



**Saint Paul**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

Jodi Danielson, Director, Schools & Learning  
Board of Education  
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# Overview

- Policy discussion, including:
  - Rationale
  - 6-12 principal perspective
- Implementation
  - Staff and student focus groups feedback
  - Initial implementation plan
- Questions and Discussion

# Rationale for Policy

1. MN legislature made a law in spring 2024 that all school districts must have a district policy regarding cell phones
2. To minimize the impact of cell phones and personal electronic devices on:
  - a. Academic performance
  - b. Mental health
  - c. Learning environments
  - d. Effective teaching

# 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> )

# 6-12 Principals

**Leading recommendation:** Consistent practices within schools that serve grades 6-12 (Creative Arts, Humboldt, OWL) are necessary.

## Why?

- Grade levels are integrated by design
- Simple and clear is best for students and staff
- Common messaging to families within the school

# 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><li>○ <b>Must be reviewed annually</b></li></ul></li></ul>
Empowers students		
Includes supporting students in learning responsible management of devices		

# 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 ( <i>III.B.</i> )

# Policy 550 Overview: Additional Elements

Community Feedback		How it Shows Up in the Policy
Consequences should be tiered, non-exclusionary and consistently applied		<p>Preventative, educational, restorative approach with clear and consistent expectations.</p> <p>Consequences for violations of this policy:</p>
Responses should include positive interventions	⇒	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Cannot be exclusionary</li><li>2. Should <b>teach the expected behavior, repair harm, and use appropriate least severe disciplinary response</b></li><li>3. Should be consistently applied <b>(III.D.)</b></li></ol>



# Policy 550 Overview: Additional Elements

Community Feedback		How it Shows Up in the Policy
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, students who are parents, 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.*)

# January Focus Groups

# Staff Feedback on Successful Implementation

- Administrative backing is critical
- Consistent implementation by all staff is important to develop routines and habits, especially in the first months
- Need to ensure new staff, subs and partners know the expectations
- Need plans to mitigate barriers (e.g. facilitating student/parent communication)
- Student use of iPads to disengage is still a challenge
- Understanding which students are allowed exceptions will be important
- Some staff have an interest in tools to hold phones, others do not want to manage them

# Student Focus Group Feedback

- Valued:
  - Having clear rules has reduced phone issues
  - Grades improve when using phone less in class
  - Time away from the screen
  - Increased attention
  - Interacting with peers face-to-face and getting to know classmates
- Were worried about:
  - Communicating with parents, rides, etc.
  - Limits on iPads
  - Relationships with staff when phones are a source of conflict
  - The real issue is less about phones and more about mental health

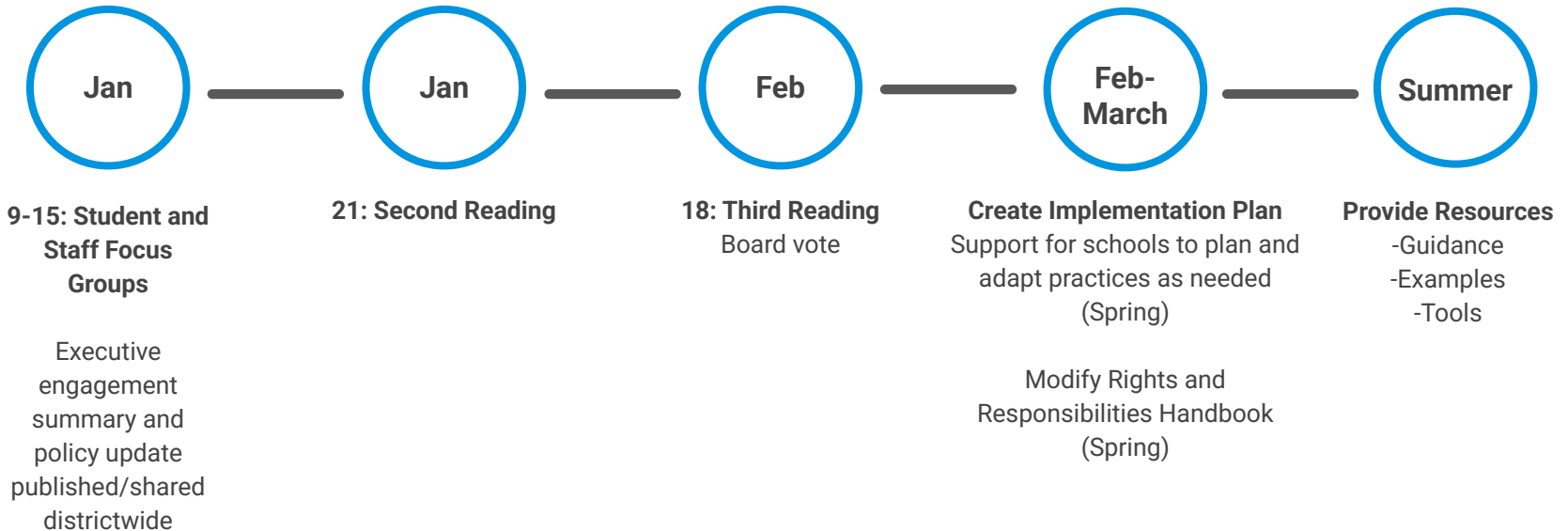
# Student Focus Group Feedback, cont.

- Suggestions for implementation:
  - Respect and patience are important
  - Consistent rules across classrooms
  - Needs to be consistently enforced with all students in order to be fair
  - Need to be more clear about what it means to have a phone in class
  - Staff need to model expected behaviors
  - Find positive ways to frame the policy (e.g. a teacher let students not have to take notes if 100% of the class had their phones put away)

# Support and Implementation



# Timeline



# Questions?