleyball, basketball, ping pong, dancing rehearsals or simple chats. Dozens of teens are rediscovering how to reconnect to the real world after a school in Santiago, Chile, implemented a **pioneering** program in the country that blocks cell phone signals.

Now, instead of **compulsively** scrolling through their Instagram feeds or sharing choreographed TikTok dances, students spend time at the library, the café or along the several courts of Lo Barnechea Bicentenario school.

"Breaks are very lively now," the school's principal, Humberto Garrido, told The Associated Press.

**Q: What do students at the Lo Barnechea Bicentenario school do instead of compulsively scrolling through social media?**

**A: Students spend time at the library, the café, or along the several courts of Lo Barnechea Bicentenario school.**

In order to **stimulate** bonding among youngsters, the school also put in place a "**comprehensive** plan that also includes more games in the courtyard, board games in the library, soccer, tennis, basketball, and even championships," he said.

The program—the first ever put in place in Chile and one of the first in South America—was implemented in August, a bid by the Lo Barnechea mayor’s office to address student well-being in times of hyperconnectivity and help them rediscover real-world connections.

For now, the initiative is being tested only at Lo Barnechea Bicentenario school and applies to eighth-grade students, ages 13 or 14. However, the measure will soon be extended to all grades and gradually implemented in other district schools over the next year.

**Q: What did the school do in order to stimulate bonding among youngsters?**

*A: The school put in place a “comprehensive plan that also includes more games in the courtyard, board games in the library, soccer, tennis, basketball, and even championships.*

On a recent cold, sunny day at the end of winter in Chile, dozens of students patiently lined up before putting their smartphones inside a black case designed to **jam** signal detection through a blocking magnet that can only be deactivated by the school’s inspectors. They are still able to keep their devices, but are only allowed to text, call or scroll again after school is over.

The first few days of the digital detox demanded some adaptation, but just a few weeks after its launch, the program has been well received by students, teachers and parents.

“I feel freer, I spend more time at recess, I spend more time with my classmates. I play a lot, I play a lot more sports. Before, I used to spend time on my phone, watching TikTok and Instagram,” said 14-year-old José David.

*This article was provided by The Associated Press.*

**Q: Are students still able to keep their devices?**

*A: Yes, they are still able to keep their devices, but are only allowed to text, call, or scroll again after school is over.*

## Summary (optional)

Ask the question below to check if the student can summarize the article.

What was the article about?

## Viewpoint Discussion (9-13 minutes)

Have a discussion with the student using the questions below. Be sure to ask follow-up questions to make the student produce more. You do NOT have to ask all the questions.

### Discussion A

- Under a pioneering program in Santiago that blocks phone signals, students join physical and social activities instead of compulsively scrolling on social media. What challenges do you think students, teachers, and parents each face when dealing with kids’ compulsive phone use (ex. students: can’t control compulsive scrolling, parents: can’t completely ban phones for safety)? How important is community help in addressing this issue? Discuss.
- The school in Santiago didn’t just block phones; it also added games, sports, and activities. Why is it important to replace phone time with real activities instead of just taking devices away? What real activities do you enjoy that make you forget about your phone? Discuss.

### Discussion B

- The principal said the goal was to help students bond more, so the school added sports, championships, and games. How do you think these activities help students connect in ways phones cannot? Discuss.
- The program has been well-received by students, teachers, and parents. Why do you think some students feel freer without their phones at school? How would you feel if your school or workplace did the same? Discuss.

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