# CASE STUDY

## NO CELL PHONE POLICIES AND SWATTING PREVENTION

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**THE DISTRICT NAME IS NOT LISTED ON PURPOSE. IF A SCHOOL DISTRICT WANTS TO SPEAK TO THEM, WE WILL PRIVATELY PROVIDE THE NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS.**

## SECURING SCHOOL IN A DIGITAL AGE

Schools face growing pressure to protect students and staff while maintaining a safe and focused learning environment. Both distractions from cell phones and frequent swatting incidents or fake threats disrupt the academic experience, diminishing a student's ability to achieve greater academic success. This case study highlights the X School District's success in implementing a student cell phone ban while preventing swatting with TDR Technology Solutions' School Access Manager (SAM). It offers insights and strategies for schools navigating similar challenges, demonstrating how reducing both digital and external distractions can foster an environment conducive to learning.

# BACKGROUND

The x School District has demonstrated a proactive commitment to student safety. By implementing a no cell phone policy and integrating TDR Technology Solutions' School Access Manager (SAM) system, the district has created a better learning environment and prevented swatting and fake threats. This strategic approach, implemented before the ban on cell phones, has proven to be a highly effective in managing potential threats and maintaining a stable school environment.

x School District has effectively tackled the crisis of fake threats. The significant reduction in lost instructional hours due to fake threats has allowed the district to focus on educating students and preventing real threats. The district's approach to protecting students and staff, reducing lost instructional hours, and minimizing the associated mental health issues has been successful. Swatting has been virtually eliminated at x School District, and the heavy investment to reduce real threats continues, as every life lost is one too many. The ongoing investment to prevent swatting has significantly reduced lost instructional hours and associated mental health issues.

In 2017, x School District schools experienced months of very disruptive swatting attacks.  At the time, the threats were so disruptive that it resulted in a loss of instructional time of over 12%. The district had to pay for weekend classes to make up for some of the lost instructional time.  After a meeting with the FBI, DHS, State Police, and several local police organizations, it was determined they could not stop the threats. They could only prosecute the swatters after they caught them. They had identified some of the calls were coming from overseas. It wasn't clear to law enforcement that even if they identified who made the calls, would the country they came from cooperate and prosecute or extradite the offenders?  School board meetings turned hostile as community members insisted the district better protect the students.

Since the implementation of SAM in 2017, the disruptive swatting and email threats have ceased, providing a sense of control and empowerment to the x School District community. SAM has blocked over 1,385,000 unwanted calls and emails, demonstrating its unwavering commitment to school safety. Despite the increase in swatting threats, SAM remains a reliable barrier, preventing threats from disrupting the schools.
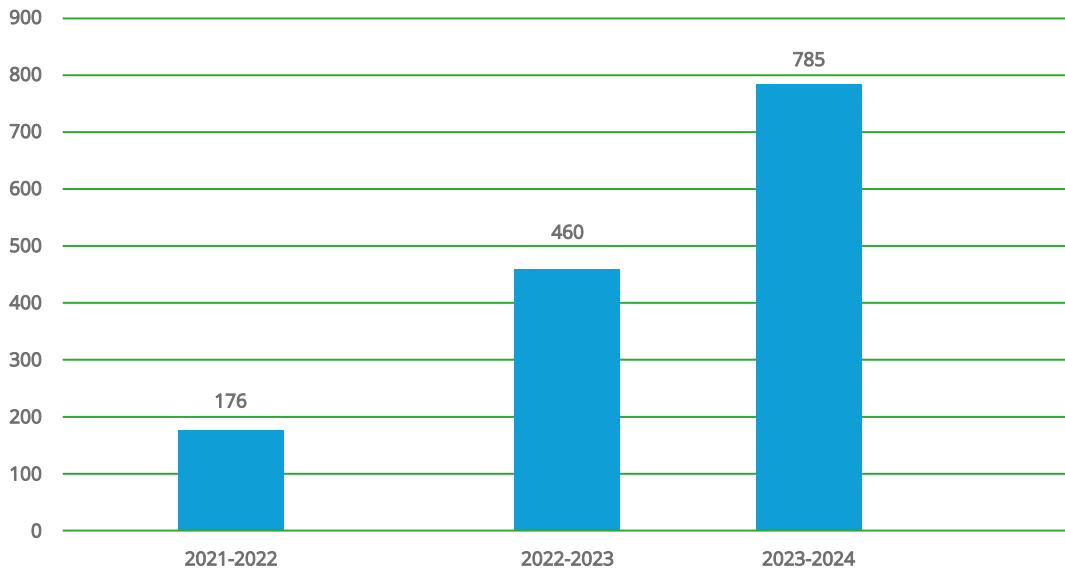
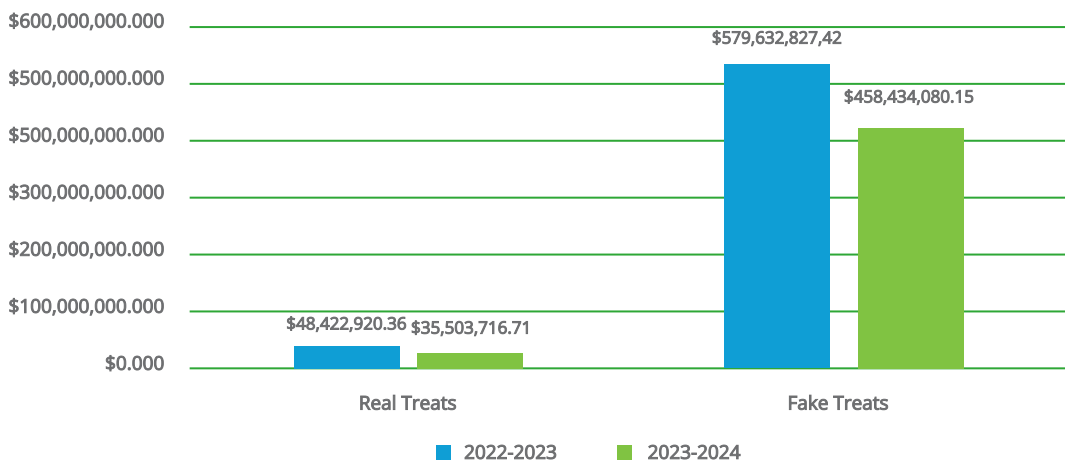**! Swatting Has Escalated Dramatically In The Last Few Years**

# DATA & EVIDENCE

When x School District implemented swatting protection, the average number of schools in the US impacted per month was less than 50.

## Swatting Threats in the US Average Schools Impacted per Month



| Year | Value |
|------|-------|
| 2021-2022 | 176 |
| 2022-2023 | 460 |
| 2023-2024 | 785 |

## The Cost of Lost Instructional hours due to threats in the United States



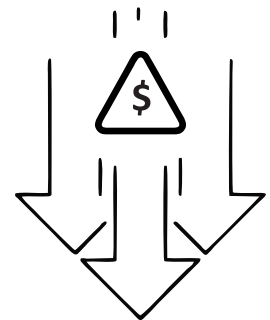| | 2022-2023 | 2023-2024 |
|------|-----------|-----------|
| Real Treats | $48,422,920.36 | $35,503,716.71 |
| Fake Treats | $579,632,827,42 | $458,434,080.15 |

# KEY INSIGHTS

## Understanding the Source of Threats

Most threats do not originate from students using cell phones within the school; instead, they come from outside sources, such as remote callers or email swatting attacks. This understanding is crucial as it highlights that banning cell phones alone will not prevent most threats. Therefore, SAM technology provides a more comprehensive solution to reduce fake threats and improve safety.

## First, Reduce the Number of Threats

One of the key challenges in implementing a no-cell phone policy is managing the potential for anxiety and disruption during emergencies. If schools could eliminate or significantly reduce the number of threats—especially fake ones that currently happen hundreds of times a month—the decision to ban cell phones would become much more manageable. By reducing the frequency of these threats, schools can create an environment where students, parents, and staff feel secure, making it more feasible to manage without immediate communication access.

## Primary Reason for No Cell Phone Policy

The main reason behind implementing a no-cell phone policy in schools is to improve academic performance by eliminating a major distraction. Cell phones can interfere with the learning environment, and their removal helps students focus better on their studies. However, without adequate swatting prevention measures, such a policy could inadvertently cause more harm during emergencies if parents, students, and staff cannot communicate.

## Strategic Implementation of SAM Technology

X School District's decision to install SAM before banning cell phones has created a safer environment by effectively preventing fake threats from escalating. Other districts considering similar policies should look to x School District's example, as it demonstrates a well-thought-out strategy that minimizes the risk of fake threats and community overreaction.

# Implications of No Cell Phone Policies

With the rise of no cell phone policies in schools, it's critical to anticipate the psychological and behavioral impact on students. If a threat occurs and students are unable to communicate with parents and peers due to the lack of cell phones, this could potentially escalate anxiety and lead to negative behaviors. The inability to communicate during emergencies is a significant concern that schools need to manage carefully.

# Managing Parent Anxiety and Overreaction

Parents' inability to communicate with their children during a perceived threat can lead to mass panic. Without real-time communication, parents may rush to the school during a fake threat, creating chaos and potentially overwhelming school resources. By preventing fake threats through SAM, x School District has effectively reduced the likelihood of such mass overreactions.
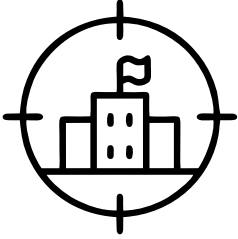
# Political and Social Considerations

Schools implementing a no-cell phone policy without implementing technology like SAM to prevent swatting may face significant political and social backlash. The absence of a clear plan to address the increased anxiety that comes with a lack of communication could create a challenging situation for school administrators.

## Targeting Schools with No Cell Phone Policies

There is a concern that individuals making threats might specifically target schools with no cell phone policies to amplify the chaos and take credit for causing a significant disturbance. Swatting often aims to generate a large-scale reaction; without the ability to communicate, students, parents, and staff could contribute to an overreaction.



**PHONE**

**FREE**

**SPACES**

## Innovative Approach by x School District

x School District's unique approach involves providing students with magnetic lock bags that block cell service. Students can unlock their phones in designated areas like lunchrooms or study halls, maintaining controlled communication access while minimizing distractions.

# CONCLUSION



The x School District's approach to integrating SAM before enforcing a no-cell phone policy offers valuable lessons for other districts. By strategically deploying swatting prevention technology first, they have managed to reduce fake threats, avoid mass hysteria, and create a more secure environment. The next logical step for schools is to focus on reducing the number of threats—especially fake ones—currently happening hundreds of times a month. The lower the number of threats, the easier it will be to manage no-cell phone policies and focus on education without the added anxiety of potential threats. Other districts should consider following this example to prevent a cell phone ban's political and social challenges without appropriate safeguards.

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