



Expect
More.

Cell Phone Policy Feedback

*Presented to the School Board
Jan. 21, 2025*



New Legislation

School cell phone policy:

Requires districts and charter schools to adopt a policy on students' possession and use of cellphones in school by March 15, 2025.





Our district is considering a phone-free policy as a way to prioritize students' academic success and emotional well-being.

Why a Phone-Free Policy?

- Improved student mental health
- Fewer distractions
- Less cyberbullying
- Fewer fights and social media related drama
- Increased engagement in class
- Improved attendance
- Improved teacher morale and retention
- Less mid-class absenteeism
- More face-to-face conversations
- Less cheating
- Less reported stress among students

Source: Phone-Free Schools Administrator Toolkit



Community Input on Phone Policy

3,970
respondents
shared their
feedback

Data collected Nov. 27 - Dec. 21, 2024

- **Student survey:**
2,918 students (*grades 6-12*)
- **Staff survey:**
513 staff districtwide
- **Online ThoughtExchange:**
433 parents and 106 “other”
community members





Engagement Summary

Families & Community ThoughtExchange



Families & Community

Participants were asked:

“What are the most critical things we should consider when drafting a student cell phone use policy for our school district?”

Making a policy that is clear to students and implemented consistently among staff It could be confusing to students if not all teachers are consistent

4.5 ★★★★★ (30 👤)

Ranked #1 of 510

If they take away cellphones during the day the district must be consistent If enforcement is not across the board, the policy is worthless

4.4 ★★★★★ (29 👤)

Ranked #2 of 510

Smart phones are distracting when in a learning environment and can be used for inappropriate behavior like cheating or bullying, etc. Teachers and staff should not have to police the use of phones. They have enough on their plate and this should not be one of them.

4.4 ★★★★★ (28 👤)

Ranked #3 of 510



Families & Community: Critical Things To Consider

- Emergency communication
- Distraction concerns
- Consistent enforcement
- Mental health
- Social skills
- Parental involvement
- Educational focus
- Policy clarity
- Technology alternatives
- Digital citizenship



Families & Community

Balancing Safety and Distraction

Side A

Safety and Communication

Many parents and some educators emphasize the importance of students having access to their cell phones for safety reasons, such as emergencies, school shootings, and medical conditions. They argue that cell phones provide a direct line of communication between parents and children, which is crucial in urgent situations.

Common ground

Controlled Access

A common ground between the two sides is the idea of controlled access to cell phones. This could involve allowing students to have their phones in lockers or designated areas, with limited access during the school day for emergencies or specific times. This approach aims to balance safety concerns with the need to minimize distractions.

Side B

Distraction and Mental Health

Others argue that cell phones are a significant distraction in the classroom, leading to decreased academic performance and social interaction. They highlight the negative impact of constant phone use on students' mental health, attention spans, and ability to engage in face-to-face interactions.



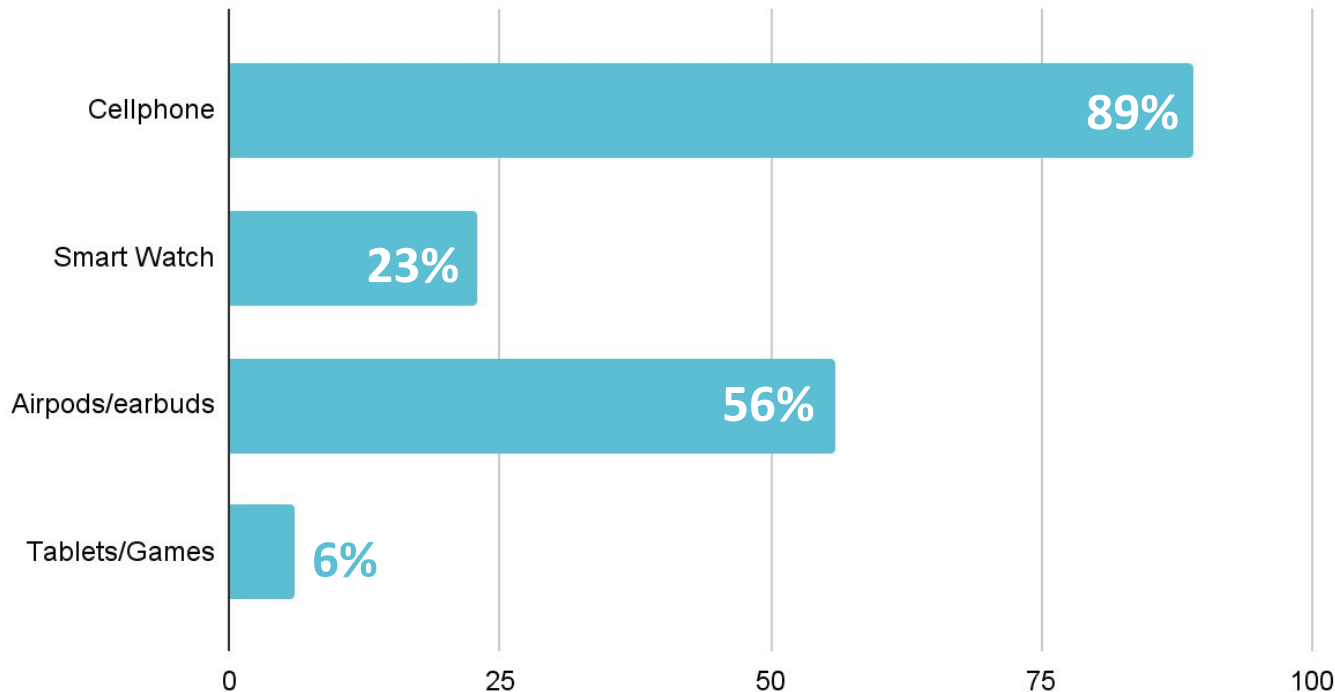
Engagement Summary

Students (Grades 6-12) Survey



Students Grades 6-12

Percent of students who bring the following devices to school “every day” or “most days”





Students Grades 6-12

Percent of students who use devices **“very often,” “often” or “occasionally”**:

For educational purposes during class	25%
For personal use during class	38%
Between classes and during lunch	60%



Students Grades 6-12

How do teachers currently manage the use of phones and personal devices in their classroom?

	Collected at start of class and returned at the end	Kept in a designated area in the classroom	Kept in backpacks or out of sight during class	Allow limited use for learning activities.	Students are free to use devices in my class.	Other
Oak-Land Middle School	6.6% (57)	3.0% (26)	61.7% (531)	7.1% (61)	2.8% (24)	18.7% (161)
Stillwater Middle School	2.4% (17)	1.8% (13)	69.0% (496)	18.2% (131)	2.9% (21)	5.7% (41)
Stillwater Area High School	18.4% (732)	29.0% (1157)	26.7% (1067)	19.6% (783)	4.8% (190)	1.5% (60)
St. Croix Valley Area Learning...	<5*	<5*	57.1% (28)	28.6% (14)	<5*	<5*
Bridge Transition	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Other	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Total	14.4% (809)	21.3% (1200)	37.8% (2125)	17.6% (992)	4.2% (237)	4.7% (265)

*Answers with less than 5 responses are hidden to protect anonymity.





Students Grades 6-12

Open ended: How do teachers currently manage cell phones and devices?

- Locker storage
- Teacher dependent
- Confiscation
- Limited use
- Smartwatch allowance
- AirPods/earbuds allowance
- Classroom phone pocket storage system
- Emergency use
- Inconsistent enforcement



Students Grades 6-12

Why do you use your phone during the school day? (select all that apply)

Communicate with my family	74%
Communicate with friends	55%
Listen to music	53%
Scroll social media	31%
Other	15%
Utilize features like speech-to-text, screen reader, translation apps	8%
I don't have a phone/device at school	8%
Manage a medical device/app	6%



Students Grades 6-12

About how much time do you think you spend on social media each day?

	More than 4 hours	2-4 hours	1-2 hours	Less than 1 hour	I'm not on social media
Oak-Land Middle School	18.3% (121)	29.2% (193)	27.3% (180)	8.6% (57)	16.5% (109)
Stillwater Middle School	10.5% (55)	26.9% (141)	22.1% (116)	15.6% (82)	25.0% (131)
Stillwater Area High School	12.8% (196)	34.3% (524)	35.1% (537)	12.4% (190)	5.4% (82)
St. Croix Valley Area Learning...	21.2% (7)	51.5% (17)	21.2% (7)	<5*	<5*
Bridge Transition	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Other	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Total	13.8% (380)	31.8% (876)	30.6% (842)	12.0% (331)	11.7% (323)

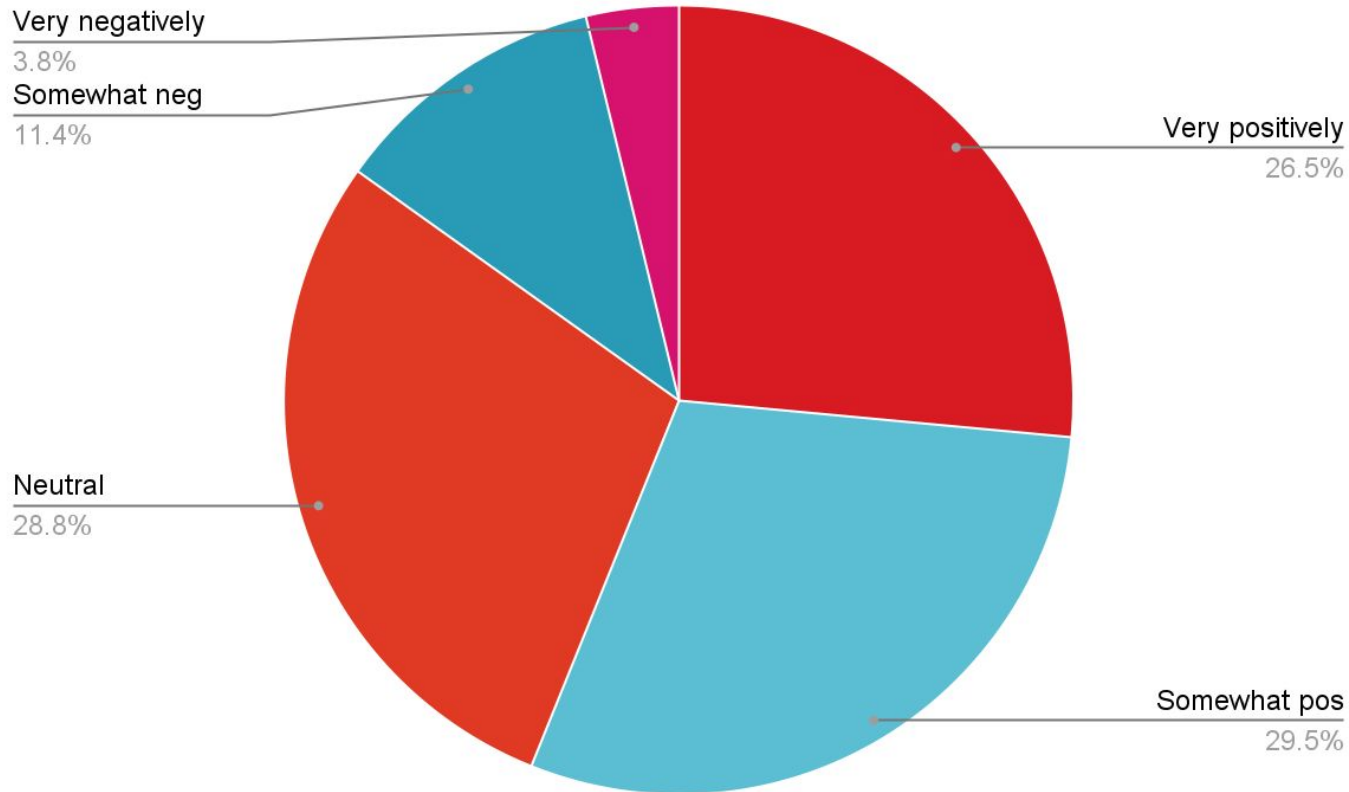
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Students Grades 6-12

How do you
think
cellphones
and social
media
affects your
mental
health?





Students Grades 6-12: Critical Things To Consider

- Emergency communication/safety concerns
- Family contact
- Medical needs
- Mental health
- Academic use
- Music and focus
- Policy enforcement
- Personal responsibility
- Social interaction



Students Grades 6-12

Balancing Phone Use in Schools

Side A

Allow Limited Use

Many students believe that cell phones should be allowed in school but with limitations. They argue that phones are essential for communication with family, especially in emergencies, and can be used for educational purposes. They suggest policies where phones are kept in lockers or specific spots in the classroom and only used when necessary.

Common ground

Emergency Communication

Both sides agree on the importance of having access to phones in case of emergencies. Whether advocating for limited use or complete restriction, there is a consensus that students should be able to contact their families during urgent situations. This common ground can help in drafting a balanced policy that addresses safety concerns.

Side B

Restrict Use Completely

Some responses advocate for a stricter policy where cell phones are completely restricted during school hours. They argue that phones are a major distraction, can be used for cheating, and disrupt the learning environment. They suggest collecting phones at the beginning of the day or class and returning them at the end.



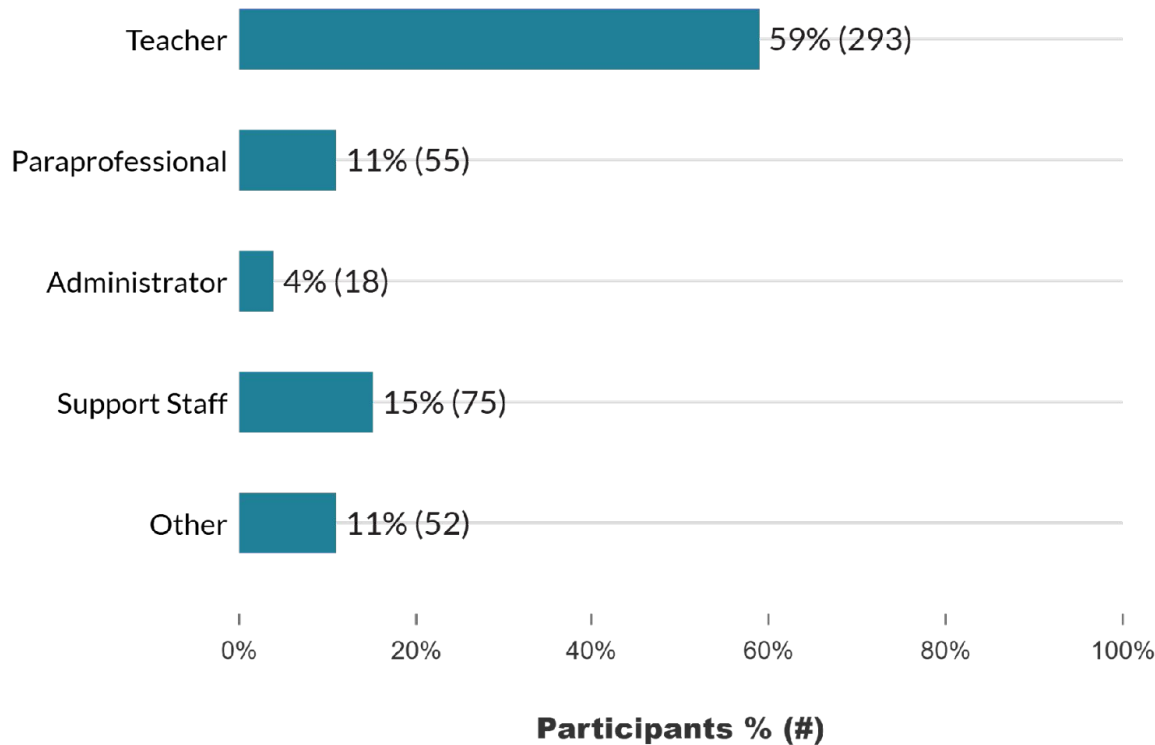
Engagement Summary

School Staff: Phone-Free Policy Survey



School Staff

What is
your role?





School Staff

How do you currently manage the use of phones and personal devices in your classroom?

	Collected at start of class and returned at the end	Kept in a designated area in the classroom	Kept in backpacks or out of sight during class	Allow limited use for learning activities.	Students are free to use devices in my class.	Other
Afton-Lakeland	<5*	<5*	53.3% (8)	<5*	<5*	46.7% (7)
Andersen	<5*	<5*	63.6% (7)	<5*	<5*	<5*
Brookview	36.8% (7)	<5*	26.3% (5)	<5*	<5*	36.8% (7)
Lake Elmo	<5*	<5*	54.2% (13)	<5*	<5*	41.7% (10)
Lily Lake	<5*	<5*	63.6% (7)	<5*	<5*	<5*
Rutherford	<5*	<5*	44.4% (8)	<5*	<5*	55.6% (10)
Stonebridge	<5*	<5*	60.0% (6)	<5*	<5*	<5*
Oak-Land Middle School	<5*	<5*	48.5% (16)	<5*	<5*	48.5% (16)
Stillwater Middle School	<5*	<5*	86.8% (33)	<5*	<5*	<5*
Stillwater Area High School	19.5% (17)	35.6% (31)	19.5% (17)	11.5% (10)	<5*	13.8% (12)
St. Croix Valley Area Learning...	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Bridge Transition	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Early Childhood Family Center	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	100.0% (8)
Other	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Total	8.8% (25)	12.0% (34)	43.5% (123)	4.9% (14)	0.7% (2)	30.0% (85)

*Answers with less than 5 responses are hidden to protect anonymity.



School Staff

Examples of how phones/personal devices are used for instructional purposes:

- Photography
- Video recording
- Calculators
- QR codes
- Kahoot and games
- Translation
- Music and audio
- Emergency use
- Personal computers

69% of teachers say they never have students utilize personal devices for instructional purposes during a typical class



School Staff

How often do
you observe
students utilizing
devices between
classes and
during lunch

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Afton-Lakeland	<5*	<5*	26.1% (6)	43.5% (10)	30.4% (7)
Andersen	<5*	<5*	<5*	35.7% (5)	42.9% (6)
Brookview	<5*	<5*	<5*	30.4% (7)	43.5% (10)
Lake Elmo	<5*	<5*	22.6% (7)	38.7% (12)	32.3% (10)
Lily Lake	<5*	<5*	<5*	57.9% (11)	36.8% (7)
Rutherford	<5*	<5*	17.9% (5)	17.9% (5)	60.7% (17)
Stonebridge	<5*	<5*	<5*	45.0% (9)	40.0% (8)
Oak-Land Middle School	40.8% (20)	28.6% (14)	16.3% (8)	12.2% (6)	<5*
Stillwater Middle School	25.5% (13)	25.5% (13)	27.5% (14)	15.7% (8)	<5*
Stillwater Area High School	93.0% (119)	4.7% (6)	<5*	<5*	<5*
St. Croix Valley Area Learning...	85.7% (6)	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Bridge Transition	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Early Childhood Family Center	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	90.9% (10)
Other	43.8% (7)	37.5% (6)	<5*	<5*	<5*
Total	40.1% (171)	10.8% (46)	12.9% (55)	17.4% (74)	18.8% (80)

*Answers with less than 5 responses are hidden to protect anonymity.



School Staff

“I spend a disproportionate amount of time policing phones”

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Afton-Lakeland	37.5% (9)	37.5% (9)	20.8% (5)	<5*	<5*
Andersen	50.0% (7)	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Brookview	34.6% (9)	19.2% (5)	26.9% (7)	19.2% (5)	<5*
Lake Elmo	51.5% (17)	21.2% (7)	<5*	<5*	<5*
Lily Lake	35.0% (7)	30.0% (6)	30.0% (6)	<5*	<5*
Rutherford	53.6% (15)	17.9% (5)	25.0% (7)	<5*	<5*
Stonebridge	50.0% (10)	30.0% (6)	<5*	<5*	<5*
Oak-Land Middle School	18.4% (9)	28.6% (14)	16.3% (8)	34.7% (17)	<5*
Stillwater Middle School	<5*	29.4% (15)	23.5% (12)	31.4% (16)	<5*
Stillwater Area High School	6.2% (8)	15.5% (20)	21.7% (28)	34.9% (45)	21.7% (28)
St. Croix Valley Area Learning...	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	71.4% (5)
Bridge Transition	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Early Childhood Family Center	66.7% (8)	<5*	<5*	<5*	<5*
Other	<5*	<5*	68.4% (13)	<5*	<5*
Total	24.0% (105)	21.9% (96)	23.1% (101)	21.9% (96)	9.1% (40)

*Answers with less than 5 responses are hidden to protect anonymity.



School Staff: Critical Things To Consider

- Implementation challenges
- Student distraction
- Mental health
- Safety concerns
- Consistency across schools
- Parental communication
- Technology alternatives
- Teacher support
- Age considerations
- Educational impact



School Staff

Balancing Cell Phone Policies

Side A

Strict Ban Advocates

Advocates for a strict ban on cell phones argue that phones are a major distraction in the classroom, negatively impacting students' learning and social skills. They believe that a complete ban would help create a focused learning environment and reduce the mental health issues associated with social media. They emphasize the need for a clear, enforceable policy that is supported by both teachers and administrators.

Common ground

Clear and Consistent Enforcement

Both sides agree on the importance of having a clear and consistently enforced cell phone policy. They emphasize the need for all staff to be on the same page and for the policy to be communicated effectively to students and parents. Consistent enforcement is seen as crucial to the success of any cell phone policy, regardless of its strictness or flexibility.

Side B

Flexible Use Supporters

Supporters of flexible cell phone use policies argue that phones can be beneficial for educational purposes and emergency situations. They believe that students should be allowed to use their phones during non-instructional times, such as lunch or passing periods. They emphasize the importance of teaching responsible phone use and ensuring that policies are not overly punitive or restrictive.



Comparison Across Groups



Comparison Across Groups

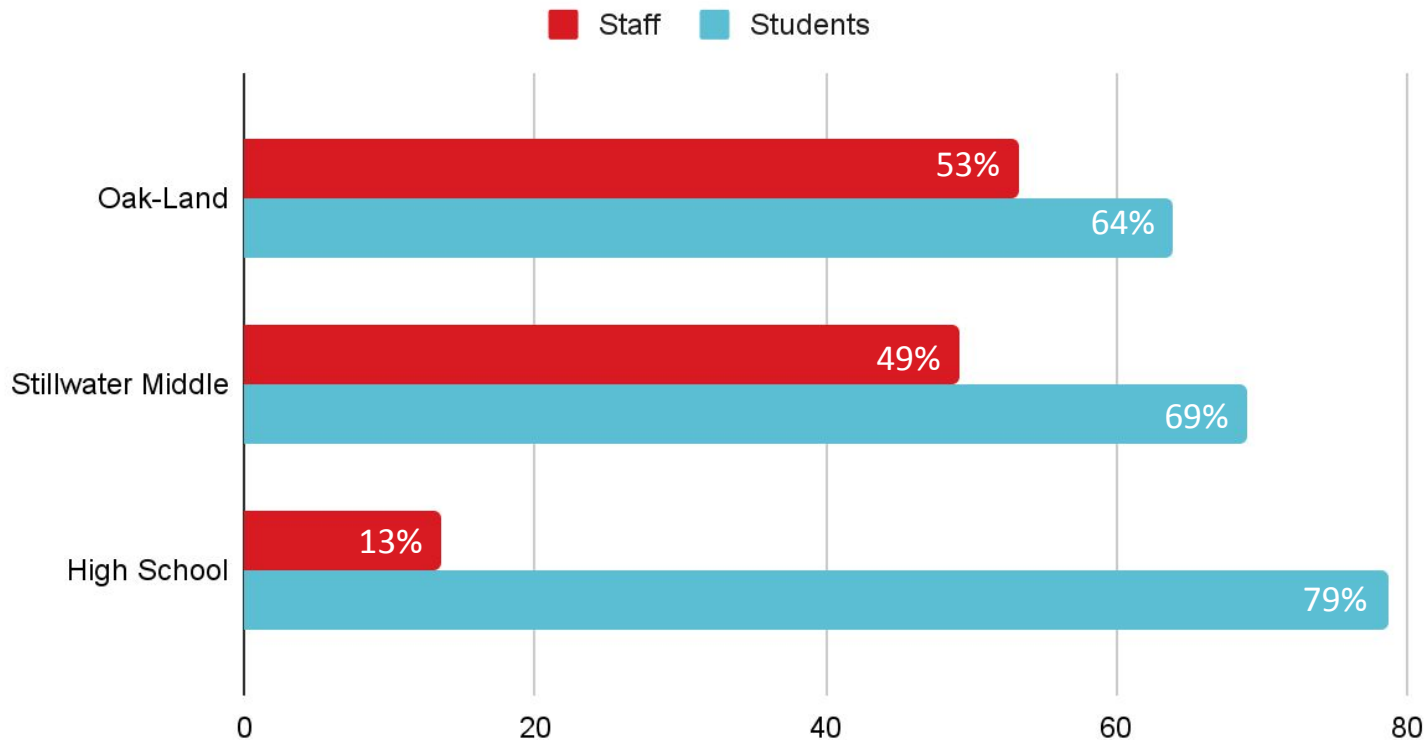
Respondents who “Strongly Agree” or “ Agree” with the following:

	Staff	Students
Students use phones to look up information relevant to their coursework	24	55
Students use cellphones in ways that disrupt the learning environment	71	26
Phones help students stay organized by managing schedules/assignments	20	69
Students use phones to play games or browse social media during class	62	39
Phones help students interact and maintain friendships with classmates	43	81
Students use phones to engage in cyberbullying or other harmful online behavior	61	16



Comparison Across Groups

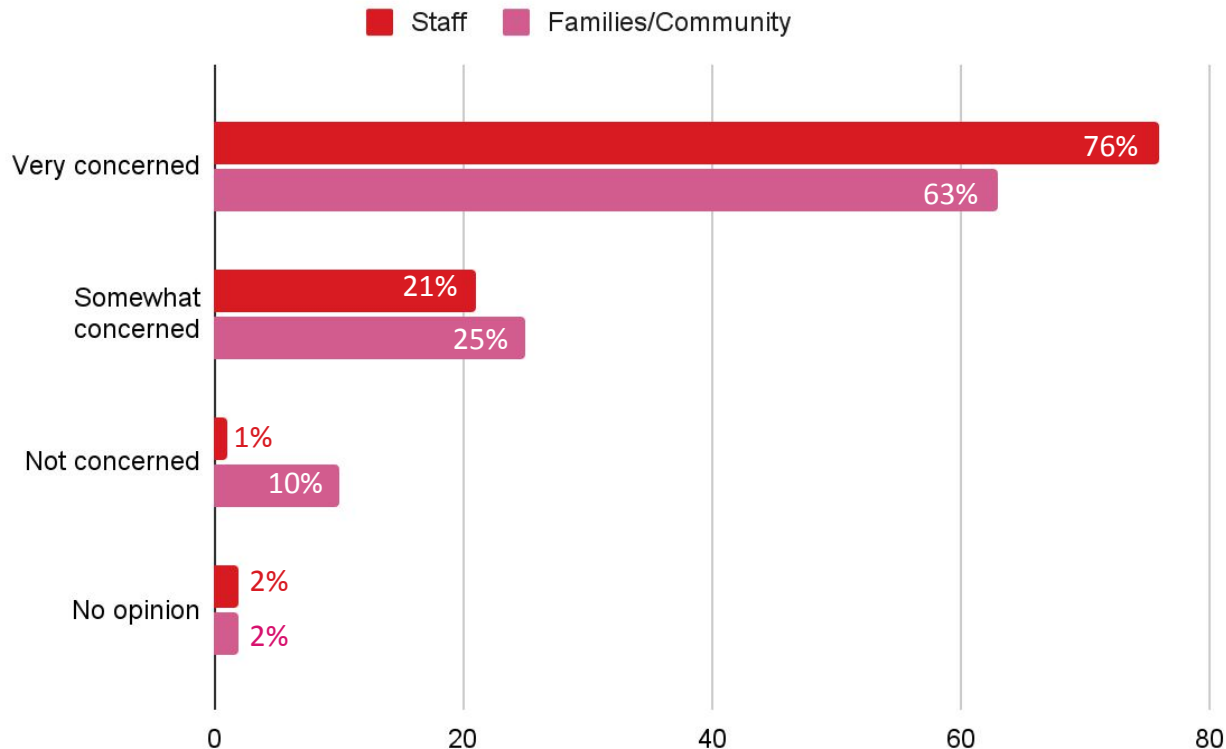
Percent of respondents who think their school currently has an effective policy





Comparison Across Groups

How concerned or not concerned are you about impact of social media/phone usage on students' mental health?



Common Themes	Suggestions
Consistent enforcement	• Develop a district-wide policy outlining specific rules and consequences. • Train all staff, students and families on the policy.
Balancing safety and learning	• Require phones to be stored in lockers/designated caddies/pouches during class. • Provide opportunities for students to communicate with families for urgent issues.
Tailored approach by level	• Develop age-appropriate guidelines for elementary, middle, and high school levels.
Addressing mental health and social skills	• Incorporate digital citizenship and mental health education into the curriculum. • Support students with social media and/or phone-related mental health challenges.
Engaging community	• Communicate with stakeholders about policy, expectations and enforcement. • Host workshops to educate on impact of phones/social media use and provide tips. • Use periodic surveys to assess the policy's effectiveness and areas for improvement.
Providing alternatives to cell phones	• Provide students with access to office phones to communicate with families. • Allow families to contact main office to relay messages to students. • Utilize school-issued devices for educational purposes, with appropriate restrictions.



Cell Phone Policy Timeline

What	Date	Purpose
Research	Fall	● Gather info from other districts ● Review best practices
Community Feedback	Dec	● Gather ideas and feedback from our students, families, staff and community
Draft policy	Jan/Feb	● Policy Committee to develop a draft policy based on research and community feedback
	Feb	● Present draft policy to board, community
School board action	March	● Board takes action on final policy
Develop procedures	Spring/ Summer	● Staff to develop procedures/processes to enforce policy
Implementation of new policy: Fall 2025		



Discussion