

PCSD 25 CELL PHONE POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES
February 4, 2025



Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present:

Tonya Wilkes – Director	Ellen Laggis – Administrator
AJ Watson – Director	Lyndsey Matthews - Teacher
Susan Pettit – Director	Mayor Blad – Comm. Member (<i>absent</i>)
Courtney Fisher – Director	Maribel Mendez - Teacher
Raymond Knoff – Board Member	Steven Morton - Administrator
Amanda Prather – Parent	Jodi Prestwich - Administrator
Aubrey Eldredge – Teacher	Amber Tews - Parent
Darcy Brockman – Parent	Lauren Dalton - Parent
Holly Lacey – Administrator	Tara Jensen - Clerk

Welcome and Introduction

Ms. Wilkes welcomed the committee and had everyone give an introduction.

Ms. Wilkes stated that in the packet was the agenda and an executive order from the Governor that was put out in October in support of more strict cell phone policies.

Overview of Meeting Goals, Norms and Objectives

- Review, discuss, evaluate Policy 8506 – Student Use of Personal Electronic Devices.
- Balance the educational benefits of technology with the potential disruptions caused by unrestricted phone use.
- Create a safe and conducive learning environment while addressing the diverse needs of students, teachers and parents.
- Support learning while promoting student well-being and safety

Review of Current Cell Phone Policy

- Current Cell Phone Policy #8506
- Discussion of strengths and weaknesses of the existing policy
- Overview of how the policy has been implemented across secondary schools

Ms. Wilkes stated that included in the packet was Policy 8506. She asked everyone to look at it and highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the policy. She asked them to put down strengths on the sticky notes that were provided. The strengths and weaknesses included:

Strengths:

- *Students responsible for devices, strong word “prohibited”, not a right it is a privilege, define electronic device, parent/guardian conference, teacher’s discretion, phone conference held by phone, discipline actions, specific violation language, specific and flexible, strictly prohibited in locker rooms and restrooms, phone taken if it is violated, and legal protection. She said we does not want to reinvent the wheel but tie a lot of these in to what we have and make it better.*

Weaknesses:

- *The why in the policy is missing, teacher vs. administrator discretion, teacher to teacher consistency, definitions, allowing posts to social media and obtaining permission, consistency, using for instruction, more guidance for elementary, lack of parent support, doesn’t include smart watches, more specific policy,*

who has permission to use it in class, violations “while at school” is this enough, more specific policy for each grade/age level.

Ms. Wilkes said included in the packet is what the schools were doing right now for cell phone policy usage and what they have implemented for the current year. She asked them to share what they see in the middle schools that is consistent or what they like. Ms. Lacey said it looks like the middle schools agree across the board there should not be a phone from bell to bell. She said some of them give it to a teacher for a warning level first before it escalates but some goes right to the office. She said there is also some parent support across the board and Ms. Pettit said smart watches are on there. Ms. Laggis said she liked how Highland High School has a clear expectation for teachers of management strategies. Ms. Dalton said there is a comment about turning the phone in before school and she wondered how they differentiate who has a phone on them and who does not. Ms. Lacey said she will communicate with the parents and they assume that if it is not turned in, they do not have one.

Ms. Wilkes asked what them to share out about the high schools. Mr. Morton said they are more accommodating with the teachers to have discretion at the high school level at Highland High School. Ms. Brockman said she has heard that Century High School is pretty relaxed with the cell phone policy. Ms. Lacey said the consistency from teacher to teacher can be hard sometimes. Ms. Laggis said she feels there is in-consistency with what happens when a student does have a phone on their person. Ms. Lacey said it is confusing for parents and learners when the consistency is lacking. Ms. Matthews said it does make for a battle if the consistency is not there and they do not understand and it can be interpreted in a different way.

Teacher Feedback

- Summary of teacher/staff survey
- Discussion on how teacher experiences can help with policy recommendations
- Potential strategies for balancing student use of phones with classroom focus

Ms. Wilkes said included in the packet was a survey that was sent out to teachers. She asked them to look at the comments that were put together. She said one of the questions was how easy was it to enforce the policy in the classroom and 35% said it was easy 24% said it was somewhat easy. She said the majority feel it was easy to enforce which is a positive. She said the survey also asked how effective the policy is in promoting a focused learning environment and 11.2% said it was effective and 38% said it was somewhat effective. She said this survey shows us where some of the weaknesses are. She said she separated secondary and elementary as they might be different and see different things with cell phones. She said staff is feeling with the current school push with the policy it is more effective. She said schools have really pushed to make sure it is implemented. Ms. Lacey said they put caddies in classrooms this year to help with this and give teachers options for students to not have them on their person. Ms. Laggis said she does not feel teachers feel supported with this and she is surprised by results of the survey. Ms. Prestwich said there is some ambiguity and needs more direction especially with the smart watches and other devices.

*Ms. Wilkes said included in the packet is information and research on the impact of cell phones on students and the classroom. She said the Board of Trustees was doing a book study right now on *The Anxious Generation* and it is a good foundation. She said this is becoming a nationwide a topic and the legislators are talking about it as we speak. She said this handout gives different resources and said some of the symptoms of cell phones in classrooms are distraction, loss of learning time, academic integrity, cyberbullying, etc.*

Review of Surrounding Schools’ Cell Phone Policies

- Review of neighboring district’s cell phone policies (comparison of rules, flexibility, use during class, etc.)
- Discuss how those policies might be applicable or beneficial for our schools
- Considerations for adopting similar elements

Ms. Wilkes said the goal was to come up with a policy that has balance. She said we need to know what it looks like at elementary, middle school and high school levels. She said she had printed out four different school district's policies and included them in the packet which were Jefferson, American Falls, West Ada and Blackfoot's policies.

She asked the committee to split into groups and discuss the policies and share out what they did and did not like about the policies.

Jefferson Policy – Ms. Laggis said they liked the purpose focused on being present at school. Ms. Mathews said it made her realize we do not have AirPods or earbuds included in our policy and we need to add that. Ms. Dalton said she likes that it specifies not using it at discretion. Ms. Matthews said there were specific instructions to teacher and students for expectations. Ms. Laggis said she likes that it also includes athletics and field trips. Ms. Fisher said there is also flexibility for storage and she liked that with privilege comes responsibility.

American Falls – Ms. Eldredge said they liked that they gave a why and stated evidence as well. Mr. Morton said it clearly states the purpose and that it was to support the district's mission of educating students. Ms. Prather said she likes that it specifically said it cannot be on their person. Mr. Morton said the definition was included but also said not limited to so it was a catch all. Ms. Eldredge said the communication piece that guardians should not expect communication from their student was important. Ms. Wilkes asked what it means to not have the phone on their person and Ms. Prather said not on their body but put somewhere else. Mr. Morton said if cell phones are on their person, the student can leave the classroom to use the restroom and go use their phone.

West Ada – Ms. Lacey said they liked that it started with the why and implementation guidelines as well as places they can put their devices. She said there is discretion for it to be determined at the classroom level where it will be and it is placed somewhere in the class but not in a backpack or on a person. Ms. Lacey said at Pocatello High School they have provided caddies and that is how the teacher takes attendance. If there is a cell phone missing then students are absent or possibly still have their phone. She said teachers are a little uncomfortable with the phones in caddies because if they are stolen, they are not sure who is responsible for that. Ms. Lacey said it is flexibility with the teachers to use the caddy and so far, the teachers using those have said it has taken away their power struggles with students. Ms. Lacey said they can use their phone in between classes/hallways and through passing time. Ms. Wilkes said those could be talking points for our policy. Ms. Prestwich said they were very specific about keeping the phone turned off but their discipline matrix was a little different and they would like it to be more specific. Ms. Laggis said we need to be careful about the "babysitting" of the phones for our teachers as it becomes a lot to manage. Ms. Lacey said if they power their phones off when they enter the classroom, it powers off the AirPods and other devices attached. Ms. Wilkes said some feedback was from West Ada was that if a student had the cell phone on their person some administrators were addressing it and others were not so it goes back to consistency. Ms. Lacey said the biggest thing is not using it as a reward and Pocatello High School is working on that. She said it is too hard when it is not consistent across the board. Mr. Morton said if you are using it as a reward, students are going to blow through their work just to get on their phone. Ms. Wilkes said the data behind it is also that the cell phone is an addiction. Ms. Lacey said we have to find the balance with students and parents especially with high school students with passing time/lunch time. Ms. Wilkes said every school district she called to talk about this said parents are thankful to have a stricter policy.

Blackfoot – Ms. Mendez said they liked that it started with their why and they were detailed on listing devices and social media. Mr. Watson said they allowed for students to possess the devices as long as they were turned off. Ms. Tews said as a parent she feels it was contradictory and it was too long so she did not finish reading through it. Ms. Wilkes said Blackfoot does not have a one-to-one device so their policy might be a little different. Mr. Knoff said it specifically asks parents to call the office to get in touch with their students.

She asked each group to write down four things they like about the policy they read:

Surrounding School's Policies Strengths:

- *The why and the impact, turn the phone off and in specified areas in the classrooms, defines devices, states where the phone needs to be, states how parents can contact the student, violations are detailed, no district responsibility, clear expectations for all involved, access is a privilege and not a right, not on their person and not used for instruction.*

Ms. Wilkes said so far the committee as looked at the policy, looked at what the schools are implementing this year, what the survey showed and also surrounding districts policies. She said she wants to check in to see where everyone was at right now. She asked if the committee feels we need to change the current policy a great deal or just make some tweaks and come up with a policy as well>

Ms. Prather said she would like to see a lot changes with more definition and no phones bell to bell at each level. Ms. Dalton said she feels the policy needs to be easier to read with headings and bullets. She said they do like the policy being short but a few changes could be a lot of changes. Ms. Laggis said she would like to see the personal device defined and also move it to a different place in the policy. Ms. Pettit said there needs to be a why and if there is a specific policy and then procedures for expectations. She said there needs to be some exceptions for high schools at lunch time. Ms. Matthews said there needs to be expectations for everyone involved. Ms. Laggis said clear expectations for staff setting a positive example. Ms. Watson said the policy needs to help drive what is happening. He said we need to clarify and be more specific to support the schools. Ms. Mendez said they would like to see the expectations listed and switch the order of the policy – students, parents, staff. Ms. Tews said there needs to have definition of violations and make it clear for all to understand and not at the discretion of teacher to teacher. Ms. Lacey said they want it to be more specific and consistent across the board. She said she feels her job has gotten easier because of the clear expectation they have set at Pocatello High School. She said relationships have also gotten better because the battle and arguments are not there. She said they feel there needs to be procedures as well. Ms. Prestwich said in elementary they would like to start out with the consistency so that way the expectation grows with the student from school level to school level. Ms. Laggis said consistency is good even with students go from middle school to middle school, they want to be a united front. Mr. Morton said the why needs to be there not only for instruction but the mental health impacts so we need to really decide what the policy needs to look like. Ms. Wilkes asked if it could be both and Mr. Morton said he felt the policy would look a lot different depending on what the why becomes.

Ms. Wilkes said she is going to take the information and start outlining a draft policy and procedure and capture what everyone wants to see in place. She asked them to think about storage of the devices. She said the theory behind the bags and magnets she felt was great but they are very expensive and does not see them being an option right now. Ms. Lacey said there was a question about if there was a school shooting, the parents wanted their student to have their phone and that is why they liked the phone caddies. Ms. Wilkes said the worst thing they can do it be on their phones during a school shooting and we need to educate the parents on this and how we are keeping students safe.

Ms. Wilkes said the Mayor has put out the challenge for the month which is Disconnect to Reconnect and it is for families to do and it is community driven. She said they can earn things as they cross things off the list.

Discuss Proposed Changes to Policy and/or Procedure

- Discuss clear policy objectives
- Discuss limitations and permitted uses
- Discuss plans for accommodations and safety
- Identify clear expectations surrounding device storage, guidelines and procedures
- Discuss discipline procedures

Ms. Wilkes

Discussion/Questions/Resources

- Information and Needs for Next Meeting

Ms. Wilkes stated the next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 5th at 5:00 p.m. She said we might run late as she would like to have the policy and procedure put together and take to the Board in April. Ms. Wilkes reminded the committee about open meeting laws.

Meeting Adjourned at: 6:04 p.m.