

# Fostering Student Learning, Well-Being, and Belonging

Guidance for Personal Electronic Device  
Policies *in accordance with Executive Order  
25-09*

**Updated: August 1, 2025**



**Revised July 2, 2025**

## A Statewide Commitment to Distraction-Free Learning

In July 2025, Governor Tina Kotek released [Executive Order No. 25-09](#) which requires that all Oregon school districts have a **policy in place that restricts** the use of **personal electronic devices** from the **start of regular instructional hours to the end of regular instructional hours**. School districts are required to adopt a policy no later than **October 31, 2025**, with full implementation in effect no later than **January 1, 2026**.

**"Personal Electronic Device" (PED)** means any portable, electrically powered device that is capable of:

- Making and receiving calls
- Making and receiving text messages
- Accessing the Internet independently from the school's network infrastructure

In accordance with the Executive Order, school district policies **must** (at a minimum):

1. Provide clarity on how devices will be stored during the school day;
2. Provide direction to school personnel regarding actions that may be taken when a student violates requirements wherein allowed actions may not authorize or otherwise result in students losing instructional time, which includes suspension or expulsion.

Policies **must** provide for the use of Personal Electronic Device by a student when the use complies with the terms of:

- Student's medical provider's order for the care and treatment of a medical condition;
- Student's IEP or 504 Plan;
- A written exemption provided for students, based on guidelines adopted by the school district to allow school building administrators to accommodate individual circumstances or to further specific educational outcomes.

Adopted Personal Electronic Device policies **must** be posted on the school district website and be made available to school district personnel, students, parents and guardians, partners who are in the school building during the school day, and the Oregon Department of Education.

Additionally, the policy **may** exclude time when students are not on school grounds and are not under the supervision of school personnel other than a school bus driver.

# Guiding Principles for Restricting the Use of Personal Electronic Devices in Schools

The Oregon Department of Education recognizes that personal electronic devices can provide important benefits to students. Transitioning to environments without cell phones can be challenging for students, families, and staff, so this process should be approached with careful planning and thoughtful implementation. To be successful, any personal electronic device policy must prioritize and respect the needs and well-being of all students.

**Oregon’s Goal for Restricting the Use of Personal Electronic Devices in Schools:** Improve academic outcomes by ensuring students are fully engaged in learning within a distraction-free environment that supports their well-being, focus, and ability to thrive academically and personally.

## Guiding Principles for Personal Electronic Device Use

The following principles serve as a foundation to ensure that electronic device use enhances learning, protects student well-being, and respects the diverse needs of our school communities. By adhering to these core values, districts can create consistent, thoughtful approaches that foster safe, focused, and inclusive distraction-free learning environments.

- **Human brains are naturally wired for connection, communication, and learning—processes that are amplified through real, relational interactions.**<sup>1</sup> Schools provide a critical space where students build both cognitive and social skills through face-to-face engagement with peers and teachers. While digital tools can complement learning, overreliance on screens can interfere with these connections, leading to reduced social interaction and a greater sense of isolation.<sup>2</sup>
- **Student mental health and safety must be central to decisions about the use of technology in schools.** Research shows that excessive screen time—especially involving social media—can contribute to anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. Limiting access to personal electronic devices during the school day can help reduce these risks, promote face-to-face interaction, and ease the pressures of constant online engagement.<sup>3</sup>
- **A focused, distraction-free environment is essential for students to thrive in school.** Personal electronic devices in the classroom can interrupt concentration, limit engagement, and hinder deep learning.<sup>4</sup> To support students' ability to think critically and stay present, schools must create conditions that minimize distractions and promote sustained attention.

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<sup>1</sup> Toward an interpersonal neurobiology of the developing mind: Attachment relationships, “mindsight,” and neural integration. Retrieved from: <https://www.openground.com.au/assets/Documents-Openground/Articles/c96e82dc74/siegel-interpersonalneurobiology.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One’s Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity. Retrieved from: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/691462>

<sup>3</sup> Smartphones, social media use and youth mental health. Retrieved from: <https://www.cmaj.ca/content/192/6/E136.short>

<sup>4</sup> Mobile phones: The effect of its presence on learning and memory. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7425970/>

## Why This Policy Matters

Personal electronic devices are a regular part of students' lives, but their use during the school day has raised significant concerns. Research shows that constant access to PEDs and social media can lead to reduced focus, increased anxiety and depression, and weakened peer connections. This section summarizes key findings on how device use affects student mental health, relationships, and academic engagement. By grounding policies in this evidence, schools can foster more supportive, connected, and focused learning environments where all students can thrive.

## Personal Electronic Device Use and Student Well-Being

Teachers across the country are raising concerns about the disruptive impact of cell phones and other Personal Electronic Devices (PEDs) on student learning and mental health.<sup>5</sup> National organizations like the [American Medical Association](#) and the [American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#) recommend limiting screen time for children and teens to support healthier physical and mental development, as well as overall well-being. Excessive phone and social media use has been linked to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and reduced attention spans, along with a sense of distress when students are separated from their devices, even briefly.<sup>6,7</sup>

Social media, which accounts for a substantial percentage of PED usage in and out of schools, has been shown to contribute significantly to these effects on adolescents.<sup>8,9</sup> According to the 2022 [Oregon Student Health Survey](#), 10 percent of students reported being monitored, shamed, or embarrassed through the misuse of their privately shared content on social media. Rates were highest among girls, nonbinary students, and transgender students. Social media can also expose young people to sexually explicit material, discriminatory or hate speech, violent imagery, and messages that promote unhealthy or abusive relationships. A [Common Sense](#) study from 2024 found that 54 percent of students had engaged with sexually explicit material by age 13, with most of that exposure occurring unintentionally. Additionally, students may be exposed to inappropriate contact between adults and children on social media, including "sextortion,"<sup>10</sup> trafficking, and other forms of exploitation.

The widespread use of PEDs and social media can increase students' exposure to [cyberbullying](#), harassment, and other harmful online interactions. These experiences can have a serious impact on students' mental and

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<sup>5</sup> NEA's 2024 report: <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/nea-member-polling-on-social-media-personal-devices-and-mental-health-june-20-2024.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Impact of Problematic Smartphone Use on Mental Health of Adolescent Students: Association with Mood, Symptoms of Depression, and Physical Activity. Requested and retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/4drVinF>

<sup>7</sup> Associations Between Time Spent Using Social Media and Internalizing and Externalizing Problems Among US Youth. Retrieved from: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapsychiatry/fullarticle/2749480>

<sup>8</sup> The associations between screen time and mental health in adolescents: a systematic review. Retrieved from: <https://bmcpyschology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40359-023-01166-7>

<sup>9</sup> Screen time and depression risk: A meta-analysis of cohort studies. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9815119/>

<sup>10</sup> For more on the meaning and impacts of sextortion, please see: <https://www.dhs.gov/hsi/ops-and-initiatives/sextortion>

physical well-being, as well as their academic performance. The constant connectivity enabled by personal electronic devices can make it difficult for students to disengage from negative online experiences, often leading to elevated psychological stress and distress.<sup>11</sup>

Given the growing body of evidence and the concerns raised by educators and health professionals alike, the unregulated use of personal electronic devices during the school day can help to increase risks to students' well-being and their ability to learn. Establishing clear, consistent policies that limit device use in schools is a critical step toward creating safer, more focused, and more supportive learning environments. By prioritizing students' mental health and reducing distractions, schools can better ensure that all students are positioned to thrive both academically and personally.

## Personal Electronic Devices and The Impact on Learning

Effective learning happens when students are fully engaged with meaningful content, connected to their teachers and peers, and feel a strong sense of belonging. However, research shows that the use of PEDs during instructional time can disrupt students' concentration,<sup>12</sup> leading to decreased academic performance<sup>13,14</sup> and increased behavioral challenges.<sup>15,16</sup>

Many apps are intentionally designed to capture and hold users' attention for long periods. Studies suggest that excessive device use may affect adolescent brain development in ways similar to addictions such as substance abuse or gambling.<sup>17</sup> This raises concerns about the long-term impact on students' ability to focus and regulate their attention which can disrupt their ability to learn.

Many Oregon districts have already moved towards developing policies that restrict personal electronic devices (PEDs) during the school day, and many have found that limiting their use during the school day supports student focus, well-being, and meaningful engagement. These policies are not about restricting technology, but about creating environments where students can concentrate, feel connected, and thrive both academically and personally.

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<sup>11</sup> Social Media Use and Cyber-Bullying: A Cross-National Analysis of Young People in 42 Countries. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32446603/>

<sup>12</sup> Dividing attention in the classroom reduces exam performance. Retrieved from: <https://leupen.umbc.edu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/548/2018/10/Dividing-attention-in-the-classroom-reduces-exam-performance.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Ill Communication: Technology, distraction & student performance. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0927537116300136?via%3Dihub>

<sup>14</sup> PISA 2022 Results: The State of Learning and Equity in Education, Volume I. Retrieved from:

[https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/12/pisa-2022-results-volume-i\\_76772a36/53f23881-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2023/12/pisa-2022-results-volume-i_76772a36/53f23881-en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Excessive Smartphone Use Is Associated With Health Problems in Adolescents and Young Adults. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8204720/>

<sup>16</sup> Smartphone Use Linked to Behavioral Problems in Kids. Retrieved from: <https://www.aau.edu/researchscholarship/featured-research-topics/smartphone-use-linked-behavioral-problems-kids>

<sup>17</sup> Social Media and Youth Mental Health The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory. Retrieved from: <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-youth-mental-health-social-media-advisory.pdf>

# Policy Considerations and Recommendations for Policy Development for Personal Electronic Devices

As schools and districts work to align with the statewide guidance on restricting PED use during the school day, there are a variety of approaches they can take to address the challenges these devices present in the school environment. A strong first step is to engage school staff, students and families, in meaningful conversations about policy development, ensuring community input helps shape local implementation. Schools can establish clear, consistent expectations about when and where personal electronic devices may be used, and how misuse will be addressed. Regular communication and reinforcement of these expectations with both staff and students can help build a shared understanding and foster a positive school culture that supports focused learning and reduces distractions.

## Key Policy Considerations

The following are key considerations when developing PED policies to ensure alignment and compliance with statewide policies.

### Establish Clear Guidelines for Device Storage

- Define where and how students are expected to store personal electronic devices during the school day (e.g., off and away for the day in backpacks, stored in lockers, secured in locked cell phone pouches, placed in designated classroom storage, or located in the school office).
  - If personal electronic devices are stored in a shared/public location, ensure that they are stored in a secure manner.
- Ensure consistency in storage expectations across grade levels and classrooms, while allowing flexibility for age-appropriate implementation.
- Communicate storage procedures clearly to students, families, and staff, and include visual or multilingual materials as needed. Ensure school staff are able to support storage implementation.
- Evaluate policy and implementation efforts to determine if course corrections or revisions are necessary.

### Clarify Allowable Use Based on Individual Needs

- Allow students to use personal electronic devices when such use is explicitly required by:
  - A licensed medical provider's written order for the care and treatment of a medical condition.
  - A student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
  - A written exemption granted under district guidelines by a school administrator based on individual circumstances or to support specific educational outcomes.
- Ensure staff understand how to verify and honor these accommodations without stigma or confusion.

## Define the Scope and Limits of the Policy's Applicability

- Clarify that the policy developed by districts may **allow exceptions for times when students are off campus** and not being supervised by school staff, other than a bus driver. For example, district policy may exclude lunch time for schools where students are allowed to travel off campus. Another example is when students are riding a bus without any school staff on board besides the driver. In these situations, school policy must allow students to use cell phones and other personal electronic devices, since it would be unsafe for the driver to monitor device use while operating the vehicle.
- Clearly communicate when and where the policy is and is not enforceable, potentially including during field trips, extracurricular activities, or while traveling to and from school.
- Ensure all partners—school staff, students, families and caregivers, school partners and transportation providers—understand the boundaries of the policy's reach. Plan for regular communication of policy reach and implementation.

## Provide Clear Direction for Addressing Policy Violations

- Outline a clear and consistent district or school wide approach to responding to student misuse of personal electronic devices. Successful and consistent implementation across a school community will benefit from staff modeling limited personal PED use during instructional time. While not required by EO 25-09, encouraging staff to follow similar expectations can help build school-wide buy-in and reinforce the learning environment the policy aims to support.
- Emphasize restorative and instructional responses over punitive actions.
- Do not permit responses that remove students from instructional time, including suspension, expulsion, or classroom exclusion for personal device violations. *This restriction is not intended to include the short time it might take to have a conversation of redirection either with the teacher or with administrators outside the classroom.*
- Include examples of allowed responses, such as verbal redirection, family / caregiver contact, or opportunities for student reflection and reteaching of expectations.
- Plan regular and ongoing training opportunities for all school staff for PED policy and addressing student policy violations.

## Ensure Accessibility and Transparency of the Policy

- Post the personal electronic device policy on the school district's website.
- Make the policy easily accessible and understandable for:
  - School district personnel
  - Students
  - Parents and caregivers
  - School-based partners or visitors present during the school day

- Translate and format the policy to meet the language and accessibility needs of your school community.

## Creating an Effective Policy for Personal Electronic Device Use

Creating an effective policy for PED use requires thoughtful planning, inclusive engagement, and a strong focus on student well-being and learning. Policies are most successful when they are co-developed with those who will be impacted by them—students, families, educators, and community members. This section outlines a step-by-step approach to designing, implementing, and continuously refining a policy that is equitable, practical, and aligned with statewide expectations. Using guiding questions and actionable tasks, district and school leaders can ensure that policies are clear, inclusive, and responsive to the unique needs of their communities.

### Needs Assessment & Community Engagement

Guiding Questions:

- What are the current challenges related to personal electronic devices in our schools?
- Who are the key partners that need to be engaged early in the policy process?
- How do we ensure community voice—especially from students and families—is reflected in policy decisions?
- How can we effectively use community engagement tools and the spectrum of engagement to ensure meaningful participation from all stakeholders, especially students and families?



## Needs Assessment & Community Engagement Key Tasks:

- ❑ Engage students, families, staff, school site councils, and labor associations in early input sessions in alignment with the Governor Office's Executive Order.
- ❑ Utilize [ODE's Community Engagement Toolkit](#) to plan and evaluate outreach efforts, ensuring diverse voices are actively involved in policy development and decision-making processes with the Governor's Executive Order.
- ❑ Use surveys, focus groups, and existing advisory groups (e.g., student councils) to identify concerns and priorities.
- ❑ Assess communication needs: Can classrooms communicate with the front office without relying on personal devices (e.g., landlines, intercoms, or radios)?
- ❑ Consider cultural and linguistic needs—ensure input is accessible across communities and languages.

## Policy Development and Iteration

### Guiding Questions:

- How can we design a policy that is equitable, consistent, and realistic to implement?
- How will we communicate rules and expectations clearly across schools?
- How does the policy align with other existing school rules and state requirements?
- How does the policy accommodate the unique needs of multilingual learners, students with IEPs, and those with 504 plans?
- Are the policy communications and materials accessible and understandable to families and students from diverse linguistic backgrounds?
- What provisions are included to ensure equitable access to devices or alternative supports for students with disabilities?
- How will individualized accommodations be identified, documented, and implemented consistently?
- How are school staff trained and supported to understand and apply the policy with sensitivity?
- Does new policy include a clear and transparent communications plan in the case of school emergencies?

## Policy Development and Iteration Key Tasks:

- ☐ Co-create the policy with input from staff, students, and community members.
- ☐ Ensure that policies do not stigmatize or disadvantage those without cell phones and other mobile devices.
- ☐ Design clear rules that integrate into the student code of conduct or behavior management systems.
- ☐ Clarify how the policy aligns with existing personal property liability guidelines regarding theft, loss, or damage.
- ☐ Translate and visually represent policy guidelines in students' and families' primary languages.
- ☐ Review Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans to identify any necessary device usage accommodations or exemptions.
- ☐ Collaborate with special education and English Learner (EL) specialists to develop guidelines that address the needs of these student groups.
- ☐ Translate policy documents and communications into families' primary languages and use clear, accessible language.
- ☐ Provide multilingual support and interpretation during policy development discussions and community engagement efforts.
- ☐ Ensure alternative learning supports or device access are in place for students who cannot use personal devices per policy restrictions.
- ☐ Train educators and staff on applying the policy in ways that respect students' linguistic and accessibility needs, avoiding stigmatization.
- ☐ School leaders should also include plans for a unified, redundant and practiced response for direct emergency communications in the new policy. This should include website communication, cell phone app notifications and direct phone communication as applicable.<sup>18</sup>

## Policy Implementation

### Guiding Questions:

- How will we regularly educate and prepare staff, students, and caregivers for the new policy?
- How will we ensure that enforcement is fair, consistent, and non-exclusionary?
- How do we build student voice, agency, and understanding into implementation?

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<sup>18</sup> The Role of Technology in Improving K–12 School Safety. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1400/RR1488/RAND\\_RR1488.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1488/RAND_RR1488.pdf)

### Policy Implementation Key Tasks:

- ☐ Provide ongoing professional development for staff on implementation, equity, and alternatives to exclusionary discipline.
- ☐ Communicate regularly with students and families using multiple formats and languages.
- ☐ Integrate the policy into digital citizenship, media literacy, and SEL instruction. Use free resources such as:
  - [\*Common Sense Media's Digital Citizenship Lessons\*](#)
  - [\*Digital Well-Being Lessons\*](#)
  - [\*SEL in Digital Life Resource Center\*](#)
- ☐ Incorporate [\*Transformative Social Emotional Learning \(TSEL\)\*](#) to build student agency and belonging.
- ☐ Encourage staff to model expected behavior and reduce their own use of personal devices during instructional time.
- ☐ Ensure staff have access to alternative communication tools (e.g., school apps, landlines, radios) during the school day.
- ☐ Support classroom educators by ensuring that policy implementation is a shared responsibility across the entire school community. Design enforcement strategies that avoid suspension or other exclusionary discipline practices. Refer to [\*Oregon Department of Education's guidance\*](#) on positive behavioral interventions and alternatives.

## Continuous Improvement

### Guiding Questions:

- How will we know if the policy is working as intended?
- How can we regularly refine the policy based on partner feedback?
- What mechanisms will we use to track implementation, equity, and effectiveness?

### Continuous Improvement Key Tasks:

- ☐ Build review checkpoints into the school year (e.g., quarterly reflections or annual evaluations).
- ☐ Gather regular feedback from staff, students, families, and community groups using [\*continuous improvement cycles\*](#).
- ☐ Use existing structures like student leadership groups or school site councils to collect and review feedback.
- ☐ Make adjustments based on data and lived experience, keeping community members informed about changes.
- ☐ Communicate progress and policy changes clearly, consistently, and in families' preferred languages.

Strong personal electronic device policies are not static documents—they are living agreements that must evolve alongside the communities they serve. When developed collaboratively and implemented with care, these policies can create learning environments that are more focused, connected, and supportive of student

well-being. By centering equity, student voice, and continuous improvement, districts can build policies that not only reduce distraction but also foster a stronger sense of belonging and engagement for every learner.

## Charting a Path Forward

Aligning local policies with Oregon’s statewide guidance on personal electronic device use is essential to creating safe, equitable, and distraction-free learning environments where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. The requirements laid out in Governor Kotek’s Executive Order reflect a commitment to supporting student well-being by addressing the complex challenges posed by personal electronic devices while honoring the diverse needs of students, families, and educators.

The research is clear: limiting device use during instructional time promotes engagement, reduces disruptions, and helps protect students’ mental health. Thoughtful policy development and implementation will foster positive school climates that empower students to focus, connect, and succeed.

ODE staff are here to support districts and schools every step of the way. We welcome your questions and stand ready to provide technical assistance to ensure your local policies align with statewide goals and best practices. To help you in this effort, we will continue to update our website with new resources, including detailed guidance documents, webinars, and tools designed to assist in policy planning, implementation, and continuous improvement.

Together, we can build learning environments that prioritize student well-being and academic success, ensuring every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

### Resource and Support Information

- Several Oregon school districts have personal electronic device policies in place. The Oregon Department of Education is working to identify sample policies to support the development of policies aligned with Governor Kotek’s Executive Order.
- ODE is continuing to update their website with resources to support policy development. Please continue to check back for more: [Guidance for School Cell Phone Policies](#).
- If you have questions, please reach out to [ode.mobileddevices@ode.oregon.gov](mailto:ode.mobileddevices@ode.oregon.gov).

## Appendix I. Considerations for When and How to Allow for Cell Phone Use

In accordance with Governor Kotek's Executive Order, policies must provide for the use of a personal electronic device by a student when the use complies with one of the following:

- The student's licensed medical provider's order for the care and treatment of a medical condition;
- (2) The student's individualized education program, as defined in ORS 343.035 or an education plan developed for the student in accordance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. 794; or
- (3) written exemption provided for the student based on guidelines adopted by the school district to allow school building administrators to accommodate the individual circumstances of a student or to further specific educational outcomes for a student.

### Health-Related Considerations

As school districts work to develop and/or revise cell phone and mobile device policies, school leaders should consider the health-related needs and overall well-being of their students. For example, students managing chronic health conditions, such as diabetes or severe allergies, may need to rely on mobile apps on their personal electronic devices to monitor their health in real time. Some students may also have sensory needs or preferences where mobile devices and headphones can help them self-regulate by keeping external stimuli at lower levels. Additionally, students with anxiety or other mental health challenges may benefit from access to calming or grounding apps, soothing music, or the ability to communicate with parents, families, or other trusted adults during stressful moments. IEP and 504 teams should determine where exceptions to a cell phone policy may be warranted to meet specific student health needs and ensure appropriate accommodations are included in the student's IEP or 504 plan. These health-related considerations should also be taken into consideration when districts are developing individual circumstance exemptions for their PED policies under the new executive order.

### Accessibility and Assistive Technology

Assistive technologies such as speech-to-text, screen readers, and other features available on cell phones can enable students experiencing disabilities to participate more fully in classroom activities, fostering an inclusive learning environment, though many of these same functions may be available on district-managed devices. Cell phones can also offer critical language accessibility for multilingual students, especially those who may be new to their school, by providing quick access to translation tools that help bridge language barriers and facilitate smoother communication. For more on accessibility for Oregon schools, see the 2024-25 accessibility manual. Additionally, artificial intelligence tools like chatbots and generative AI apps (e.g. ChatGPT, Google Gemini) represent a new sector of digital learning. These tools, many of which are accessible on cell phones, may help teachers provide more opportunities for accessibility and differentiation. IEP and 504 teams should

determine where exceptions to a cell phone policy may be warranted to meet specific student needs and ensure appropriate accommodations are included in the student's IEP or 504 plan. For more information and guidance on generative artificial intelligence, please refer to ODE's Digital Learning page.

## Appendix II. Addressing Frequently Expressed Concerns about Cell Phone and Mobile Device Policies

To ensure positive communications and interactions which prioritize safety and student well-being, school leaders developing cell phone policies should proactively think about addressing concerns that may be frequently expressed by students, families, and caregivers.

### Emergency Communications

Oregon Department of Education's [School Safety and Emergency Management](#) (SSEM) program is designed to support the development and implementation of emergency operations plans (EOPs) in schools across the state to help improve the safety and security for all students and staff. [Oregon Revised Statute 336.071](#) and [Oregon Administrative Rule 581-022-2225](#) require schools to instruct and drill students on emergency procedures and maintain a comprehensive safety program that includes plans for responding to emergencies. ODE has resources to aid districts in developing, implementing, and maintaining [High-Quality School Emergency Operation Plans](#).

Many parents and caregivers consider cell phones as a lifeline during emergencies, allowing quick communication between students and families. This is a real and valid fear that should be addressed by those involved in new cell phone policy and rule development. Students and staff should follow district response protocols. Excessive communication can overwhelm cellular networks, hindering effective response efforts by public safety personnel. Moreover, spreading incorrect information, misinformation, or unverified details can cause confusion and additional fear, potentially worsening the situation. [An additional concern is that a phone's alerts, alarms, notification sounds, vibrations etc. could potentially bring unwanted attention during a drill or an emergency. Schools and districts are encouraged to have effective communication plans in place that will keep families informed of incidents and mitigate anxiety when direct communication with a student is not immediately available.](#)

While PEDs could be used in maintaining communication during crises, their use must be managed carefully to balance the benefits and risks involved. States such as [Ohio](#), as well as The [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#), suggest that student cell phones can do more harm than good in emergency lockdown situations and as part of emergency response plans should be turned off. School leaders should also have prepared policies and plans in place to have a unified, redundant, and practiced plan for direct emergency communications that includes website communication, cell phone app notifications and direct phone

communication.<sup>19</sup>Schools should examine their current safety protocols and determine if changes to cell phone policies expose additional risk to be mitigated.

## Student Concerns and Transitional Challenges

Students regularly rely on cell phones for communication, organization, entertainment, and social engagement. Restricting access to them during the school day can disrupt familiar routines and cause anxiety or resistance, which may negatively impact well-being.<sup>20</sup>Additionally, some students may exhibit behaviors associated with "screen addiction," which can involve compulsive use of digital devices for notifications and social media.<sup>21</sup> To ease this transition, schools should plan to support students and families by acknowledging these challenges and emphasizing engaged learning and positive, supportive environments for students. Providing opportunities for student and family input, along with teaching [digital etiquette, citizenship, and media literacy](#), can help students transition and adhere to new policies. It is helpful to provide regular communication to students and families that cell phone and mobile device restrictions are not about punishment, but rather about helping our students.

## Appendix III. Personal Electronic Device Policy Example

### Sample Introduction and Rationale:

In July 2025, Governor Tina Kotek released Executive Order No. 25-09 which requires that all Oregon school districts have a policy in place that restricts the use of **personal electronic devices** from the start of regular instructional hours to the end of regular instructional hours. School districts are required to adopt a policy no later than October 31, 2025, with full implementation in effect no later than January 1, 2026.

[By October 31, 2025], [Insert district name] is implementing a new personal device policy to align to Executive Order No. 25-09, to create the best possible learning environment for all our students, starting [insert date NO LATER January 1, 2026]. This policy has been carefully considered and is based on research showing the negative impacts that constant cell phone and personal electronic device use can have on academic performance, mental health, and overall student well-being.

The goal of this policy is to enhance [insert district name]'s academic outcomes by ensuring students are fully engaged in learning within a distraction-free environment that supports their wellbeing, focus and ability to thrive academically and personally.

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<sup>19</sup> The Role of Technology in Improving K–12 School Safety. Retrieved from:

[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1400/RR1488/RAND\\_RR1488.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1488/RAND_RR1488.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Psychological Characteristics And Mobile Phone Addiction Among Adolescents. Retrieved

from:[http://oorja.org.in/uploads/pdfFiles/article/63ea00fdd94cf-Sept-Dec%202017\\_Himanshu%20Shekhawat.pdf](http://oorja.org.in/uploads/pdfFiles/article/63ea00fdd94cf-Sept-Dec%202017_Himanshu%20Shekhawat.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> 4Screen Use and Social Media "Addiction" in the Era of TikTok: What Generalists Should Know. Retrieved from:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10743327/>

## Example Policy Template

All schools in the [insert district name] are to be free from personal electronic devices from the start of school through the end of the school day. This includes, but is not limited to smartphones, flip phones, tablets, e-readers, smartwatches, smart glasses and any other personal web-capable device and the headphones and/or earbuds connected to those devices. Personal electronic devices that are brought onto school grounds are to be stored in accordance with [insert district name] storage policy [insert district storage policy].

### *Definitions:*

**Personal Electronic Device:** means any portable, electronically powered device that is capable of:

- Making and receiving calls
- Making and receiving text messages

Accessing the internet independently from the school's network infrastructure This includes personal electronic devices that can make calls, send texts, or access the internet via cellular data are restricted. This includes smartphones, web-enabled flip phones, cellular-capable tablets and e-readers, smartwatches, smart glasses, and connected headphones or earbuds. This does not include laptop computers or other devices required to support academic activities.

- **Instructional Hours:** means from the regular start of the school instructional day to the end of the instructional day. This policy may also extend to field trips and athletic events, as determined by the school district.
  - This may exclude time when students are not on school grounds and are not under supervision of school personnel other than a school bus driver.

### *Expectations:*

- During class time, all students are required to store their personal electronic devices in [insert district storage policy].
- Students may not access their personal electronic devices in bathrooms or locker rooms at any time.
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure all their personal electronic devices are stored in accordance with the district's policy.
- Communication between students and parents, caregivers and /or guardians will occur through the school office if necessary.

### *Steps for Missed Expectations:*

When students need support in meeting expectations for personal electronic device use during the school day, teachers or administrators will use the following steps, designed to guide and encourage positive choices:



- **First Instance of Noncompliance:** Staff will give the student a verbal reminder of the policy and expectations to reinforce appropriate use of personal electronic devices.
- **Second Instance of Noncompliance:** The device will be temporarily confiscated and held at the front office until the end of the school day. Parents or caregivers will be notified, and a meeting with school administration may be scheduled to discuss ways to support the student.
- **Third Instance of Noncompliance:** The device will again be temporarily held, and parents or caregivers will be informed. A meeting with school administration and family will be arranged to review the policy and plan for improved compliance.
- **Beyond Third Instance of Noncompliance:** If non-compliance continues, schools will determine additional appropriate consequences, always prioritizing keeping students in class and engaged in learning.

#### *Exceptions:*

Students with documented health conditions, as defined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 plan or a medical provider's order, may be permitted to use a cell phone or other mobile device during the school day if required to monitor or manage their health. This use must be approved in advance by school administration and incorporated into the student's health plan. Students with approved exceptions are expected to follow all other device storage and usage guidelines when not actively managing their health concerns.

## Appendix IV. Cost Considerations for Oregon Districts Restricting Cell Phones in Schools

*These prices are based on October 2024; ODE is currently working on updating the cost estimates for 2025.*

**Overview:** Implementing a policy to restrict cell phones during the school day may involve several cost components. These include the purchase or lease of storage solutions, the employment of additional classified staff, and ensuring the privacy and security of student information.

**Background on Data Sources:** Each Oregon district and school is unique. The estimates provided here are based on publicly available state and federal data and reports, covering aspects such as district, school, and class sizes, as well as student and teacher populations. While these estimates aim to be as accurate as possible, the actual final pricing for any of the approaches included may vary significantly from these figures.

#### **Estimates:**

- I. **Off and Away:** Free, as devices can be stored in backpacks or lockers.

II. **Magnetic Lockable Pouches:** Reports from Oregon school districts currently using magnetic lockable pouches, along with publicly available information, indicate that the annual cost per pouch is approximately \$15-30 per student. This cost typically includes customer service, lock/unlock bases, initial training, and ongoing support. Districts with larger student populations may secure lower per-student pricing. Currently existing models require districts to lease pouches.

**High Schools:** Average cost per student: \$27 per year

- Small school (600 students): \$16,200 per year
- Medium school (900 students): \$24,300 per year
- Large school (1200 students): \$32,400 per year

**Middle Schools:** Average cost per student: \$27 per year

- Small school (500 students): \$13,500 per year
- Medium school (650 students): \$17,550 per year
- Large school (800 students): \$21,600 per year

III. **In-Class Storage Solutions:** In-Class Storage solutions vary in cost, based on the type of storage container provided. Average estimated costs for the different types of in-class storage solutions include:

- Hard-sided Lockable Caddies: \$62 each
- Hard-sided Open Caddies: \$27 each
- Soft Hanging Storage: \$16 each

**High Schools:**

- Lockable Caddies: \$2,790 - \$3,100 per school
- Open Caddies: \$1,215 - \$1,350 per school
- Hanging Storage: \$720 - \$800 per school

**Middle Schools:**

- Lockable Caddies: \$1,984 - \$2,294 per school
- Open Caddies: \$864 - \$999 per school
- Hanging Storage: \$512 - \$592 per school

IV. **Associated Costs Related to Additional Classified Staff Capacity:** To effectively manage the new responsibilities and duties associated with the implementation of cell phone restrictions, additional classified staff time may be required. These staff members, most likely front office staff, would handle tasks such as monitoring and enforcing cell phone policies, managing the collection and distribution of locked devices, and providing support to students and parents regarding the new rules.