

Renton Technology Coordinating Council (RTCC)

Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2024

ATTENDING

Dr. Ellen Dorr, Dr. Stefanie McIrvin, Susan Talley, Alex Castro-Wilson, Dr. Bob Ettinger, Kristine Farwell, Mawiyah Fields, Jay Gray, Kelly Jones, Woody Sobey, and Kerrie Thornton, with special guests, Elizabeth Flavors and Reid Saaris

AGENDA

- [Welcome and Introductions](#)
- [Project Updates](#)
- [Focus for 2024-25](#)
 - [Cell Phone Policy Exploration](#)
- [Celebrations & Appreciations](#)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ellen welcomed the council and thanked them for their attendance. Since RTCC had guest participants, she provided a more in-depth framing for the work of the council. Ellen explained the purpose of RTCC is to review the district's technology plan and guide district activities related to technology. She then highlighted some of the topics the council has examined in recent years.

- **Multilingual Learner (ML) Technology Support:** A couple years ago we spent time examining how we could best support multilingual learners and whether there were technology tools that could assist in that effort. We held empathy interviews with students, and they identified that it was the teacher strategies that best supported their learning over the use of any specific technology application.
- **AI Guidance:** Last year the council reviewed the statewide [AI Guidance](#) to see how it aligned with how we were thinking about artificial intelligence and what we might want to adopt from the plan. This assessment ultimately led to a revision of the district's [Responsible Use Policy](#).
- **Student Device Selection:** Last year, we reviewed how devices are selected for students, including how those devices are assessed, compared, and whether they meet student needs.

This year, RTCC has had one meeting where we considered what topics we wanted to examine during the 2024-25 school year, and the topic that rose to the top was examining the cell phone policy. So, that is what we will start digging into tonight.

Ellen went over the agenda and asked everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name, role, and one thing they are excited about this month. See [addendum](#) for individual responses.

Core Values and Strategic Framework

Ellen grounded the meeting with a reminder that our work is in service of students: to ensure they have the resources they need for learning.

She noted that all departments in the district are working in alignment with the [District Core Values and Strategic Framework](#) and outlined how that alignment looks for Technology Services (TS).

- **Service:** providing a strong foundation
- **Excellence:** improving systems and support
- **Equity:** right support for each and every learner

Minutes Review

Ellen gave the council time to review the [October 8, 2024 Minutes](#), and asked for questions, corrections, clarifications, or additions.

Corrections

- **October 8, 2024 Minutes, Page 7:** Alex Castro-Wilson's title is listed as "5th Grade Teacher, Benson Hill Elementary & Building Technology Assistant." This title should be updated to: "Special Education Teacher at Bryn Mawr Elementary, Technology Integration Specialist, and Building Technology Assistant."

Ellen thanked Kerrie for her excellent notes.

PROJECT UPDATES

- **Front Office Digital Signage:** Installation has been completed at all school locations except for Hilltop Heritage. This installation includes a panel at the front office that displays information for students and families. Ellen received a note from Renton Academy after their installation, that they used their front office panel right away by posting October birthdays and sharing a dog video. Ellen checked in with Kelly (Assistant Principal at Hazen High School), since the digital signage for Hazen was set up in the commons vs. the front office due to spatial constraints.
 - **Kelly:** Yes, it works well there. It is a better location than the front office because more students will see the information there.
 - **Ellen** clarified that at elementary schools, the digital signage was primarily for families to get information about things going on at their children's school. In Secondary, it plays a bigger role in providing students key information for after school clubs and sports, upcoming events, and other student body activities.
- **Elementary Gym/Commons Stabilization:** TS is continuing to work with the vendor partner to get the Gym/Commons AV system stabilized in elementary schools. The TS team has collected a lot of data regarding the issues arising with this system, the primary issue being that parts of the connection are not staying connected. It is too heavy a lift on schools to have them troubleshoot the system every time an issue arises, so finding the right solution is high priority. The TS vendor partner is also helping to identify incidents that should be escalated to the product creator, as some of this instability may come down to the product itself. As a result, the second phase of this project is still on hold. While Ellen recognizes secondary schools are interested and eager to have this new equipment, the current solution is not stable enough to expand further.
 - **Kristine:** Most recently, the vendor did a round of software updates and installed a power strip to help with Bluetooth connection. They continue to do work and install solutions to hopefully address these continued challenges. We are carefully tracking the impact of these solutions to ensure we have sufficient evidence of improvement and stability.
 - **Ellen:** The good news is that when the system is working, people love it!
 - **Woody:** I go to Sartori every Tuesday, and recently their unicycle club was able to stream a video on the panel showing them unicycle techniques and it was very helpful!

FOCUS FOR 2024-25 - CELL PHONE POLICY

At the last meeting, RTCC crowdsourced some ideas for what to focus on in the 2024-25 school year. Ellen identified the three topics that the council had indicated the greatest interest for exploration.

- Cell Phone Policy
- Chromebook Equity
- Digital Citizenship

Cell Phone Policy Readings

In advance of the meeting, Ellen sent the council articles to prepare for the cell phone policy discussion. Two of the articles were required for review prior to the meeting.

- [OSPI - message from Reykdal Aug. 2024](#) - Outlines state focus, links research
- [Seattle Times - Claire Bryan Oct 13 2024](#) - Education Lab article with interviews from several students in the Puget Sound region

In addition, she asked the council to read at least one additional article from the options below.

- [Opposition in Clark County, July 2024](#) - Article, highlighting concerns with safety
- [Mercer Island School District, cell phone website](#) - District website policy: data and information
- [Gig Harbor, district cell phone policy, Oct. 2024](#) - Article, highlighting district approach
- [3 Schools, 3 Principals, 3 Cell Phone Bans](#) - Edutopia national article from July 2024

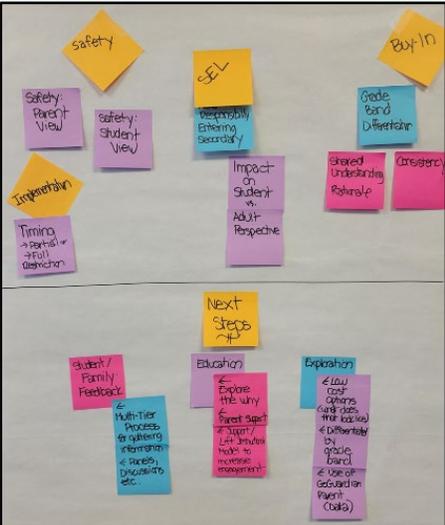
Ellen asked the council to discuss in table groups what they read and identify key takeaways from the readings on post-its. She then asked for the council to organize the post-its they wrote into categories.

After 10 minutes of discussion, Ellen brought the council back together to share their findings with the whole group. Before sharing began, she took a moment to introduce the newest member of RTCC, Mawiyah Fields, who had arrived during group discussion. Mawiyah is one of the assistant principals at Nelson Middle School. Ellen turned the floor over to Mawiyah to share a little bit about herself and her interest in RTCC.

- **Mawiyah Fields, Assistant Principal, Nelsen Middle School**

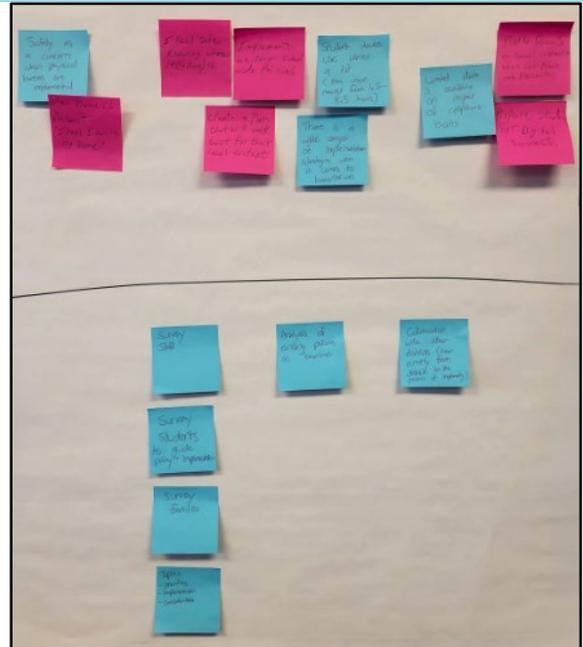
I come from a Career & Technical Education (CTE) background. That was my introduction to teaching in the classroom. I had a lot of systems in place to manage technology and I think that is a big part of building digital citizenship. I am a parent as well as an administrator, so I understand the challenges of managing technology from multiple perspectives. I am also a first-year educational doctorate, so being a part of this council will serve as part of my learning.

Ellen asked the council to introduce themselves by sharing their name and title. After the introductions were complete, Ellen invited table groups to share what they had discussed.

Discussion	Poster
<p>Group 1: Presented by Kerrie Thornton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety: We read multiple perspectives regarding ensuring safety, from both a parent and student standpoint. • Social-Emotional Learning: We discussed how cell phones are a new responsibility for many students entering secondary and the impact of cell phone use on students. • Student/Teacher Buy-In: We noted that there were different needs by grade bands, but that a consistent policy between schools was ideal, as well as a shared understanding of the rationale for a policy to exist. • Implementation: There were different types of implementations to consider including time restrictive and full restriction policies. 	

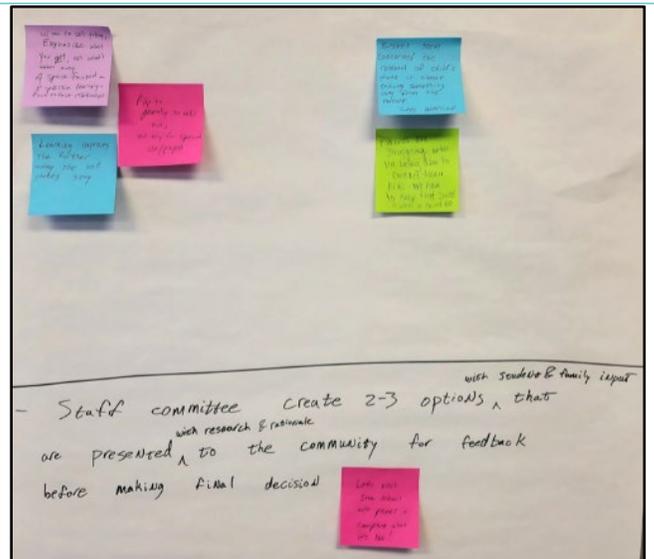
Group 2: Presented by Kristine Farwell

- **Safety:** We also listed safety as a primary category. In specific, physical safety and concerns about communication with parents under circumstances where physical safety is threatened. We also talked about the mental-emotional safety of cell phones discussed in the articles, such as students feeling safer when they have phones with them, the safety of having access to online communities, and using phones as tools to stay focused.
- **Implementation:** There are a lot of things to consider in implementing a policy. One recommendation made was implementing a uniform school-wide policy and making sure you are creating a plan that will work best for your local context. There were a wide range of implementation strategies from fully locking the device away to just keeping the phones in backpacks. We also noticed that student device use varied significantly.
- **Impact / Goal Outcomes:** One thing that was noted in one of the articles is there is limited data available on the impact of cell phone restriction. There was data mentioned regarding social media, but in terms of impacts of cell phone policies specifically, that seems to be a newer area. There are some benefits to cell phone restriction mentioned, like increased social interaction between students, but on the flipside, it affects the digital social interaction. The goal overall in many of the readings was that whatever action is taken, it prepares students for digital success.



Group 3: Presented by Woody Sobey

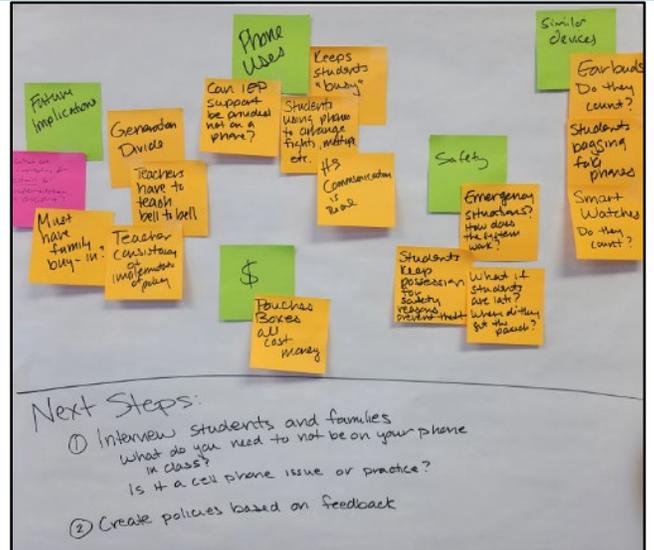
- **Perspective:** Whatever policy we go with, our group was talking about how we want to focus on what students get vs. what they lose. This would include a change in mentality about the general rule. Instead of the focus being on the times cell phone use is restricted, we talk about the special times when cell phone use is appropriate, like sending a message to parents or taking a photo of their work to share and celebrate their learning.
- **Observation:** Visit schools that already have a cell phone ban in place and see how they are managing it.
- **Location of device:** Research suggests that learning improves the further away the cell phone is from the student (i.e., in their pocket vs. backpack vs. on the door vs. at home, etc.)
- **Safety:** One of the biggest concerns we saw is



parents struggling with the idea that they won't have immediate access to their kids in case of emergency. It seems like a situation of loss-aversion; a concern that we are taking something away, even if it is not something they really use. So, some techniques for overcoming loss-aversion would be helpful.

Group 4: Presented by Kelly Jones

- **Safety:** Parents being able to access their students and students being able to contact parents during emergency situations.
- **Similar devices:** There are other devices to consider like smart watches and air pods that are all part of this discussion.
- **Cost:** Some of the methods for these policies will cost a lot of money and others are virtually free.
- **Real Uses of Phones:** Consider how phones are used by students in school. For example, most high schoolers have a phone, and they have real need for them during their day, but they also use them to do things that are inappropriate. Some students use them for IEP support. In some cases, cell phones are a means to keep students busy. This is something to note for future implications. In classrooms where teachers have good policies and are truly teaching bell-to-bell, this isn't really an issue. However, in classrooms where teachers do not have strong policies and do not teach bell-to-bell, students are more likely to have their devices out. I think under those circumstances, teachers are less likely to fight cell phone use because it keeps the students from acting out; it keeps them passive and, in the room, but not engaged in learning.
- **Other Implications:** The family buy-in must be there for this to be successful. Also, in looking at steps for intervention laid out by some districts, it really makes me think about the inconsistencies across classrooms in terms of how well the policy would be implemented and enforced.
 - **Ellen:** One thing I noticed in looking at some of the intervention steps we saw from other districts, is that they are very robust. They have a clearly outlined plan, but how easy would it be to put in place?
- **Generation Divide:** Most teachers/admin/staff are coming from a place where it is easier to put our phones away. Kids are from a different generation and have a different relationship to their phone.



Additional Discussion:

- **Mawiyah:** I just want to highlight one thing that I noticed in reading the student perspective portion: the majority of the students acquired their cell phones once they entered middle school. That is something to keep in mind. It is new technology and a new responsibility for them.
- **Ellen:** One thing I saw in the Tech Directors listserv is the issue of Smart Glasses. They are prescription glasses and have to be worn, so what do you do in situations like that? What continues to resonate though, as we discuss these things, is that technology is not inherently bad or good. It is how we use it that matters.

Cell Phone Policy Exploration

The [Office of Educational Technology](#) (OET) recently put out a [Playbook for Student Personal Device Policies](#). Ellen and Bob reviewed this resource and brought an excerpt to share with the council, to help them think about next steps.

Ellen noted that whatever policy we come up with should meet established success criteria. She asked the council to review the criteria listed below and determine if anything should be changed or added.

Success Criteria

- Focus on student learning
- Limit distractions and helping students focus
- Support safety and security needs
- Easy to understand and implement
- Little to no budget impact

Success Criteria Discussion

- **Mawiyah:** Could you elaborate on what is meant by bullet 3 (*Support safety and security needs*)?
 - **Ellen:** The policy put into place should not impact students' psychological safety, or relational safety with family. We also wouldn't want anything in place that becomes problematic in an emergency situation, such as needing to evacuate and not having access to cell phones during reunification. Additionally, in the [I Love U Guys](#) protocol, I believe there are a couple of action states where there is a directive to have students text their families to say they are safe. We don't want a policy that does not allow for these directives to be carried out.
- **Kelly:** There is also the issue of device security. For example, a phone collected by the teacher becomes damaged or lost while in their care.
 - **Ellen:** Yes, there is risk of devices going missing or becoming damaged depending on how they are collected, and that is something we would want to take into consideration.
- **Bob:** One thing I am thinking about in terms of the second bullet (*limit distractions and helping students focus*), is that we also want to meet student needs for communication and connection. I wonder if maybe it could be: "Balance limiting distractions and helping students focus." I also wonder if we need to add sub-bullets to bullet 4 (*Easy to understand and implement*). Like, who is this for: admin, teachers, students?
 - **Ellen:** I appreciate that, especially the part you mentioned about "balance." When cell phone restrictions were being implemented at Nelsen, the ML students voiced that the translation tools on their cell phones work better than the tools they had available on a Chromebook, and they needed access to those tools. So, some adjustments needed to be made to meet that need. So, yes. It is important to continually think about balance. In terms of it being easy to understand and implement, we would want that to be true at all levels.

Process

Ellen cited the following process for our cell phone policy exploration:

- Research and reading
- Defining the problem and scope of solution
- Input and feedback
- Goal: Create a proposal for the District Instructional Leadership Team (DILT) and other school administrator review

Cell Phone Policy Collaboration

Ellen provided the council with the one-page excerpt from the OET playbook, which included some considerations to think about as we determine next steps. She asked the council to review the document and place their ideas for next steps on their poster.

Ellen identified things she heard from table group conversations and asked the council to demonstrate (with a raise of hands) how common those ideas were among the full group.

- Gather input from students and families
- Gather input from staff
- Identify clear purpose and rationale
- Review policies from neighboring districts

She asked if there was anything else people thought of:

- **Kerrie:** In alignment with rationale, our group also talked about education. In some of the articles they mentioned holding sessions for students about the effects of cell phones on student learning and experience. We also talked about providing support for families on managing cell phone use.
 - **Ellen:** I think when it comes to this work, we first need to identify the “why” and the “how,” and then we can start outlining the “what” aspect (what kinds of education and support is needed).
- **Ellen:** I also heard from table groups the point about consistency. As we have already heard in discussion today, even if we implement a school-wide policy, how it plays out in each classroom will look different. This is something that came up during our exploration of GoGuardian Teacher as well. We talked about how the impact of the tool could vary based on the classroom environment. For those who had good relationships with students, using a tool like GoGuardian Teacher could enhance the classroom experience. For those who struggled with student relationships and used GoGuardian Teacher in a punishing way, it would not have a positive outcome. So, this is something we need to be aware of as we think about our policy.
- **Bob:** The other thing our group talked about is prototyping possible solutions. Part of where I feel stuck in these conversations is understanding what the potential solutions are once, we have that feedback from our stakeholders.
 - **Ellen:** That is why I think the one-pager is helpful, because it outlines different solutions based on different considerations. I think one of the biggest considerations they call out on this document is students with diverse needs. I think that is one we really need to keep at the forefront so that we are not stigmatizing students.

Ellen shared that the council would continue working on the cell phone policy in the next meeting. Between meetings, her team would work on putting together diverse methods of gathering input from students, families, and staff. In addition, they will start building resources and tools that RTCC can use to inform decision making. Ellen opened the floor for any other thoughts or questions before closing the meeting.

- **Susan:** Looking at the student questions from the articles, maybe we could consider driving the questions with more specificity, instead of just asking what their phones mean to them.
 - **Ellen:** I want to make sure we focus on student learning. I think what happened in some of the national conversation around cell phone policy is that people are seeing this data around anxious generation and

feel compelled to address all the ills of social media and all the distractions of cell phone use. Our goal is to narrow that focus into what we can do to support student learning. So, we would aim to keep our questions close to that center focus, such as: “What might you need to use your phone for in class?”

- **Susan:** Or maybe: “What keeps you off your phone in class?”
- **Reid:** We have the importance of leadership and helping to marshal a sense of what is possible. The status quo when you talk to kids about their cell phone is that they would want to keep it on them. However, last year when I was in the classroom, we moved to a phone free environment and by the end of the year those same students would say they would never give up the experience they had without their cell phones. So, part of this work could be how we help students imagine those possibilities by hearing from kids who are in phone free environments.
 - **Ellen:** That brings up the idea we were talking about earlier. At Kelly’s school, they have implemented a “no cell bell-to-bell” policy, and how it is being implemented in classrooms is very different. The success is based on the skill and strength of the teacher. How do we support everyone in getting to that place where they can implement it in a way that supports students? This is where it becomes more challenging, because while there may be really positive experiences, there will also be situations where a phone free classroom is not a good learning environment for students.
 - **Reid:** Just suggesting that in the process we create some visibility on what it could look like.

CELEBRATIONS

Before closing the meeting, Ellen opened the floor to celebrations and appreciations. She started with sharing her gratitude for Kerrie’s return from leave.

- **Ellen:** Thank you to Kerrie for coming back and being ready to do this work again! I also appreciate our guests coming into this new environment and for everyone sharing so openly.
- **Elizabeth:** Thank you for welcoming me in this space and discussion. It is really benefiting my learning and helping me to determine what role I want to take to support Seattle with this process. I also appreciate my table group; they are wonderful.
- **Ellen:** Thank you for joining us for your first RTCC meeting, Mawiyah.
- **Mawiyah:** Thank you for welcoming me! And thank you to my table group for your ideas and for making connections.
- **Stefanie:** It has been a while since I have been able to be here at RTCC. Thank you for this experience! And thank you to those of you working on higher degrees.
- **Susan:** I really like being here. I joined RTCC once, and I haven’t left. I appreciate this experience.

MEETING ADJOURNED

5:51pm

ADDENDUM

Dr. Ellen Dorr, *Chief of Technology & Strategic Initiatives*

I am excited to start digging into the cell phone policy. I think our exploration together will be interesting and fruitful.

Dr. Stefanie McIrvin, *President, Board of Directors*

I am excited to see my family in Spokane for the holiday.

Alex Castro, *Special Education Teacher at Bryn Mawr Elementary, Technology Integration Specialist, and Building Technology Assistant*

I am looking forward to doing some fun things with my students this month. A big part of my job is goal setting with students, so I like to weave in the things going on in the school environment (like the winter theme) into the work we do in our program. I am also excited because I will be collaborating with our Teacher Academy students on those projects.

Dr. Bob Ettinger, *Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

I am excited to do a lot of baking in the next couple weeks.

Kristine Farwell, *Customer Service Director*

I am excited for the break, but I am also excited about a new process we have just put into place for managing device repairs. I have already seen some good impacts with the full adoption of the policy. So, I am excited to see us build upon that and have better data around our device repairs.

Jay Gray, *Infrastructure Director*

I am excited about the upcoming break.

Kelly Jones, *Assistant Principal, Hazen High School*

This weekend my oldest son is graduating from college! I am excited about that! We are going up to Western to celebrate him.

Woody Sobey, *Career and Technical Education STEM Facilitator*

One thing I am excited about is hosting my first 5K. I know there are a lot of runners in this room, and anyone can sign up. It is going to be a painful mistake of a 5K. If that doesn't sell it to you, there is nothing more I can do.

Susan Talley, *Board of Directors*

I am excited for the two-week vacation so I can get away from Woody's daughter (joke).

Kerrie Thornton, *Information and Communications Specialist*

I am excited to get a new pair of glasses this month.

Elizabeth Flavors, *Principal at Hawthorne Elementary (Seattle Public Schools) and Doctoral Intern with Dr. Pattenaude*

One thing I am excited about this month is the upcoming two-week break.

Reid Saaris, *RSD Parent, Behavioral Health at Children's Alliance, and Superintendent Intern with Dr. Pattenaude*

One thing I am excited about is working on the Governor Elect's Transition Committee. We are in the process of putting together policy on things like cell phones.