



**Saint Paul**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# **First Reading Discussion: Board Policy 550: Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Devices**

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Committee of the Board  
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# Objectives

- Process the community feedback
- Focused discussion and guidance from the board regarding the policy
- Share timeline and next steps

# Cell Phone Policy Work Group

- School Board Director Carlo Franco
- Assistant Superintendents Nancy Páez and Adam Kunz
- Principals Jamil Payton (HS), Shandyn Benson (ALC), Jocelyn Sims (MS) and Lauren Bolopue (Elementary)
- Teachers Dan Perelstein (HS), Libby Arnosti (HS), Molly Brown (MS)
- Health and Wellness Director Becky Schmidt
- School Support Director Kathy Kimani and College and Career Readiness Assistant Director Beth Coleman
- Communications Director Erica Wacker
- Cora and Samia (Students)
- Schools and Learning Director Jodi Danielson
- Project Manager Maria Vincent

# Community Feedback

# Summary of Survey Data

- High response rate
- Students prefer less restrictive practices, staff and parents prefer more restrictive practices
- Staff report higher rates of distraction than students
- Staff report higher rates of addressing cell phone use in less restrictive settings
- Policy preferences lean towards more restrictive at earlier grades and less restrictive at higher grades

Reference: [12/19/24 Board Book](#), beginning on page 129-138

# Parent Advisory Councils' Recommendations

- Should be clear and consistent
- Should be equitably enforced
- Do not want to result in increased suspensions or exclusion
- Would like it tiered and accounting for unique programs
- Should be explicit about all devices
- Want to balance the needs of learning and instruction with parent concerns about safety and communication

*“I agree to not have cellphones in the classroom, but I think about emergency situations when they don't have access to the phone and something is happening in the school, how am I going to hear from my kids?” - Parent*

# Student Roundtable: How Cell Phones Impact Students

## Adds:

- Useful for academic tasks
- Mental breaks
- Quick tasks
- Listening to music

## Takes Away:

- Creates distractions
- Missing important information
- Creates disengagement

# Reflection

What does the data suggest?

What are the implications for a cell phone policy?



# Policy Recommendations

# Policy 550 Overview: Introduction

Community Feedback		Where it Shows Up in the Policy
Rationale is included in the policy	⇒	Includes purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Research (<i>I.A.</i>)</li><li>● Values (<i>I.B.</i>)</li></ul>
Policy expands definitions beyond cell phones to include a range of personal electronic devices	⇒	Definitions section includes all personal electronic devices as well as a definition of “use” ( <i>II.</i> )

# Policy 550 Overview: Additional Elements

Community Feedback		How it Shows Up in the Policy
Consequences should be tiered, non-exclusionary, and consistently applied	⇒	Consequences for violations of this policy: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Cannot be exclusionary.</li><li>2. Should be tiered.</li><li>3. Should be consistently applied. <b>(III.D.)</b></li></ol>
Families have a responsibility as well	⇒	Asked to limit calling/texting students to minimize disruptions <b>(III.F.)</b>
School staff should follow the spirit of the policy	⇒	School staff should follow the intent of the policy <b>(III.G.)</b>

# Policy 550 Overview: Additional Elements

Community Feedback		How it Shows Up in the Policy
Needs to allow exceptions based on individual needs	⇒	Medical, IEP, <b>students who are parents</b> , volunteer firefighter, and emergency medical services exceptions <b>(III.H.)</b>
Needs to account for emergency situations	⇒	During emergency situations, use of personal electronic devices must follow the School Emergency Operations Plan. <b>(III.H.4.)</b>
Need alternative ways for parents to reach students	⇒	Students and families will have an alternative method of leaving messages, defined by the school. <b>(IV.B.)</b>
Communication to stakeholders about the policy is needed	⇒	Notification of policy built into Rights and Responsibilities and schools communicate annually <b>(IV.)</b>

# Policy 550 Overview: Additional Elements

- Not responsible for theft or loss (*III.C.*)
- Cannot engage in prohibited conduct; devices may be searched if relevant (*III.E.*)
- Implementation begins September 2, 2025 (*V.*)

# Policy 550 Overview: Core Element

Community Feedback		How it Shows Up in the Policy
Accounts for unique programs	⇒	Special education transition programs allows cell phone use to support independent travel and employer communication ( <b>III.B.</b> )

# Policy 550 Overview: Core Element

Community Feedback		How it Shows Up in the Policy
Allows for staff and student voice	⇒	<p>Not allowed during school hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Schools with grades 9+ (e.g. 6-12, 9-12, 12+) can develop a documented plan with a team of school stakeholders to allow use before and after school, at passing time, and/or during lunch<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ E.g. principal, staff, students, and/or parents <b>(III.A.)</b></li></ul></li></ul>
Empowers students		
Includes supporting students in learning responsible management of devices		

# Discussion

Based upon the community feedback shared, do you support the language as written in section 3.A.1.?

If not, what changes would you suggest?

- See entire proposed policy [here](#).



# Next Steps

- 2 student and 3 staff focus groups this week and next to understand how the policy looks like in practice (Jan 9-15)
- Second reading at January 21 Board of Education meeting
- Third reading at February 18 Board of Education meeting
- Create an implementation plan (February-March)
  - Support for schools to plan and adapt practices as needed (Spring)
  - Modify Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (Spring)

# Discussion and Questions