



**Board Meeting Date:** 2.3.25

**Title:** Electronic Communication Devices - Policy 524

**Type:** Discussion

**Presenter(s):** Nate Swenson, Assistant Superintendent

**Description:** The purpose of the discussion is to provide the Board with an update on the cell phone policy.

**Recommendation:** Utilize policy 524 to meet the statutory obligation to have a cell phone policy.

**Desired Outcome(s) from the Board:** Carefully review the introduction (below), background and policy language for consideration information below. Come prepared with initial reactions (comments and questions).

**Attachments:** [5.21.24 Cell Phone Work Group Board Report](#) & [9.9.24 Cell phone presentation](#)

## **Introduction**

Following our previous Board discussions regarding electronic device management in our schools, I am presenting this update on our efforts to incorporate specific cell phone policy language into an existing policy. Given that Policy 524 underwent a comprehensive review in August 2024, we are recommending focused revisions only to the cell phone portion at this time. The policy will receive its next full review during the summer of 2025. These targeted updates will ensure our district's compliance with the legislative requirement to maintain a formal cell phone policy, while building upon our established electronic device procedures.

## **Background**

Our journey began in early 2023 when administrators recognized a significant increase in electronic device usage over the previous five years. What started as primarily cell phone management had evolved to include a broader spectrum of devices, including smartwatches and various personal electronic devices. This proliferation of technology prompted the formation of a diverse work group comprised of teachers, administrators, parents, and students to study the impact of these devices on the learning environment.

Initial findings revealed a complex landscape: while devices could support learning objectives, they also presented significant challenges to student engagement and mental health. The District observed varying needs across different grade levels, with elementary students primarily using smartwatches for parent communication, while secondary students navigated more complex usage patterns.

By mid-2024, we implemented our first structured approach, introducing the "Away for the Day" policy for younger students (K-8) while developing a three-tier system for high school students (9-12). This tiered approach acknowledged the growing autonomy of older students while maintaining appropriate boundaries for educational focus.

The most significant evolution came through comprehensive stakeholder engagement and data collection in late 2024. The district surveyed families, staff, and students, while also consulting with emergency management personnel and considering assistive technology needs. This thorough approach overwhelmingly affirmed support for our electronic device management approach.

Policy 524, which underwent a comprehensive review in August 2024 and is scheduled for its next full review in summer 2025, now includes specific language regarding cell phone usage. The recommended addition to Section XVII focuses specifically on "Cell Phone and Other Electronic Communication Device Use," establishing:

- Clear guidelines for student possession and use of devices
- A specific "Away for the Day" requirement for K-8 students
- A three-tier system for high school allowing graduated device access
- Explicit prohibitions against device misuse for cheating, bullying, or harassment
- Procedures for device searches when policy violations are suspected
- Guidelines for confiscation and return of devices
- Disciplinary measures for policy violations

These focused revisions to Policy 524 have been reviewed by the policy committee, and ensure compliance with statutory requirements for a cell phone policy while building upon the District's established electronic device procedures. The targeted nature of these updates reflects a strategic approach to policy management, addressing immediate needs while maintaining the broader policy framework for future comprehensive review.

## Policy language for consideration

### XVII. Cell Phone and Other Electronic Communication Device Use

- A. The school district ~~will~~ **has** established **ed** rules and procedures regarding student possession and use of cell phones and other electronic communication devices in schools. These rules and procedures ~~will~~ seek to minimize the impact of cell phones on student behavior, mental health, and academic attainment. These rules and procedures ~~may be~~ **have been** designed for specific school buildings, grade levels, or similar criteria.

**Under these guidelines, at K-8 levels, all electronic devices must be stored "Away for the Day" in backpacks or lockers. High school uses a three-tier system where devices are stored away by default (Tier 1), but teachers may permit use for specific learning tasks (Tier 2) or independent work (Tier 3), with device use allowed outside classrooms following digital citizenship guidelines.**

- B. Students are prohibited from using a cell phone or other electronic communication device to engage in conduct prohibited by school district policies including, but not limited to, cheating, bullying, harassment, and malicious and sadistic conduct.
- C. If the district has a reasonable suspicion that a student has violated a district policy, rule, or law by use of a cell phone or other electronic communication device, the district may search the device. The search of the device will be reasonably related in scope to the circumstances justifying the search.
- D. Students who use an electronic communication device during the school day and/or in violation of district policies may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the district's discipline policy. In addition, a student's cell phone or electronic communication device may be confiscated by the district and, if applicable, provided to law enforcement. Cell phones or other electronic communication devices that are confiscated and retained by the district will be returned in accordance with school building procedures.