



Oregon Department of Education

Promoting Student Learning, Well-Being, and Belonging: Guidance for School Cell Phone Policies

Oregon District & School Profiles

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A number of Oregon school districts have recently been developing and/or revising their own policies on cell phone and mobile device use during the school day. Some of these districts and schools provided information that is included in the profiles below:

Bend-La Pine Schools expanded cell phone practices and expectations in the 2023-24 school year. Their *Silent and Away* policy requires students' cell phones (i.e. 'personal electronic devices' which also includes earbuds and headphones) to be put away during the school day with some exceptions. For [middle schools](#), this means that phones are put away completely before the start of the morning bell and stay there until the final bell of the day. [High school students](#) are given additional flexibility and are able to have them out before and after school, during passing periods, lunch, and during open block periods in specifically designated areas. They will also be required to place cell phones into "phone caddies" as they enter into each classroom throughout the school day. For more information on Bend-La Pine Schools cell phone policy, please reach out to Director of Communications Scott Maben at scott.maben@bend.k12.or.us.

Grant High School (Portland Public Schools) will be implementing a [cell phone free policy](#) in the 2024-25 school year by requiring students to lock their phones and smartwatches away in magnetic locking pouches. James McGee, Grant High School principal, utilized wall caddies in classrooms, which he said started very well. However, there were some inconsistencies from one classroom to another.

Grant High School staff considered locked boxes and the potential for a locked cell phone storage room in the building, but felt this would require a full-time staff member to monitor this type of policy, and therefore decided that utilizing the magnetic locking pouches was the best move for the upcoming school year.

As an administrator for several years, McGee has worked with students on what he calls "cell phone abuse," where students were regularly found on the giving and receiving end of bullying, being disengaged from learning, and experiencing social challenges with their friends and peers.

McGee spent a considerable amount of time in the 2023-24 school year researching the challenges and dangers that smartphones and social media pose and communicating about cell phone policy options with students, parents and caregivers, site council, teachers, and staff.

In an open house at the end of the past school year to discuss the upcoming cell phone free policy, McGee commented there was no pushback from participants when the pouches and new cell phone policy were presented, and most parent/caregiver input has been overwhelmingly positive. Grant High School leadership is still determining what the exact expectations, accountability, and disciplinary action will be regarding the lockable pouches for the upcoming school year.

McGee believes that by giving students a respite during the school day from their cell phones and mobile devices, it will increase student engagement with their teachers, instruction, and their fellow classmates as well as decrease problematic behaviors. Beaumont Middle School, which feeds students into Grant High School, will also be incorporating the lockable pouches into their cell phone policy in the 2024-25 school year. For more information on Grant High School cell phone policy implementation, please contact Principal James McGee jmcgee3@pps.net.

Hillsboro School District, at the start of the 2023-24 school year, has also updated their [cell phone policy](#) for their students. At the elementary and middle school levels, this includes a total ban on cell phones and other mobile devices for the entire school day. According to policy language, this means, “devices need to be off, away and out of sight.” High school students have more access, where cell phones and mobile device use is allowed during lunch, during passing periods, and before and after school. For more information on cell phone policy in Hillsboro School District, please reach out to David Nieslanik, Executive Director of Schools, at niesland@hsd.k12.or.us.

Lake Oswego School District has a [new cell phone policy](#) that took effect at the start of the 2024-25 school year. Under this policy, all personal electronic devices, including smartphones and wearable computers such as smartwatches and earpods, must be turned off and stored away for the entire school day—from the arrival bell to dismissal. That includes class time, passing periods, and lunch. If a phone is seen or heard, it will be held in the front office until the end of the day. Exceptions for health, safety, or emergencies may be made with prior approval from the principal or if outlined in a student’s IEP, IHP, or 504 plan. The policy aims to reduce distractions, improve engagement, and promote student well-being. For questions about implementing this policy in schools, please get in touch with Lou Bailey, Executive Director of Secondary Programs for Lake Oswego School District, at baileyl@loswego.k12.or.us.

North Clackamas School District has recently announced that they are utilizing magnetic locking pouches for all middle school and high school students starting in the upcoming 24-25 school year. This past June, the North Clackamas School District school board [unanimously approved](#)¹ the use of funds for their new approach to cell phones and mobile devices in their middle schools and high schools. In a seemingly growing trend of districts moving towards the use of lockable pouches, one unique aspect of this effort by North Clackamas School District was the publishing of two separate surveys that were sent to staff, students, and their families. In those [survey results](#), of the 297 staff, 566 parents and caregivers, and 417 students that responded, 85% reported that cell phone use has had a negative impact. This included areas of distraction, reduced socialization, cyberbullying, and increased anxiety and depression. In a second survey sent specifically to high school students, which had 805 responses, 86% of students said they use their phones for non-instructional reasons during the school day, and 36% responded that they are negatively impacted by other students using their phones. 47% of those student respondents also indicated that their mental health was negatively impacted by their own phone use. For more information on North Clackamas School District’s policy and the implementation of the locking pouches in the 24-25 school year, please reach out to Dr. Ivonne Dibblee at dibbleei@nclack.k12.or.us.

¹ NOTE: Discussion of locking pouches begins around the 17 minute mark in the video

Nyssa High School (Nyssa School District) has implemented a strict new cell phone policy for the 2024-25 school year that requires students to store their phones in lockers or backpacks during class and inside the building from "bell to bell." This policy, aimed at reducing distractions and improving mental health, prohibits phone use during school hours, with calls allowed only outside school buildings. Developed with community input, the policy seeks to teach appropriate technology use while prioritizing a focused learning environment. For more information on the Nyssa High School cell phone policy for the 24-25 school year, please reach out to Luke Cleaver at lcleaver@nyssasd.org.

Taft 7-12 Middle & High School (Lincoln County School District) implemented magnetic locking pouches in the 2023-24 school year [to restrict student cell phone use](#). Their policy is [available here](#). School leadership worked hard to get input and buy-in from Taft teachers and staff, which has been crucial for enforcement. This effort has shown some promising early results, though school leaders believe it is too soon to gauge long-term benefits like improved academics or fewer disciplinary issues.

The pouches prevent physical confrontations over phones, making it easier for the school to feel like a phone-free campus. Initial strict monitoring at school entrances helps ensure compliance, though some students still manage to use phones discreetly with headphones.

Taft principal, Nick Lupo, believes middle school students have become more interactive during lunch without phones. High school students can unlock their phones during open-campus lunch, with many opting to leave phones in cars. According to Mr. Lupo, another important aspect of this effort was ensuring that [communication with parents](#) and the community was thorough, and health-related exceptions were handled individually and made a priority during initial implementation. Despite some initial resistance from students, the emphasis remains on having a phone-free school, and school leaders believe the pouches have been a good physical reminder to keep phones put away throughout the entire school day. As the school has a 1:1 Chromebook program, administration feels this is a positive step forward. For more information on cell phone policy, including information regarding the locking pouch implementation at Taft 7-12 Middle & High School, please reach out to Principal Nick Lupo at nick.lupo@lincoln.k12.or.us.

West Linn-Wilsonville School District has recently instituted a "change to electronic device expectations" they are calling *Present for Learning*. The West Linn-Wilsonville guidance follows recommendations from Awayfortheday.org, with [more policy details available here](#). West Linn-Wilsonville high schools will require all students follow the *Present for Learning* expectations, which includes no cell phones out at class time, cell phones being secured in the teachers "classroom pocket", or cell phones stored away in a student's backpack. This expectation includes classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, the cafeteria, and other common places during class time. Students can have cell phones and other mobile devices out before and after schools, during passing periods, and at lunch. Teachers can also request students to use cell phones for specific tasks.

Director of Communications for West Linn-Wilsonville School District, Andrew Kilstrom, said that, "Reports from teachers and students have been that our *Present for Learning* initiative at the high school level has been an overall success as we've grown into it this school year. Teachers and students alike have shared that it has helped to maintain focus and encourage classroom participation." The *Present for Learning* language differs between the elementary, middle, and high school levels, with more flexibility and responsibility for older students. This policy can be seen [here](#), in the district's Student Rights and Responsibilities documentation. For more information on the West Linn-Wilsonville School District *Present for Learning* policy and its implementation, please contact Andrew Kilstrom at kilstroa@wlwv.k12.or.us.