TLDR

The strongest case **for** McPherson's move is that it treats classroom technology as a means, not a default.

The article makes a credible case that constant 1:1 device access was fueling distraction, bullying, and teacher time spent on enforcement rather than instruction. The strongest case **against** it is that the article leans heavily on anecdote and reaction; it does not show hard evidence that pulling back on devices improves learning outcomes enough to justify the tradeoffs.

What the school is actually doing

This is not a full anti-tech stance. McPherson Middle School took back take-home, individually assigned Chromebooks and shifted to **classroom carts with limited, teacher-directed use**. Students mostly take notes by hand, and laptops are used for specific tasks. The principal frames this as "intentional tech use," not abandoning technology altogether. The school still uses devices in targeted ways, like computer science lessons and optional at-home practice through library checkout.

The best argument for this approach

1. It directly addresses a real classroom management problem

The article's clearest evidence is practical rather than ideological: students were using school laptops for YouTube, games, and peer harassment, and teachers were spending too much time policing device use. The school had already banned phones, but digital distraction simply shifted to school-issued laptops. That is a serious point in favor of the rollback: if the tool is undermining attention and increasing misconduct, scaling it back is rational.

2. It pushes back against "tech as default"

One of the most persuasive parts of the article is its challenge to the assumption that more devices automatically means better learning. It notes that after major spending on devices and apps, studies have often found little improvement in academic results or graduation rates, and it cites concerns from researchers and UNESCO that overuse can distract

students and impede learning. Even inside the school, administrators concluded that some platforms were too game-like or underdelivered. That supports a strong policy principle: schools should require proof that a tool helps learning, not just assume it does.

3. It may improve the social environment of school

The article repeatedly ties reduced device use to more peer interaction and less conflict. Students quoted in the piece say classmates talk more, fight less with teachers over games, and have fewer opportunities to be cruel to one another online. That matters. School is not only about content delivery; it is also about attention, self-regulation, relationships, and classroom culture. If fewer screens improve those conditions, that is a meaningful educational benefit even before test scores enter the conversation.

4. It gives teachers more control over when tech is worth using

The school's better examples of Ed Tech use are narrow and purposeful: coding sensors and LEDs, optional practice, specific classroom tasks. That is a stronger model than constant open-laptop instruction. In other words, the article's best pro argument is not "paper is better than computers." It is "technology works best when it is scarce enough to stay purposeful."

The best argument against this approach

1. The article does not prove the rollback improves academic learning

This is the biggest weakness. The piece presents disciplinary improvements and positive student reactions, but not hard before-and-after evidence on achievement, writing quality, reading growth, math gains, attendance, or long-term outcomes. A school can feel calmer without necessarily becoming more effective academically. So the article is strong on symptoms and weak on proof.

2. It risks treating poor implementation as proof that tech itself failed

A fair counterargument is that the problem may not be "Ed Tech," but **bad Ed Tech governance**: weak filtering, poor platform choices, excessive open access, and too much reliance on gimmicky apps. The article itself notes Google provides controls for screen

locking, content restrictions, YouTube management, and disabling devices after hours. That suggests some schools may be able to fix the misuse problem without giving up 1:1 access so broadly.

3. It may reduce access to useful digital skills

There is a real risk of overshooting. Students do need to learn how to write, research, collaborate, organize work, and solve problems in digital environments. If a school pulls back too far, it may protect attention in the short term while underpreparing students for later academic and work demands. The article partly answers this by showing targeted computing lessons, but it does not fully address how students will build everyday digital fluency if device use becomes too rare.

4. It may work in one context and fail in another

McPherson is a relatively small school with 480 students and a principal willing to enforce a coherent culture shift. That matters. A policy that works in one community, grade band, or school culture may not transfer cleanly to a larger or more diverse district. The article implies broader relevance, but the evidence is still mostly one-school, one-leader, early-stage evidence.

What the article gets right

The article is strongest when it frames this as a correction to overreach. McPherson's experience shows how schools can drift from "devices support learning" to "learning happens through devices whether or not that helps." It also captures a point many school leaders avoid saying plainly: once every child has a laptop all day, the school is in constant competition with entertainment, messaging, and algorithmic distraction.

The classroom details reinforce that message. On page 12, students solve math on whiteboards and signal readiness physically; in English, most choose paper over a Chromebook when given the option. Those examples suggest the school is trying to rebuild engagement through simpler, more bounded routines rather than just banning screens on principle.

What the article glosses over

It does not fully confront the strongest pro-tech argument: good digital tools can expand access, differentiation, feedback speed, and flexibility. Nor does it separate low-value screen time from high-value digital work with much precision. The article also has a clear "tech backlash" frame, so it is more persuasive as a warning against overuse than as a definitive case for broad reversal.

Best overall judgment

This is a **good idea for some schools**, but only under a specific interpretation:

Good idea: pull back from default, all-day, 1:1 device dependence when laptops are clearly degrading attention, behavior, and teaching quality.

Bad idea: turn that into a simplistic anti-tech posture, or assume that paper-based instruction is automatically superior in every subject and grade.

The smart lesson is not "ditch Ed Tech." It is:

> **Use less of it, more deliberately, and only where it does something measurably better than non-digital alternatives.** That is the most defensible takeaway from the article.

What other schools should copy

Schools should copy the school's emphasis on:

- purposeful, teacher-directed tech use rather than constant access
- protecting attention as a prerequisite for learning
- judging tools by outcomes, not marketing
- preserving tech for tasks that are genuinely better digitally, such as coding or specific practice needs

What other schools should avoid

They should avoid:

- assuming one school's early success proves a universal model
- replacing evidence with nostalgia
- cutting devices without a plan for digital literacy, access, and equitable support
- blaming "technology" when the deeper issue may be weak controls or poor instructional design