# Renton Technology Coordinating Council (RTCC)

Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2025

## ATTENDING

Dr. Ellen Dorr, Alex Castro-Wilson, Dr. Bob Ettinger, Kristine Farwell, Mawiayah Fields, Jay Gray, Emrie Hollander, Woody Sobey, Susan Talley, Kerrie Thornton, Carlito Umali, and guests: Craig Cooper, Elizabeth Flavors, and Reid Saaris

## AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Project Updates
- Cell Phone Policy - Feedback Review

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ellen welcomed the council and thanked them for their attendance. She noted that the meeting slides were sent in advance and advised the council to access the slides, as they would be engaging with the content there throughout the meeting.

Ellen reminded the council that the role of RTCC is to serve as a forum to review technology decisions to ensure they maximize student performance and achievement. Each year, the council establishes an area of focus concerning technology, and this year the council identified cell phone policy as a top priority.

Ellen went over the agenda and asked everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name, role, and one way they use their cell phone to be productive, and one way they use it to distract themselves. She started by introducing herself and sharing that she uses the calendar on her phone to be productive. To distract herself, she enjoys playing Wordle, Connections, and the Mini-Crossword. Ellen commented that with so many options, sometimes she will go to do something on her phone and get distracted in the process. She invited the team to share their responses in table groups.

Ellen brought the council back together to discuss what kinds of trends they heard in their conversation.

- **Emrie:** Productivity features and peace of mind.
    - **Bob:** Can I ask Emrie to share her use of the phone?
    - **Emrie:** I use the Routinery app to guide me through my morning routine. When I get to work in the morning, I turn it on and it literally walks me minute by minute through the things I need to do; basic things like make coffee, fill my water, and put my lunch into the fridge. I can't tell you how many days I would get to 12:30pm and look over to see my lunch still sitting on my desk because I never put it in the fridge. So, this app helps me to complete these tasks.
- **Alex:** For the first one, many of us said calendaring or scheduling. For the second one. there was a commonality for social media use - like watching reels. Some people at our table like to have phone calls, which I support. Nobody I talk to wants to talk on the phone anymore.
- **Ellen:** One thing this question illuminates is that cell phones have a lot of capabilities. There are lots of different things that can happen with them, in them, around them, and about them. When Bob and I met with the Family Community Engagement Team (regarding cell phone policy), one of the parents asked if the consideration was just about parents being able to reach their students in emergencies and the answer is "no," because cell phones do so much more beyond that. So, we have to think comprehensively about it. Like we talked about last time, technology isn't inherently good or bad; it is how we use it that matters.

### 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.

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

### Minutes Review

Ellen sent the December 10, 2024 minutes in advance of the meeting and asked the council if they had any questions, corrections, clarifications, or additions. There were none.

## PROJECT UPDATES

### Elementary Gym/Commons Stabilization

We have been looking for a solution to stabilize the displays in our elementary gyms/commons. We have found two promising possible solutions with the developer. Kristine has been incredibly consistent and disciplined in pursuing these solutions. The developer from Absen flew out from Florida. We have had people from China on a call go through our configurations with us. We have deployed the solution at one location (Lakeridge). Kristine was onsite with the developer for the initial deployment, and it failed immediately, which was useful since the recurring issue we have been experiencing was replicated for the vendor in real time. We are making progress. We know secondary schools are suffering by not having the new audio equipment, but we have to get the issue resolved before expanding.

### Printing/Copying Initiative

With budget reductions, we are being very cautious about resources. Copying and printing is very expensive. We spend about 1 million a year on these expenses out of the General Fund. So, we are currently looking at strategies to reduce that amount. One strategy is to provide people clear data about the printing/copying happening at their schools and the associated costs. We are creating dashboards so that schools can see high level data, as well as individual use. The other thing we want to do is put some limits in place to avoid costly mistakes, such as setting default printing to black and white and deploying a pop-up that will say something like “did you mean 100 copies or 10 copies?” In addition, we want to upgrade the software for the Print Shop so that if someone is sending a very expensive order, it has to be approved by a budget authority. We are working on putting those pieces into place and then we will pilot them at different schools. Craig, I have been meaning to ask if you would like to have a pilot at Hazen?

- **Craig:** I would be happy to do a pilot. However, I would like to mention something from a district historian perspective. We went through an era where the central office was pushing out data at the individual user level. In my experience, those conversations did not go well with teachers. So, however this goes, whether we pivot to the bargaining table or another approach, we want to consider how we integrate knowledge of why we are going this direction.
    - **Ellen:** Thank you, that is important. Last year, Rachel at Cascade, used school level data to have conversations with her staff and it went super well. They were able to tighten their process significantly and she is ready to receive those dashboards again to continue that effort. I think part of it was that she was having the conversations with her team, as opposed to a punitive email from tech.
- **Elizabeth:** In Seattle, staff have to scan their badge to release their copies. They also made it so that only the principal and admin secretary have access to color printing. So, if people really want to print in color, they have to send it to one of those people. That’s an idea.

- **Susan:** Do RSD staff have copier codes?
    - **Ellen:** Yes, and they can use their badge. However, we haven't tracked it closely. In addition, we have been paying out of a central budget instead of school budgets. So, while schools have their own allocations, we haven't been charging them.
- **Susan:** Can they send a job to a printer, and it just prints? Or do they have to go release them?
    - **Ellen:** They don't have to release them. That is one of the things we are interested in trying with teams: the "secure release" feature.
    - **Elizabeth:** One of the things I noticed with the secure release, is that if the staff member doesn't retrieve the job within a certain amount of time, it will be deleted.
    - **Ellen:** Yes, and that is one of the things we want to explore, but we want to make sure to test it at each school level with clear rationale as to why we are doing it.
- **Susan:** Can the print job go to any machine in the building?
    - **Ellen:** Currently yes, but we are considering some routing options so that print jobs route to the most cost-effective printer. However, it would depend on the size of the building. At large schools, it could be problematic because of the distance people would have to go to retrieve their jobs.
- **Elizabeth:** We have "find-me" printing, so staff can go to any copy machine in the building to retrieve their print job. Before, people would send their print job to a copy machine, but then look for it at a different machine and when they can't find it, they would print again. It was very wasteful.
    - **Ellen**: We will definitely be looking at all those features to figure out what is going to be most cost effective.
- **Mawiayah:** I wonder if there have been conversations with Curriculum and Instruction (CIA) on some best practices for teaching instruction around note taking, what's happening in the classroom, what's happening with the notebooks, reader-writer workshops, and things like that which can reduce some of the copying and printing happening in buildings.
    - **Ellen:** Not at this time. It hasn't been a priority for CIA, but it is a place we can emphasize. It's not that we are saying "no printing," we are just trying to find ways to be the most cost effective with the printing we are doing.
- **Emrie:** Along the same lines, there should be some conversations around essential printing projects we do regularly, like the "Bridges" program material, to ensure those are automatically done through Print Shop instead of teachers doing it themselves.
    - **Ellen:** I think "Bridges" is printed by a Facilitator and then delivered to schools. So, those copies wouldn't be part of building costs.
- **Alex:** I use print release, and I can say from personal experience that it does time out. However, we haven't taught teachers how to use some of those functions. There are communications sent out, but that is pretty much the extent of it. After that, it is up to administrators, Technology Integration Specialists (TIS), and Building Technology Assistants (BTA) to teach the staff how to use it. So, I wonder what kind of implementation we can do with the current systems we have provided. I also think we should get some teacher input on what they have been advised. For example, our office manager recommends that we print colored copies at the building because she was told by Print Shop that the cost would be lower if we did it that way vs. sending it to Print Shop. So, the guidance should be clear.
    - **Ellen:** I agree with your point around clarity of communication and gathering input. That is why we will do the pilots, to see how it plays out and identify the things we will need to consider, so we can determine how to implement it more broadly. We will do a pilot at each grade band, just to get a broad perspective.
    - **Alex:** Will teachers have input on if their school participates in a pilot? Or is it just administrators?

- **Ellen**: The pilot schools selected are based on who has already expressed interest in using these features, with the exception of Hazen, which was selected because they have the greatest number of printers in use at the district.
- **Alex:** I was also the Union Vice President, so I was just thinking about pushback with this change.
- **Ellen:** There are always growing pains while people are acclimating to change, so it will be important to keep re-centering on the idea that these features are intended to make things easier, reduce costs, and avoid costly printing errors.

- **Craig:** Another piece that could be shared out is just the cost of paper. When we buy a pallet of paper in house, we let our staff know how much it costs. The price has basically doubled in the last year and a half, so it is important to create some awareness around it.
  - **Ellen:** The dashboards won't include the paper costs because school teams already know that, but it will include the other true costs, so that there is clarity about what is most cost efficient.

## CELL PHONE POLICY - FEEDBACK REVIEW

Ellen opened the cell phone policy conversation by reviewing the success criteria discussed in the previous meeting and the process for consideration.

### Success Criteria and Process

| Success Criteria | Process |
|---|---|
| • Focus on student learning<br>• Balance limiting distractions and helping students focus<br>• Support safety and security needs<br>• Easy to understand and implement<br>• Little to no budget impact | • Research and reading<br>• Defining the problem and scope of solution<br>• Input and feedback<br>• Goal: a proposal for DILT review**<br>**Ellen noted that upon reviewing some of the data collected with the District Instructional Leadership Team (DILT), they discussed also having school teams, especially administrative and instructional leadership teams, look at some of the policy recommendations to see what it would take to implement them. |

### Gathering Feedback

At the last meeting, one of the next steps identified by the council was to gather feedback from students, staff, and families. Since that meeting, data was collected from these stakeholders in the following ways:

- Staff Survey
- Family Survey
- Discussion at the Family and Community Engagement Meeting in January
- Student Focus Groups at all four high schools, Nelsen Middle School, and Lakeridge Elementary

### Student Feedback

Ellen informed the council she was unable to visit two of the schools that were initially scheduled for focus groups due to the recent snow days. However, she noted significant trends in the student data that provides insight on their perspective. She directed the council to the meeting slides where they could access the student feedback. She walked the council through the layout of the feedback for easy review. The initial page included a high-level summary of student input, with a link at the top navigating to the comprehensive notes taken at each school visited. Ellen gave the council time to review the feedback and asked them to consider:

1. What trends do you see?
2. What are some of your high-level takeaways from what students said?

Ellen brought the group back together and asked each table group to identify two main points from the information they reviewed and to capture their thoughts on a table in the meeting slides. The results were as follows:

| Table Group | Main Points Identified |
|---|---|
| **Jay, Woody, Kerrie** | As students get older, they use cell phones more/differently, at elementary they don't need their cell phones as much and seem comfortable with the policy as is. So, continuing with implementation as they get older might ease the process. |
| **Emrie, Reid, Bob** | "If we can't use our phones, teachers shouldn't either."<br>Understand that they are there to learn and phones are distractions, at same time as phones' benefits. |
| **Mawiayah, Kristine, Craig** | Student feedback at HS level is self-aware- they can name the issues/challenges/opportunities as well as benefits |
| **Susan, Alex, Carlito, Flavors** | Elementary school students are honest.<br>MS students said that teachers should have the same restrictions |

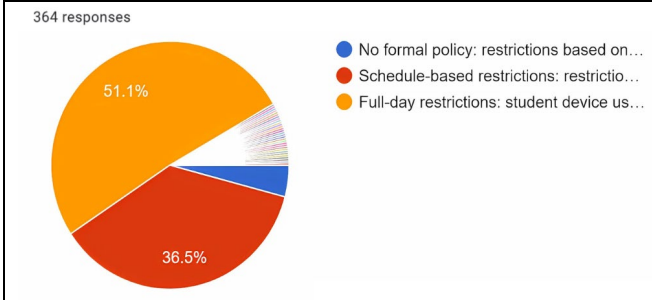
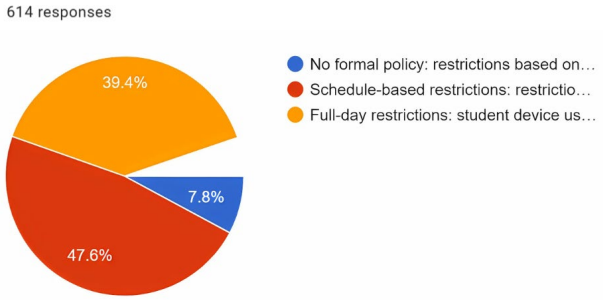
## Staff and Family Feedback

For the next portion of review, Ellen walked the council through a coding exercise to dig into the qualitative results that came out of the staff and family survey data. She began by sharing the quantitative results around the question: "If you had to choose which type of policy we had in place, what would you select and why?"

**Table 1 - Policy Types**

| No Formal Policy | Schedule-Based Restriction | Full-Day Restriction |
|---|---|---|
| Decisions around the presence or use of personal devices are typically left to the discretion of the individual teacher or other staff. | Student device use is prohibited at certain times during the school day (e.g., during instruction) while permitting limited use at other times, such as during breaks or lunch periods. | Student device use is prohibited during the school day, including during instructional time, lunch, or free periods, and passing times. |

**Table 2 - Quantitative Results**

| Staff Survey | Family Survey |
|---|---|
|  |  |





**Note:** The blank portion of the graph represents all responses and ideas outside of the three primary policy types.

Ellen explained that along with the quantitative results above, the staff and families provided rationale for their selections. The rationale is what the council would be reviewing and coding. Ellen directed the council to two spreadsheets (one for staff results and one for family results). The spreadsheets were broken down by selection type and separated out into tabs:

- **Tab 1:** Full-Day Restriction results and rationale
- **Tab 2:** Schedule-Based Restriction results and rationale
- **Tab 3:** No Formal Policy results and rationale

- **Tab 4:** All Other results and rationale

Council members were assigned different sections to review and instructed to read the rationale and code it according to what themes were indicated in the response, such as Bullying, Distraction, Engagement/Learning, Mental Health, Responsibility, etc. Bob clarified that the purpose of this exercise was to help engage with the feedback in a way that was meaningful and generative. In addition, each spreadsheet included a formula that automatically tallied the results of the coding to reveal common trends.

After the council had some time to review, Ellen brought everyone back together. She recognized there was a significant amount of data to go through and emphasized that the council was not expected to complete it all. However, she did hope that what was coded would help us to start to see some patterns in the data. She shared the summary tables which tallied the completed coding and noted which themes were most salient based on how often they were selected relative to the rationale.

**Table 3 - Coding Results**

| | Staff Coding Results | Family Coding Results |
|---|---|---|
| **Full-Day Restriction** | Distractions<br>Communication<br>Engagement/Learning<br>Responsibility<br>Social media | Distractions<br>Engagement/Learning<br>Mental Health |
| **Schedule-Based Restriction** | Engagement/Learning<br>Responsibility | Communication<br>Distractions<br>Safety |
| **No Formal Policy** | Engagement/Learning | Safety |

**Note:** The results shown above were stated during the meeting, but council member Woody Sobey identified an error in the formula that tallied the initial results, which was corrected. The following day, February 12, 2025, the updated results were sent via email along with the links to the complete staff, family, and student feedback. Items highlighted above are ranked in the top three themes of the updated coded responses. See addendum for the updated coded responses.

Ellen opened the floor for other things people noticed while doing the exercise.

**Coding Exercise Discussion**

- **Carlito**: Schools have tried full-day and schedule-based restrictions already with varying success.
- **Elizabeth**: Teachers are frustrated. They are afraid to say anything and get into battles with students over their cell phones. Or they are putting the responsibility on students when it might need to be on the school admin.
    - **Ellen:** There is this tension between what students, teachers, and administrators are responsible for in the management of cell phones.
- **Craig**: From the admin lens of the teachers' role in this, there is a lack of consistency. I read the full-day restriction input from families, and these responses are viscerally acknowledging the level of disruption families believe phones cause for kids.
- **Alex:** Can I ask a question about the family responses? Was the family survey sent to the whole district?
    - **Ellen:** Yes.
    - **Alex**: Did we gather any data on which populations completed it? I worry that some of our populations might not be able to access this. Was it only sent in English?
    - **Ellen**: Yes, it was only in English.

- **Alex:** I also wonder since these are likely the families who already have more access to these things, that it doesn't show the full picture. I mean it is valid data, but I am curious about how much accessibility there was for all families to participate.
- **Ellen:** I think another point to note is that more elementary families filled out the survey than any other group, and elementary schools are least impacted by student cell phone use. During our family and community engagement meeting, all of the families were elementary families. To your point, Alex, there are possibly some limitations with the data set. The other challenge is, we would be looking at making a policy for our entire district and there is a range of what people are comfortable with. There is also a range of personal opinions regarding what families think is appropriate for their own children. Families have their own restrictions for their kids - which is exactly how it should be. It is their responsibility and prerogative. That is also something that is important to note.

Ellen advised the council where they could find all the feedback data for individual review.

**Recommendation Considerations**

Considering the range of responses, Ellen inquired about the council's initial thoughts regarding what might make sense for a district policy. She invited them to discuss at table groups before sharing more broadly.

Ellen brought everyone back together and asked the council to share any takeaways from their table.

- **Carlito**: I think at secondary schools it is so hard. At elementary schools, it is beautiful; the world of having no cell phones all day long. I would like secondary students to benefit from that experience. I think the district should say "no" to all cell phones. It is just so hard to teach and to bring kids back from classroom disruptions. We don't need to have little fights in every single classroom about cell phones.
  - **Ellen:** I want to note that I went to two classrooms at Hazen, and I didn't see a cell phone in those rooms. I realize it can be different in other classrooms, but of the two groups of students I interviewed, all their cell phones were put away.
- **Susan:** If you get the kids in elementary schools used to not having a cell phone, it will be easier for them as they get into middle and high school.
  - **Ellen:** High school students said something like that as well. They said that when the rules are set strictly at the beginning of the year, they get it and just do it. They understand the expectation.
  - **Woody:** We talked about that too: that we push it hard at elementary school and roll it up as they get older. However, I think the big thing for me right now is that the specific policy is less important than consistent implementation. It is the consistency that is going to lead to the results.
  - **Ellen:** Reid, I think that goes to your point about an effective policy rather than just a policy - it actually has to be working. How well is it being implemented? What does the support look like? What is the clarity and expectation?
- **Ellen:** I am inferring, based on what people have said so far, that there might be an argument for having different policies at different levels.
  - **Craig:** It seems like there is an opportunity to customize by level to some degree, which we do see in other district policies. I still want what Carlito talked about though.
- **Mawiayah:** I honestly believe the position of the district should be "no cell phones in schools." At our last staff meeting, we were reviewing our discipline policy. Keeping up with the referral process and the number of cell-phone infractions is challenging. The feedback we heard from students was that teachers are doing the best they can, but students are going to do what they want, and they don't want teachers to be in trouble for that. Cell phones are causing havoc in the classroom, and there are bigger issues around bullying. And, if teachers do take a phone as a consequence, who is liable for that? Who is responsible if it breaks or goes missing? It just causes so much ambiguity around accountability. With full restriction, it is very clear. There is no ambiguity of

the expectation. Yes, I do believe that another fix could be that the policy is different at different levels, but we would still have those power struggles and implementation challenges, we would have to establish those consequences and follow through with full fidelity, and hold staff members accountable to it - administrators as well. So, I just think we really have to consider what will support everyone across the board.

- **Reid:** I would agree with that too. It becomes such a dominant part of the interaction between teacher and student and between the administrator and the student. This thing is such a huge force in the classroom and in the building. It is the subject of so many conversations. When I was a teacher at Rainier Beach, I spent more time on that than anything else. It becomes a huge part of the negotiation and power struggle. The focus should be the learning and the relationships in front of us.
- **Ellen:** I do want to point out that we did have some teachers say cell phones are not an issue, and we had some say it's mostly manageable. So, I want to give the caveat that it's not every teacher reporting that they are fighting phones all day. We have data that shows something different, and part of our responsibility is figuring out a good solution that works for everyone. We also had a lot of families say they need to be able to contact their children, and we had students explain valid reasons for why they need their phones during the day, such as family and work obligations. One student talked about how their parent cannot contact the main office because English is not their first language, so it is easier to send a text directly. If we decide on a full-day restriction, we have to think through the implications of that and how we would implement it. Since we don't have much more time this evening, my thought is we should look at two types of policy (one schedule-based and one full restriction) at the next meeting and dig into how they would actually be implemented at different grade levels (elementary, middle, high school). Then, we can see where we are in terms of policy recommendation because I do want to keep going back to the data around what families, students, and staff are telling us. I have looked at the data quite a bit and one other thing I saw in every piece of feedback is that regardless of the policy selected, teachers will still have to engage in conversations with students about their cell phones. They will have to tell them to put their phones away, and they will still have to follow-through with the consequence - like calling families if there is an infraction. That will be part of the implementation regardless, so I just want to be cognizant of that.
- **Craig:** I love your idea of doing some comparative analysis and dreaming into the implementation of different models. One thing I have heard from staff is a self-identification of not following through with notifying families about cell phone violations. That's a tricky layer too, because you have staff complaining about kids having their phones out and you ask if they called home, and they say "no" and their rationale is that they would have to do it every day for every kid. But they probably wouldn't. If they start strong at the beginning of the year and make those phone calls, then I think it would taper out.
    - **Mawiayah:** Over 75% of our referrals are for cell phone infractions with no calls home. We actually added calls home as an additional layer in our cell phone referral form that essentially did create an uptick. But what we started noticing is, teachers stopped self-reporting, so it seemed like things improved, but upon our walk-throughs we found they had not. So, it is all about implementation.
- **Elizabeth**: I just wanted to add one thing. We are a community, and the responsibility falls on all of us (students, staff, admin). I think the big piece is to start strong at every layer: from how it is implemented at teacher leadership in the summer, to professional development, to how it is addressed in the classroom. I think it is important that we all own that responsibility.
    - **Ellen:** That reminds me of something I saw on the Mercer Island website. There was a question that asked: "Who is responsible for the cell phone policy?" The answer was: "Everyone."

Ellen wrapped the meeting with details on next steps. Before the next meeting, she will draft two potential solutions for the council to dig into. We will consider how we might implement them; what implications arise and address any challenges or pitfalls with each approach.

## ADDENDUM

**Table 4 Staff Responses**

| | Full day restrictions | Schedule based | No formal policy |
|---|---|---|---|
| Benefits students | 6% | 1% | 14% |
| Bullying | 3% | 1% | 0% |
| Communication | 10% | 4% | 14% |
| Distractions | 23% | 14% | 14% |
| Engagement/learning | 8% | 22% | 32% |
| Implementation | 10% | 22% | 5% |
| Mental health | 10% | 12% | 0% |
| Real world | 4% | 1% | 5% |
| Responsibility | 11% | 17% | 14% |
| Social interactions | 2% | 1% | 0% |
| Student privacy | 1% | 0% | 0% |
| Social media dangers | 6% | 0% | 0% |
| Safety | 4% | 4% | 5% |
| OVERALL SELECTION | 51% | 37% | 4% |

**Table 5 Family Responses**

| | Full day restrictions | Schedule based | No formal policy |
|---|---|---|---|
| Benefits students | 13% | 4% | 13% |
| Bullying | 6% | 0% | 0% |
| Communication | 11% | 21% | 15% |
| Distractions | 19% | 21% | 0% |
| Engagement/learning | 17% | 11% | 0% |
| Implementation | 0% | 9% | 13% |
| Mental health | 13% | 3% | 3% |
| Real world | 2% | 8% | 8% |
| Responsibility | 0% | 4% | 20% |
| Social interactions | 6% | 0% | 0% |
| Student privacy | 2% | 0% | 0% |
| Social media dangers | 7% | 2% | 0% |
| Safety | 6% | 15% | 30% |
| OVERALL SELECTION | 39% | 48% | 8% |