Children and the Mobile Phone - an Addiction or a Necessity?

1. While there is currently no question as to the benefits of the mobile phone, at the beginning, these benefits had to be sold to us by the mobile phone industry. However, with the ease of communication—that is, contact anywhere and at anytime with friends, relations, and colleagues—and the efficiency brought to our busy lives, we have made the judgment that, indeed, the mobile phone is an exceptionally useful tool. It has advanced personal communication beyond our wildest expectations of only a few years ago. Furthermore, its future developments are likely to be equally amazing. However, every technological advance also has consequential costs, and it is the area of mobile phone usage that requires more attention, especially with regard to their use by young people.

2. Responsible parents believe that with the benefits of immediate communication, the mobile phone is a necessity. “What happens if our child can’t get a lift home? We feel safer knowing that our son can contact us if he’s in trouble.” Or, “It gives him the responsibility of the cost of phone calls as he gets an allowance and it is up to him to manage his activities.” These are some reasons why, all in all, the mobile phone is hugely convenient and popular. However, when the mobile phone becomes not just an essential item for communication but instead something that takes control of a child’s life, parents have a right to be worried.

3. Various experts say that they recognize the worrying signs of dependency on the mobile phone. They believe that, while the mobile phone is generally perceived as an accessory, it could be more appropriately described as a “comfort blanket,” since getting a phone call or a text message implies to children that, “somebody wants me.” It boosts the receiver’s self-esteem and feeling of self-worth. This is particularly true for teenagers who are struggling with their identity and social status. Phone usage not only increases the opportunity to bond with friends and to organize a social life, but it also provides a symbol for acceptance.

4. The youth of today are the first new generation to have an “anytime, anyplace, anywhere mobile communications culture” and the excessive use of it can be viewed as part of defining generational differences. This culture is no comfort to parents who cannot understand their children’s obsession because they claim that it is possible to organize lives and keep in touch with others perfectly well without the mobile phone. However, now, some children are so obsessed with the mobile phone that they can’t manage without their mobile phones. Moreover, this obsession leads to problems among family members as children can’t spend time with family members uninterrupted or they are constantly checking for messages. Furthermore, they become bad-tempered if they have to be away from their phone for any period of time. That’s why families are finding the “mobile culture” stressful, and claim that it causes gaps between family members.

5. In some families, the situation has become far worse; text messaging has become an obsession that needs to be fed by constant communication and that means constant funding. “I discovered our daughter had been using my credit card without my permission to buy more mobile airtime for her phone,” says the father of a 13-year-old. Other children, perhaps, steal cash to feed the habit. These are worrying developments and parents feel that they have a difficult situation on their hands regarding their child’s mobile phone usage.

6. In conclusion, it is important that parents understand the above concerns and the effects they can have on their children and their family. In the case of mobile phones, parents should take into account the merits of both points of view before making a judgment on whether mobile phone use is an addiction or a necessity for children and teenagers.
Graph 1.

Social Interaction Of Age Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>People who own mobile phones</th>
<th>People who DON'T own mobile phones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commentary Magazine, 05/2004

Chart 1.

What do Children with Mobile Phones Spend their Time on

- 52% mobile phone
- 30% internet
- 11% studying
- 7% family

Source: The University of Essex, Dept. of Psychology, 2005
ALL GROUPS

Class:____________________________ Name:____________________________

WRITING SECTION

PART A. Explain the ideas that were used by the mobile phone industry in the promotion of the mobile phones to the public using your own words in NOT MORE THAN 2-3 sentences.

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PART B. You work for the Child Guide Magazine, and you have been asked to write a paragraph of 180-220 words on whether children should own mobile phones or not. Use the relevant information and/or your own ideas. DO NOT LIFT SENTENCES DIRECTLY.

Write your paragraph on the lines provided here.

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ALL GROUPS
ANSWER KEY

PART A.
The ideas that were used in the promotion of the mobile phones by the mobile phone industry are:
- they ease communication (with friends, relations, colleagues) and they bring efficiency to our lives.
  and / or
- they are exceptionally useful and / or
- (they advance personal communication beyond all expectations.)
* its future developments : X (as this idea was not advertised, but is expected)

PART B.
Below are some reasons from the text to support the idea given in the topic sentence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children SHOULD own mobile phones</th>
<th>Children SHOULD NOT own mobile phones</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ▪ Children can contact their parents if they are in trouble | ▪ Children are obsessed with their mobile phones 
  - they are unable to spend time with their family uninterrupted and/or (also support for the next reason) |
| ▪ Children can learn to take responsibilities | ▪ they constantly check for messages, (also support for the next reason) and/or |
| ▪ Children’s self-esteem and self-worth will be strengthened | ▪ - they become bad-tempered when they don’t have their mobile phones near them and/or |
| ▪ Children can have the opportunity to bond with friends, organize a social life and be accepted | ▪ - It’s possible to communicate with others and organize lives without mobile phones |
| | ▪ (This mobile culture causes gaps between the family members) |
| | ▪ Children use their parents credit cards without permission and/or they might steal money to buy mobile airtime |