Title: Cell Phone/Smart Watch/Smart Device Work Group Board Update

Type: Discussion

Presenter(s): Dr. Randy Smasal, Assistant Superintendent; Dr. Cara Rieckenberg, Highlands Elementary Principal; Patrick Bass, Valley View Middle School Principal; Paul Paetzel, EHS Principal; Kristy Ardinger, Countryside 5th grade teacher; Jeff Krause, EHS Science Teacher; Tim O'Neill, EPS Parent; and Indra Khariwala, EPS Student

Description: The purpose of the work group was to review current policy/research and determine if additional recommendations (Policy 506) are needed for each level of school regarding appropriate use of Cell Phones/Watches and their impact on engagement in learning. The use of both cell phones and smart watches have increased significantly over the last five years. There is research about the benefits and challenges of these devices in school including their benefits around learning, ability to distract from learning and impacts on social and emotional wellness. The desired outcome of the workgroup was to determine what, if any, updates to policy language are needed.

Recommendation: No decisions on recommendations are being asked of the board. This presentation is an informational update for the board.

Desired Outcome(s) from the Board: Please bring forth questions you have for the presenters.

Attachment(s):
- See attached report

The following board update report is organized into these sections:
- Background Information
- The Process of study used by the work group
- Work group participants
- Elementary and Middle School Recommended Options
- High School Recommended Options

Background Information

Strategy C of the Edina Public Schools strategic plan places an emphasis on fostering positive learning environments and whole student and staff wellness support. It further articulates that EPS is committed to fostering a caring school environment where students and staff feel safe physically and emotionally, in order to be fully engaged in their academic/professional, personal, and social growth. Cell phone and smartwatch technology can both help support learning and be a distraction for learning. In order to address concerns that staff brought forward about the use of these technologies in schools, we organized a work group to look into the issue. Specifically our work group focused on initiative number C.5 in the strategic plan: **Create environments that are conducive to learning and facilitate constructive student interaction.**

Process

The Webb Homerun Leadership Information-Reactions-Options-Decision (IROD) decision making framework (Webb, 2022) was used with the workgroup in order to create shared understanding of the information, gather participant reactions, design and analyze options and move to workgroup recommendations. Three 90 minute meetings were held starting in December of 2023 and ending in January of 2024. The first meeting focused on sharing information and creating common understanding of what is currently happening in and outside of Edina Public Schools related to use of cell phones and smart watches. The second meeting continued with sharing of information, gathering of reactions and initial draft of options was completed. The third meeting focused on establishing pros and cons of the generated options and then prioritizing options as recommended next steps at the elementary, middle school and high school levels.

Work Group Participants

The participants for the work group included teachers, students, parents, school administrators and district level administrators. Work group members were:

1. Kristy Ardinger, Countryside Teacher
2. Jeff Krause, EHS Science Teacher
1. Tim O'Neill, Concord Parent
3. Erika Ladousa, Valley View Parent
4. Natasha Monsaas-Daly, former Director of of District Media & Technology Services

5. Matt Flugum, Digital Learning Specialist
6. Jody Remsing, Director of Student Services
7. Jody De St. Hubert, Director of Teaching and Learning
8. Patrick Bass, Valley View Middle School Principal
9. Cara Rieckenberg, Highlands Elementary School Principal
10. Paul Paetzel, EHS Principal
11. Randy Smasal, Assistant Superintendent - Facilitator
12. Students:
    a. VVMS:
        i. Phillips, George
    b. EHS:
        i.   Benarouch, Tariq
        ii. Hahn, Ally
        iii. Khariwala, Indra
        iv. Li, Lex
        v.   Alibright, Evelyn
        vi. Young, Jaden

In the first step of the IROD framework, information was shared with the workgroup. That information included references to articles to read, some survey data from staff, current language in policy 506 and the sharing of various experiences from the workgroup participants. Appendix I contains a list of the information resources provided to the work group.

Reactions to the shared information about cell phones and smartwatches in schools were collected from the workgroup and are summarized below:

1. There were differing perspectives between elementary and secondary school levels - cell phone/smart watch use is more prevalent at the secondary level, while at elementary it's mainly smart watches used for tracking location and communication by parents.
2. There was recognition of both positive and negative impacts of technology use - devices can be used as learning tools, but also lead to distractions, and may contribute to mental health stresses. The devices also provide parents/guardians additional reassurance in the event of a safety concern.
3. There is a need for consistent policies and practices. There is a wide variation in how teachers handle technology use in classrooms, leading to differing experiences for students. Consistent school-wide policies and expectations are important.
4. There is a need to balance student agency and compliance. There is a need to shift from mere compliance at younger ages to developing self-agency and understanding the reasons behind technology policies as students grow older.
5. There are challenges with enforcement and discipline. Strict enforcement can lead to conflicts and damage teacher-student relationships and participants indicated that finding effective strategies beyond just confiscation is necessary.
6. Parental/guardian involvement and education is important as efforts to manage technology use in schools need to involve not just staff but also parents/guardians and students for a comprehensive approach.

7. There are varying student perspectives. Some students are unaware of technology's impact, while others use it extensively for coordination and communication.

Overall, the participants recognized the complex nature of the issue and the need for a nuanced approach balancing the potential benefits and drawbacks of technology use in schools.

Upon review of pertinent information and reactions of the workgroup through discussion, the team began working through the decision making framework to develop options for improvement to current practices. The team worked in three subgroups to review elementary practices, middle school practices and high school practices. The recommended options were shared and discussed with all K-12 principals and the District Equity Advisory Committee for additional feedback. The next section includes recommended actions from each level prioritized by the participants of the work group.

Elementary and Middle School Recommended Options:

A. Reinforce a practice of "Personal Technology/Device Away for the Day" (Cell phones and Smartwatches in locker/backpack). Benefits of this practice include fewer distractions in classrooms, streamlined management and regulation by staff due to clear expectations for students. Students would still be able to use devices before and after school. Challenges to this practice are that it can cause anxiety for students or parents/guardians who are not able to communicate with their child in real time.

B. In policy language, group cell phones and wearable technology together as "Personal Technology Devices." This recommendation promotes clear expectations for students and staff, is again easier to manage and regulate and would support consistent communication and expectations across all the schools. There are clarifications to work through as some wearable technology does not have SMART features.

C. Parent/Guardian/student communication and education were deemed critical to support consistent practices and understanding. Education on the practices themselves, the purpose and the consequences for not following the practices were designated as being an important part of the school/family partnership to help support high levels of learning at EPS. Rationale for this recommendation includes the building of shared understanding as the most likely pathway to successful implementation. One suggestion from the team included having student leaders become Responsible Digital Citizens who would teach other students about responsible technology use. It would be another leadership opportunity for students and help build capacity for educating learners which will be an annual effort increasingly complex as new technologies emerge.

   The workgroup generated challenges to this recommendation which include a wide variety of community expectations on the current use of technology in schools and the convenience of real time access to their children. The workgroup also noted the degree to which personal technology devices may be more integrated into a student's life outside of school and how that may conflict with expectations of use in school. Providing communication, information and opportunities for parent/guardian and student discussion and education on the topic will be an important next step. These opportunities could include conferences, curriculum nights, PTO meetings, Get Connected Days, Connect and Assess meetings and various newsletters and videos.

D. Exceptions to personal technology device restrictions should be provided for students needing personal devices as described in either their 504, IEP or personal health plans as there are many technology tools and applications that provide support for students.
The workgroup indicated that this recommendation should apply to students at all levels in EPS and is not specific to just elementary students.

High School Recommended Options
The first option discussed was to restrict the use of cell phones and smart watches during the day at the high school. The benefit of this option would include clarity of expectations, however the workgroup articulated that at the high school level there were too many cons to this idea. The cons include a loss in the flexibility of teachers and students to utilize the apps and learning support tools on devices when needed, reduced convenience of communication with family members regarding the many activities students participate in at the high school, and the opportunity to grow student agency as the technology becomes more integrated into their life experiences. After extensive discussion this option was not supported by the team, but it is important to note in this report that the option was debated.

A second option of restricting the use of cell phones and smart watches in a "Bell to Bell" approach was also debated and later not supported for many of the same reasons as stated above. Now onto the recommended options being brought forward by the workgroup for high school students.

A. Develop a tiered approach to include universal levels of expectations that are consistent across all classrooms while simultaneously allowing teachers to use discretion when leveraging the technology for educational purposes. The tiered approach would be communicated to students through classroom visuals and expectations. A potential tiered approach would include three designated classroom use levels.
   a. Level 1: "AWAY" Phones away for class period
   b. Level 2:"LIMITED" Limited use for ed purposes
   c. Level 3: "OKAY" Phones will be used for the lesson

The flexibility of this approach aligns to much of current practice but will be enhanced through consistent language, communication and reinforcement as a staff. The approach builds upon the development of student agency to manage technology in healthy ways and forms a bridge between expectations in elementary/middle school and environments beyond high school. A challenge to this recommendation discussed by the team was a concern over how fluidly students would be able to navigate the expectations from class to class.

Note: Recommendations C and D from the elementary and middle school teams were also supported.

Summary and Next Steps:

Minor language changes to policy 506 are needed to help support the proposed options. The proposed recommendations are closely aligned to current practice but offer more consistency and common language. The options do include a call for education for students and families about the acceptable practices, the purpose of the practices and the potential impact when devices are not used properly. Educational resources will have to be created and the specific ways in which the education will be delivered will have to be determined. Exceptions to the practices will be needed for students with specific plans (504, Health, IEP) and this will have to

be vetted. An EHS implementation team of students and staff members has started to convene to determine next steps.

Appendix I: Information shared with workgroup

1. Policy 506 language overview below in Figure 1

Figure 1: Policy 506 - TECHNOLOGY INFRACTIONS

31. ELECTRONIC DEVICES, MISUSE OF

Rules relating to the possession and/or use of cell phones and/or personal electronic mobile devices in school are dependent upon the grade level of the individual student. Students are not allowed to use cell phones or personal electronic mobile devices at the elementary level during the hours of the school day, unless specifically directed otherwise by a district employee. High school and middle school students may use cell phones or personal electronic mobile devices at the discretion of a teacher and in accordance with school policy, and only in a way that is not disruptive to the educational process including use in class or in any way that sacrifices, or potentially sacrifices, academic integrity (see also Dishonesty, Scholastic, and Photographic Device Misuse).

Grades	First Offense	Second Offense	Third Offense
Grades PreK-3	★	★	★
Grades 4-5	★	★	★
Grades 6-8	★	★	1-day suspension
Grades 9-12	★	1-day suspension	3-day suspension

(★) *Indicates opportunity for restorative practices and potential disciplinary action assigned by building administration.*

2. Quick Read: [Guiding Students to Develop a Clear Understanding of Their Cell Phone Use](#)
3. [EHS Phone Survey Results](#) provided by work group member
4. Other Resources:

[UNESCO Report](#)

[Guiding Students to Develop a Clear Understanding of Their Cell Phone Use](#)

[Creating a Cell Phone Policy That Works for Everyone](#)

[Cell Phones, Student Rights, and School Safety: Finding the Right Balance](#)

[Cellphones in School: What to Know](#)

[Opinion Schools should ban smartphones. Parents should help.](#)

https://kstp.com/kstp-news/top-news/twin-cities-school-districts-put-tougher-restrictions-on-cell-phones/

[CBS/WCCO Video Story](#)

[SMART Glasses](#)

[NYTimes: Florida Policy](#)

Lawsuit against Meta:
https://www.cnbc.com/2024/01/09/meta-to-restrict-teen-content-as-complaints-mount-about-youth-harm.html

Book: [Stone Focus - Why you can't pay attention and how to think deeply again.](#)

Articles that support monotasking:

- [https://www.apa.org/topics/research/multitasking#:~:text=Psychologists%20who%20study%20what%20happens,designed%20for%20heavy%2Dduty%20multitasking](https://www.apa.org/topics/research/multitasking)
- https://news.stanford.edu/2009/08/24/multitask-research-study-082409/
- https://www.today.com/health/mind-body/multitasking-bad-productivity-monotasking-rcna26968
- https://mindfulnessbox.com/monotasking/

I Love You Guys Administrative School Safety Training August 2023
Cell phones are an important part of our essential communication with families.
When in a Lockdown, prompt students to send texts like to their family like:
- We are in a Lockdown
- I am ok
- I will text you in five minutes.

STUDENT PHONES AND SMART WATCHES in the Elementary (Elementary Communications shared with families in fall of 2023.)

Technology continues to evolve, and many of us rely on our smartphones and watches daily. While the modern conveniences and safety aspects of these devices are great, they also carry the potential to be a distraction to the learning environment. Should you need to communicate with your child, please contact the office or teacher directly. Students will be asked to not use their devices during the school day.   Thank you for your partnership in this area.

CN: [Cornelia Mobile Devices (Cell Phones/Watches) Policy Letter](#)

HL: [Smartwatches and Device Policy reminder letter](#)
ND: [Electronic Devices](#)
CC: [Student Technology Use Contract 2022-24](#)
CS: [Smartwatches and Device Policy reminder letter](#)
CV email:

Mobile Devices at School

- Just a reminder that the use of cell phones is not permitted during the instructional day, including on the bus ramp and bus, unless pre-arranged with the classroom teacher.
- This also applies to Apple watches and other electronic devices. For example, on occasion, a student will text their parents because they aren't feeling well and ask to be picked up. Leaving school early for illness needs to go through the health office so we can account for our students.

Notes from Elementary Principals
"The watches are the main challenge. It is a huge distraction to learning.
The technology has extended past the policy language.
Individual cases will sometimes dictate the need for using them during the day.
How do we ensure policy and practice are in line?
Communicate to all staff that we are aligning our practice with district policy - if it is used for something other than a watch, it will then be prohibited

[MS Student Data collection](#) (One day of observations by work group member who is a ms student)
:https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jK9bwIVV4_80CdFeXhFa9hF2fLb6NVKo9Qzir5tbbF0/edit#slide=id.p

Webb, D. (2022). Homerun Leadership: Your Guide to Better, Faster Team Decisions. USA.