



***WALLINGFORD - SWARTHMORE
SCHOOL BOARD POLICY COMMITTEE***

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY 237

March 12, 2025

TECHNOLOGY IN LEARNING

PROS

Easier access to
notes and
learning materials



Enhances
collaboration
between peers



Facilitates online
learning / home
based learning



CONS

Distracting



May develop
over reliance



AGENDA

- Brief Summary of Feb 12 meeting
- A deeper look at survey results
- Recommended Policy, and Administrative Regulation changes
- Next steps

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

2022 – District approves Electronic devices policy that says:

- High School and Middle School – phones off and away during instruction except if teacher permits it.
- Elementary School – phones off and

Spring/Summer 2024 – more information out about impact of cell phones on teens.

October 2024 – Cell phone forum held to learn about the policy and the impact of cell phone distractions for students during class.

November/December – Focus groups conducted with staff and high school students about cell phone/electronic devices in schools.

January 2025 – Survey sent to parents, students, and staff about cell phone/electronic devices policy.

February 2025 – First draft of policy changes to the school board.

BY THE NUMBERS – LOTS OF INPUT AND FEEDBACK

- October 29 Forum
 - 9 panelists including parents, teacher, students, principals, mental health therapist, & medical researcher.
 - Approximately 165 people in attendance.
- Focus Groups
 - High School students – 140 in two different groups (11/15 & 11/20)
 - High School staff – 26 staff in one group (11/20)
 - Middle School staff – 12 staff in one group (12/9)
- Surveys
 - Parents – 1,077 (29%)
 - HS Students – 894 (76%)
 - MS Students – 617 (70%)
 - Staff – 144 (48%)



WHAT DID WE HEAR? PHONE FORUM

- Elementary Breakout Group –
 - Support to ban phones in elementary schools.
 - Need for clear policies and expectations.
 - Need to educate students on screen addiction.
 - Parents need to be responsible.



WHAT DID WE HEAR? PHONE FORUM

- **Middle School Breakout Group -**
 - Mixed feedback on a total ban of phones vs policy with clear expectations.
 - Need for clear policies and expectations guided by research.
 - Need to educate students on the impact of cell phones.
 - Engage educators and parents.
 - Educate parents on the dangers of excessive cell phone use, and policy expectations.



WHAT DID WE HEAR?

PHONE FORUM

- High School Breakout Group
 -
 - Mixed support for a full ban vs. a clear policy.
 - Need an educational campaign for students and parents on the medical crisis taking place with excessive use of cell phones.
 - Need policy with more teeth that doesn't burden the teachers.
 - Need consistent enforcement by teachers.
 - Communicate changes about a new policy.





WHAT DID WE HEAR? ***MIDDLE SCHOOL STAFF FOCUS*** ***GROUP*** ***12 PEOPLE***

- Everyone has been delivering the same message about no phones in school.
- It is difficult for students to resist the temptation to check phones when they are in their pocket.
- Eliminating cell phone distraction would increase attention span and engagement in school.
- Need to remind students about the rules – possibly build incentives.
- We can evaluate effectiveness through discipline referral reductions, and fewer violations.



WHAT DID WE HEAR?
HIGH SCHOOL STAFF FOCUS GROUP
26 PEOPLE

- Staff has seen a reduction in distractions this year due to delivering the same message about no phones in class.
- Many prefer a ban but recognize the challenges.
- There is inconsistency with expectations (e.g., some allow phones at the end of class – Others restrict bell to bell).
- Eliminating cell phone distraction would increase attention span and encourage other things like reading.
- Need to consider this a health issue for students – possibly refer to mental health counselor.



WHAT DID WE HEAR?

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FOCUS GROUP

140 PEOPLE

- Most believed the current policy of Screens off and minds on was reasonable.
- Very few students were aware of the research and dangers of excessive cell phone/ screen time use.
- Teachers need to be more consistent.
- About half of the students felt the urge to check their phones when it was in their pocket but out of sight in a class.
- Need to educate students about the policy and the reasons for it.
- Students believed that they would learn more without the phone distractions, but getting rid of phones all together would be getting rid of



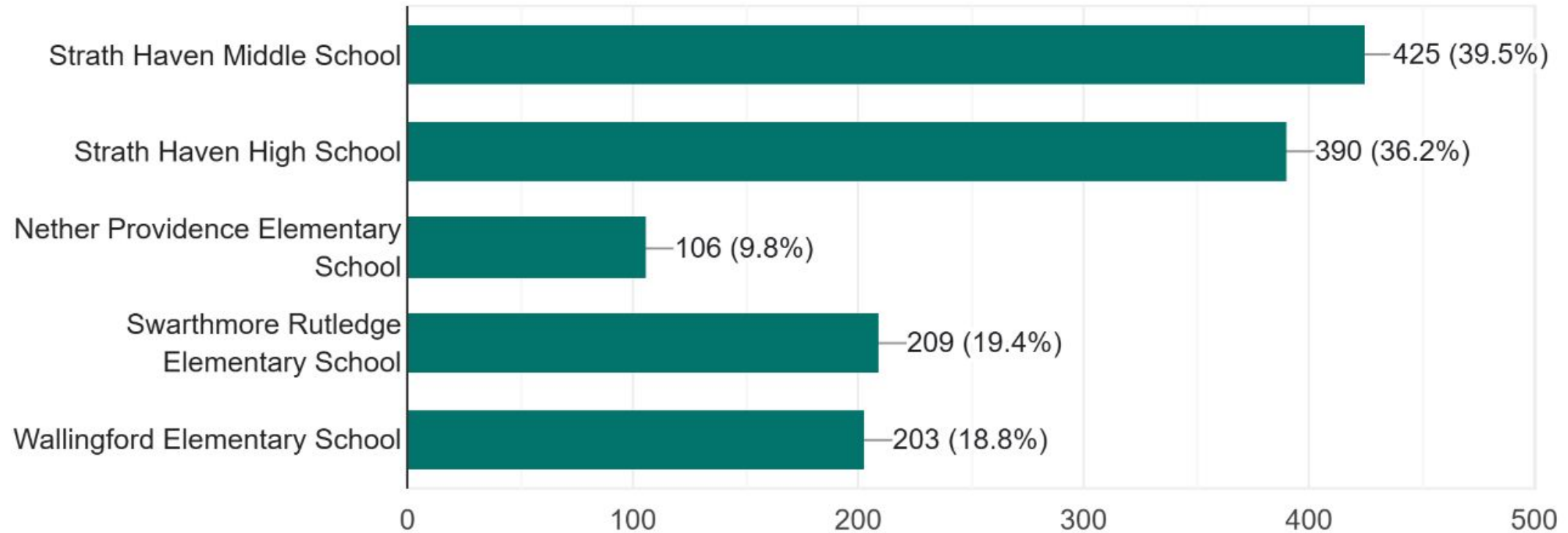
SURVEY DATA

- 144 staff (48%)
- 1077 parents (29%)
- 894 high school students (76%)
- 617 middle school students (70%)

PARENTS

1. What school does your child attend?

1,077 responses

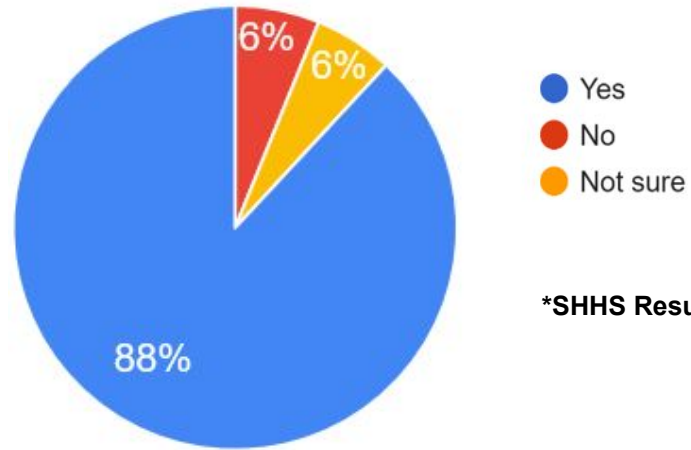
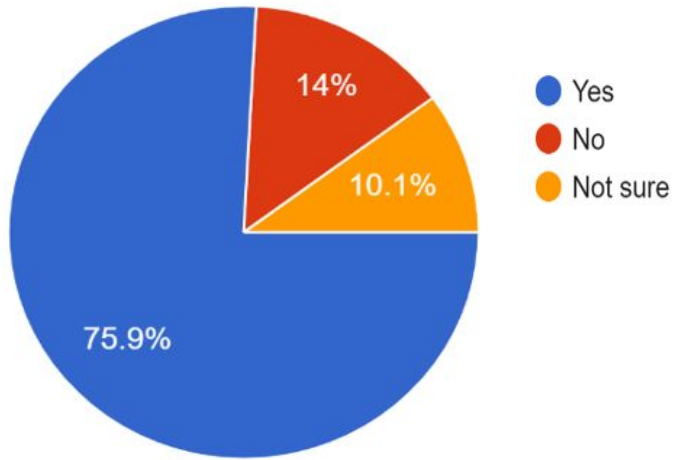


Questions from February 12

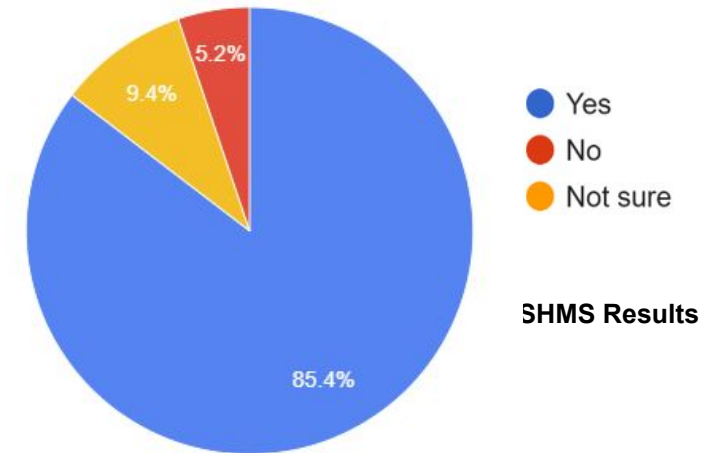


- How did the HS parents and staff respond to the survey?
- Can we include definitions and terms in the policy?
- What are some public high schools doing and how is it working?

Do you know the current expectations for cell phones during the school day is that phones must be off and away during instructional time at the high school, and turned off and away all day at the middle school and elementary school?

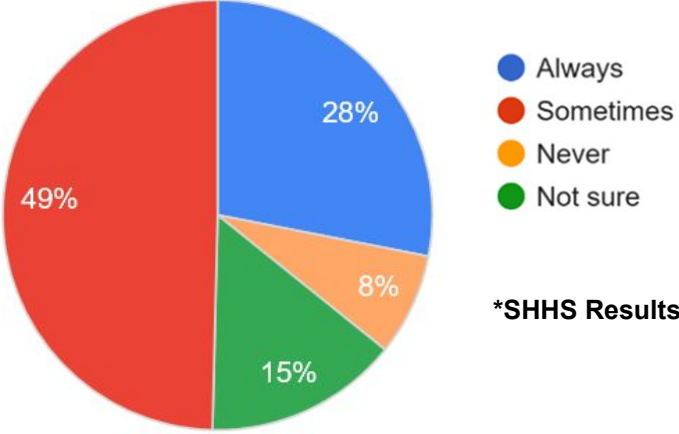
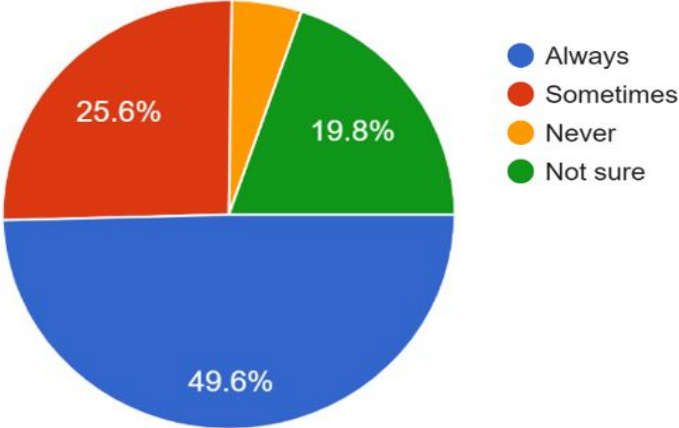


***SHHS Results**

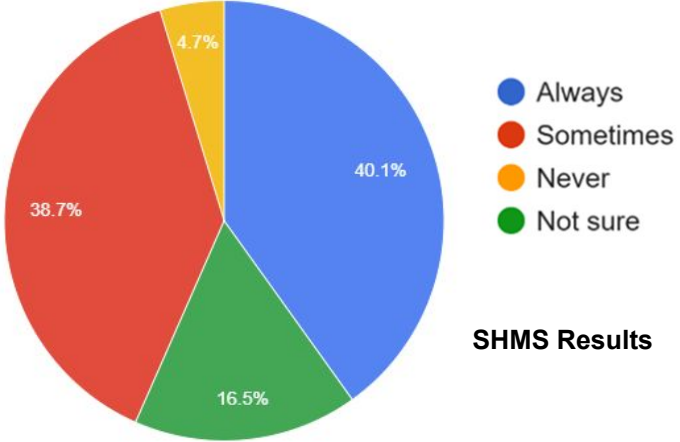


SHMS Results

Do you believe your child follows the expectations for cell phones during the school day?

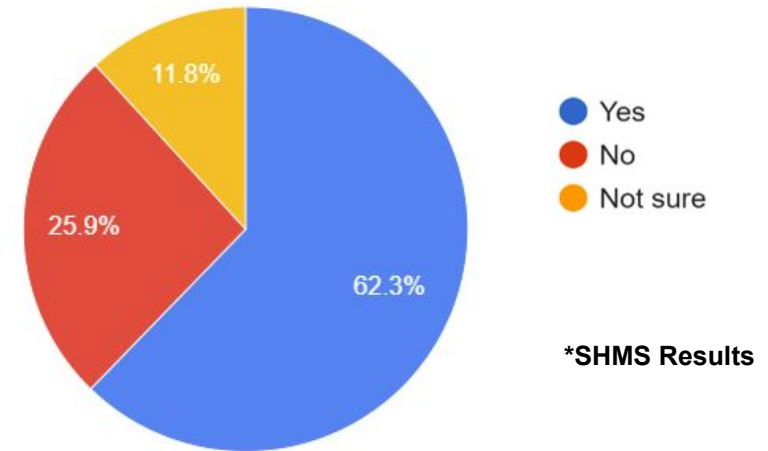
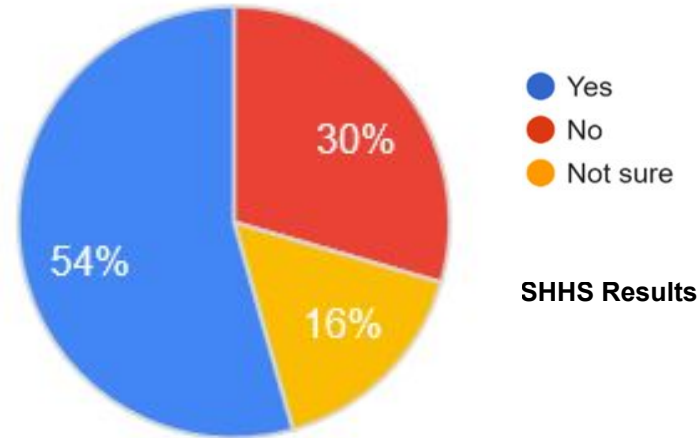
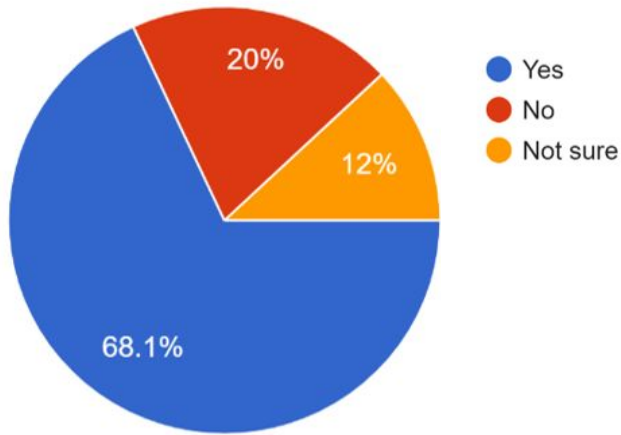


*SHHS Results

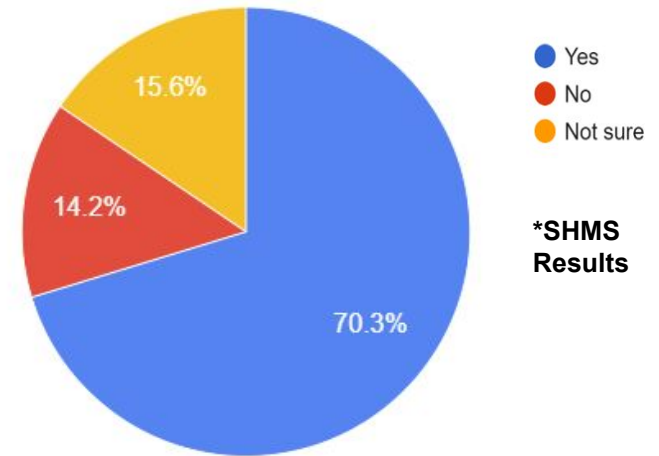
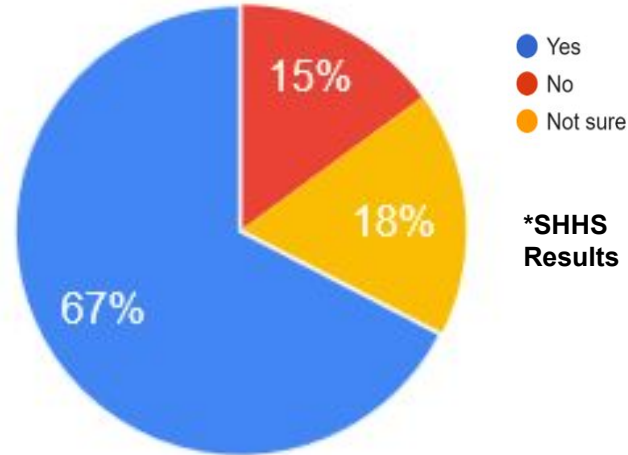
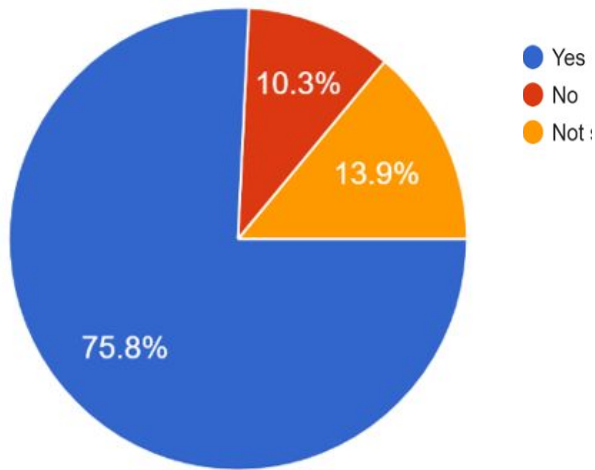


SHMS Results

Some school districts have considered policies that require students to secure cell phones in pouches, lockers, or out of sight throughout the school day, and students would not have access to phones except for emergencies. Is this something we should continue?



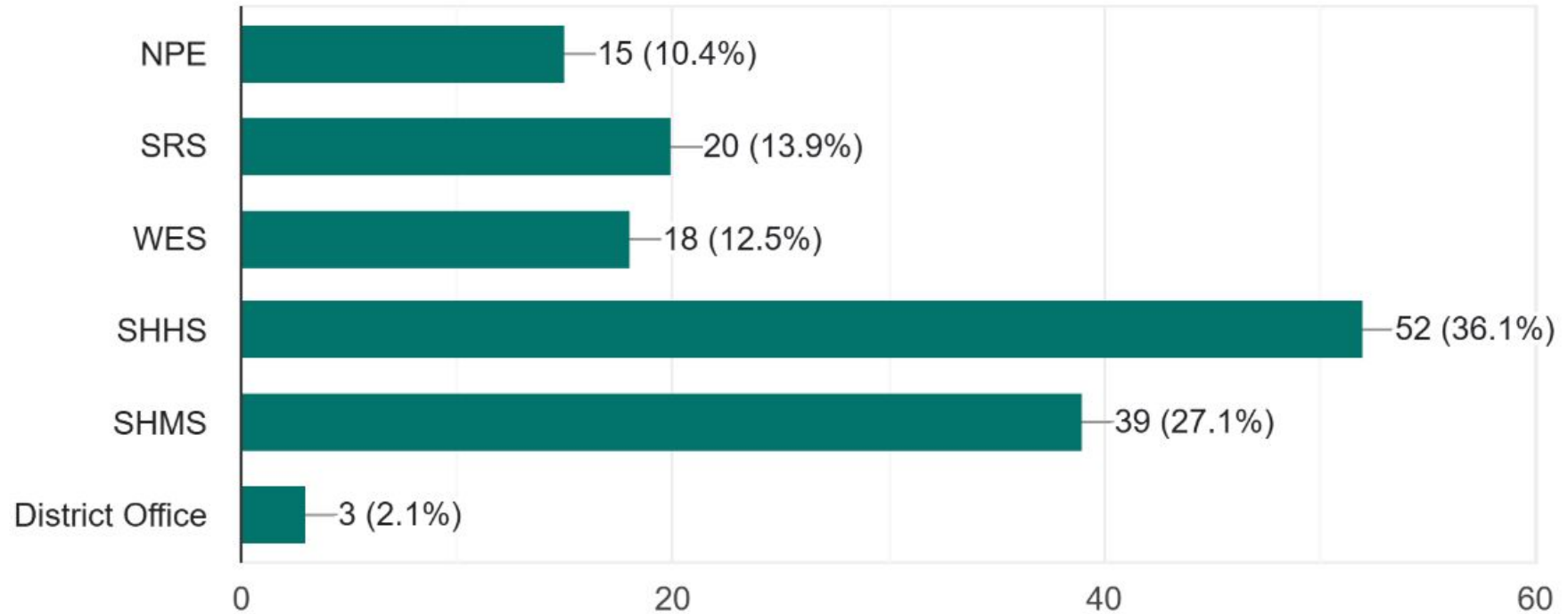
Should the school district consider outlining consequences in its cell phone use policy like consequences in the discipline policy? (e.g. – Warning, take phone for the day, detention, referral to Student Assistance Team for help, suspension, etc)



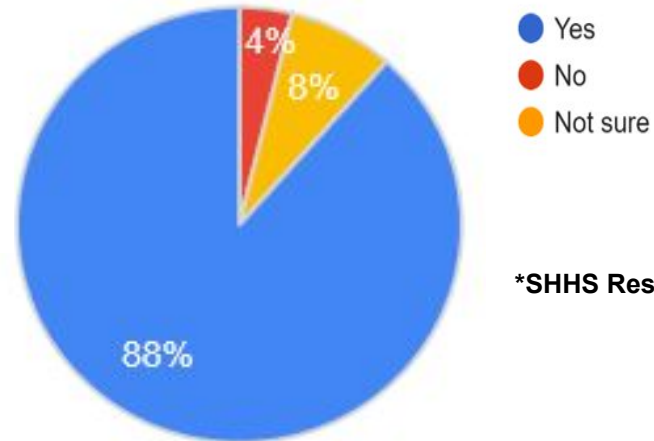
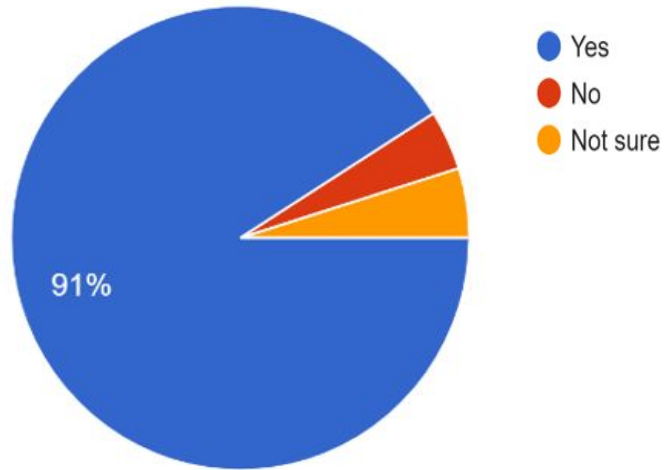
STAFF

1. In what building do you work?

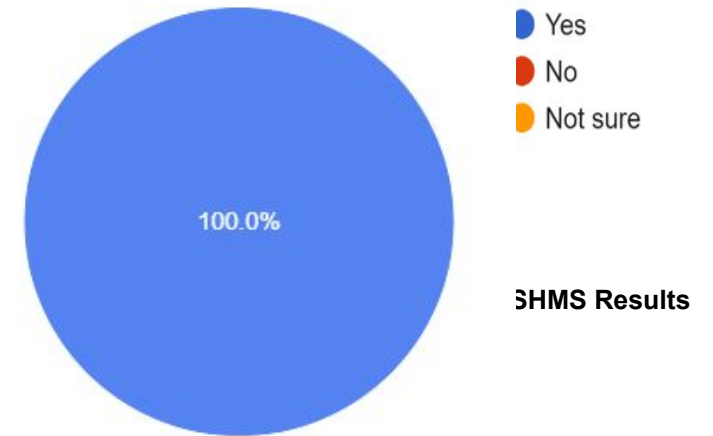
144 responses



Are you clear about school-wide expectations for cell phones during the school day that cell phones must be off and away during instructional time at the high school, and turned off and away all day at the middle and elementary schools?

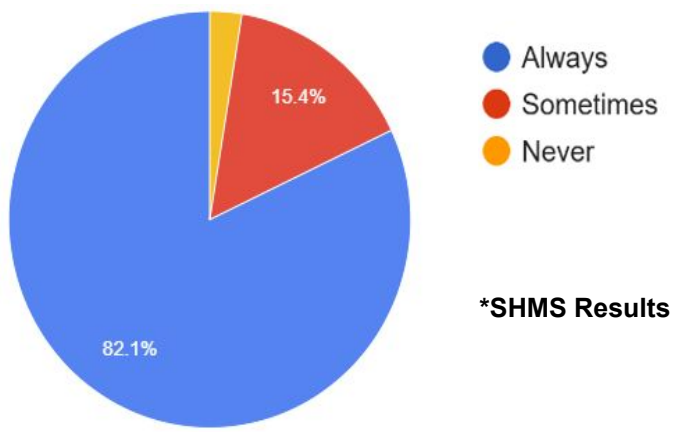
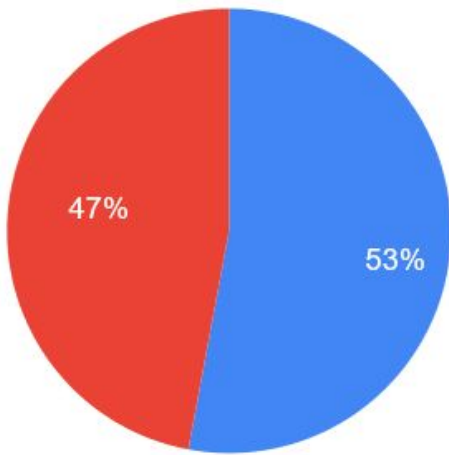
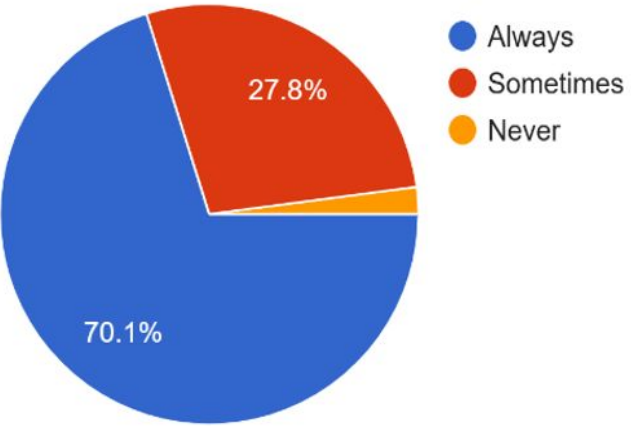


***SHHS Results**

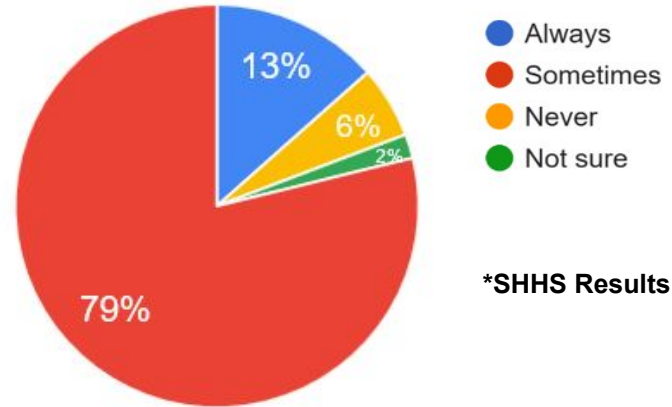
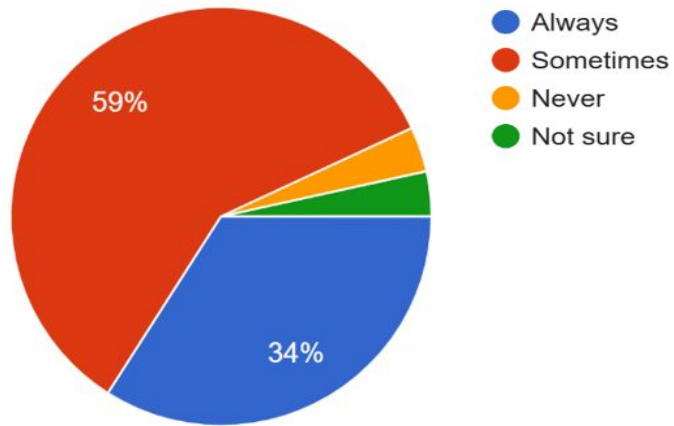


SHMS Results

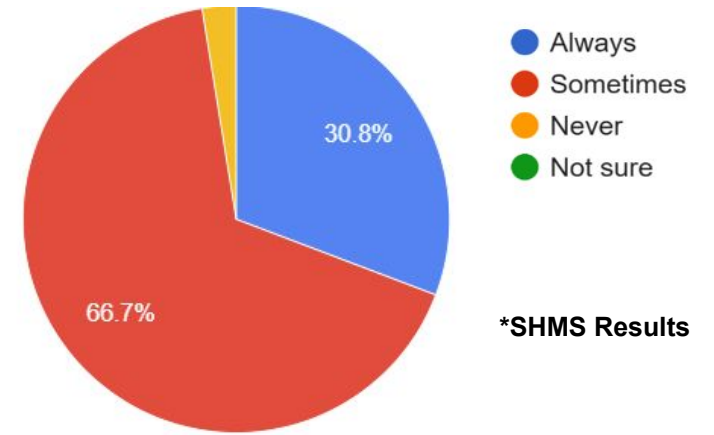
Do you follow / enforce the expectations for cell phone use, as outlined in the student handbook?



Do you believe your students follow the expectations for cell phones in your class during the school day?

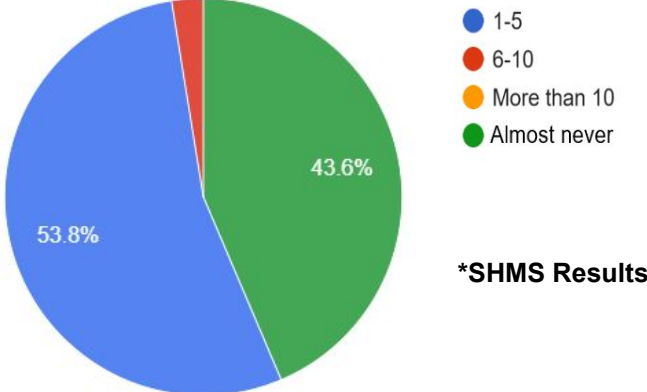
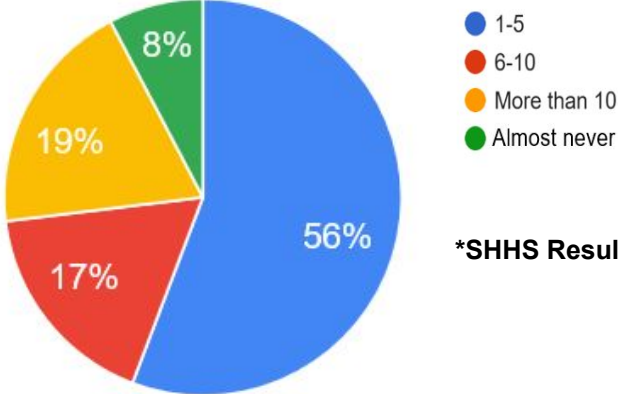
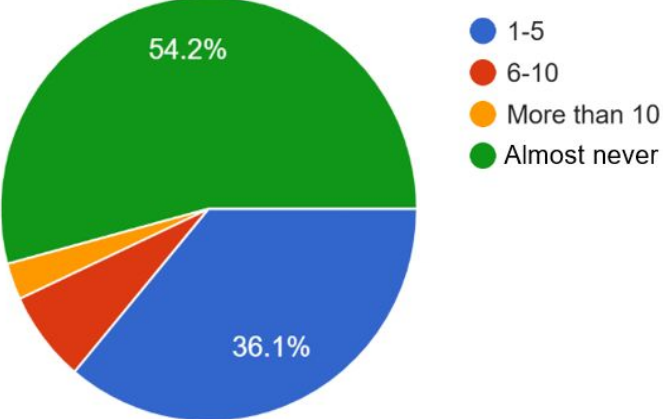


*SHHS Results



*SHMS Results

How frequently do you need to redirect cell phone use during instructional time per period?



CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

7. Which of these scenarios best meets YOUR classroom expectations for cell phones?

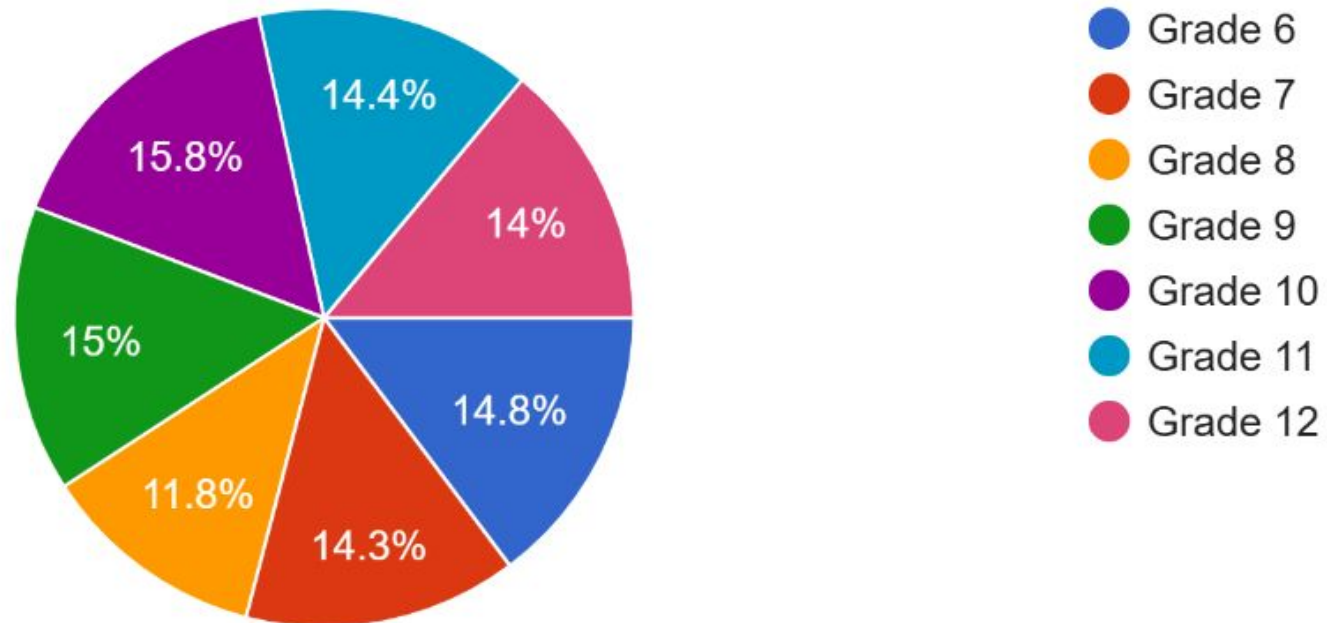
144 responses



STUDENTS

1. What is your grade?

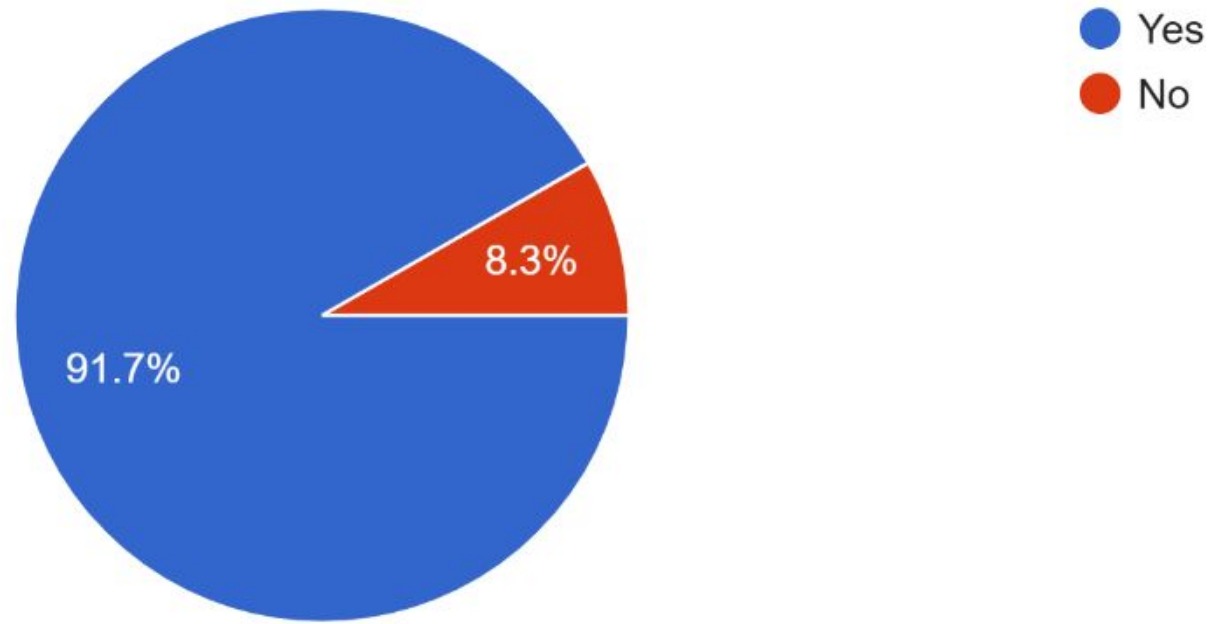
1,511 responses



STUDENTS

2. Do you have a cell phone?

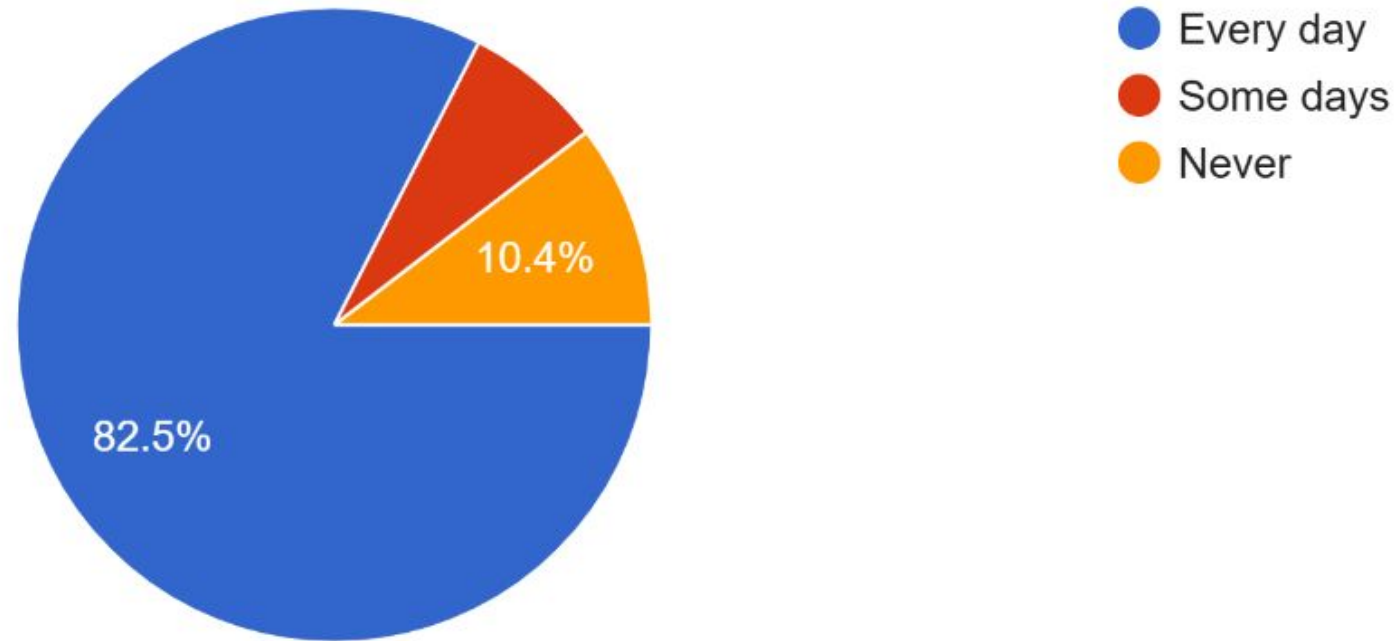
1,511 responses



STUDENTS

3. Do you bring your cell phone to school?

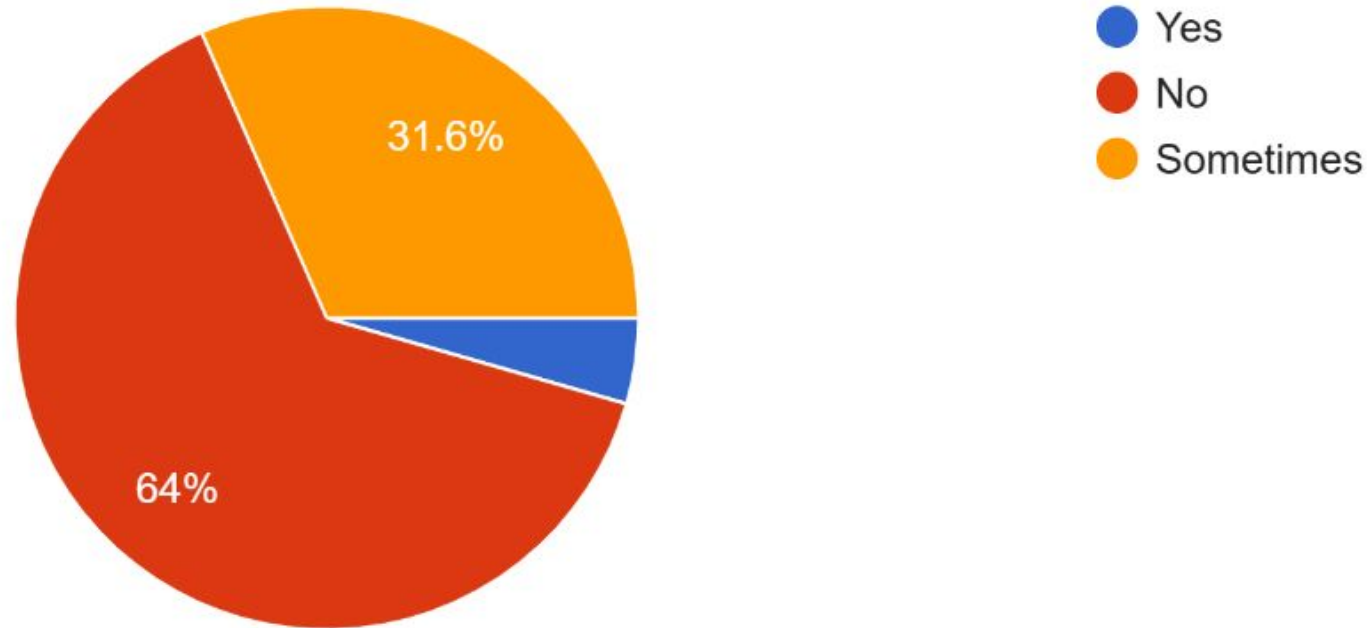
1,511 responses



STUDENTS

4. Do you feel like your cell phone can be a distraction in school?

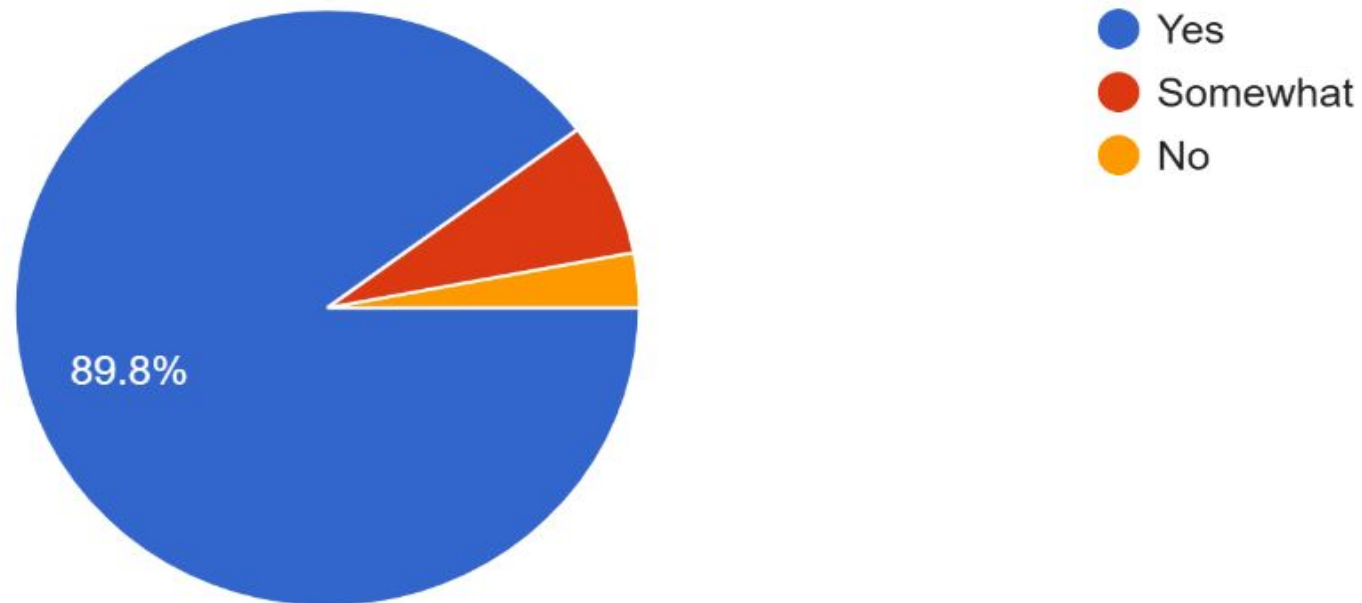
1,511 responses



STUDENTS

5. Do you know the current expectations for cell phones during the school day is that phones must be off and away during instructional time at the high school, and turned off and away all day at the middle school?

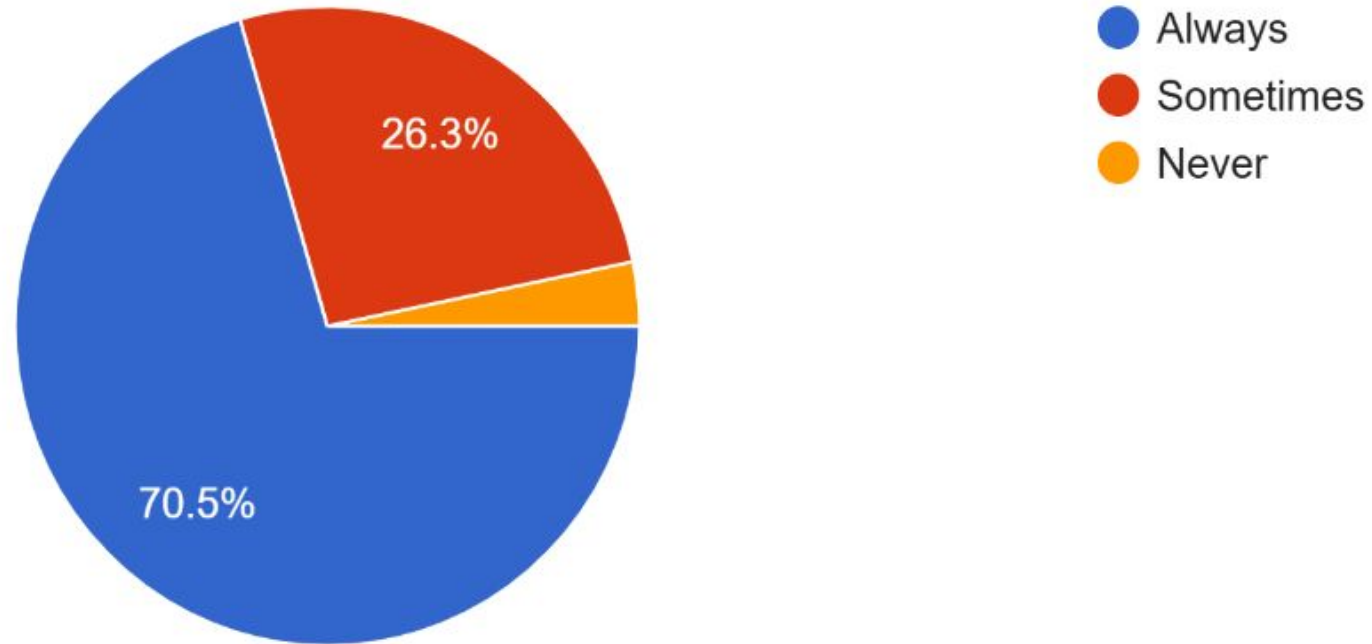
1,511 responses



STUDENTS

6. Do you follow the expectations for cell phone use?

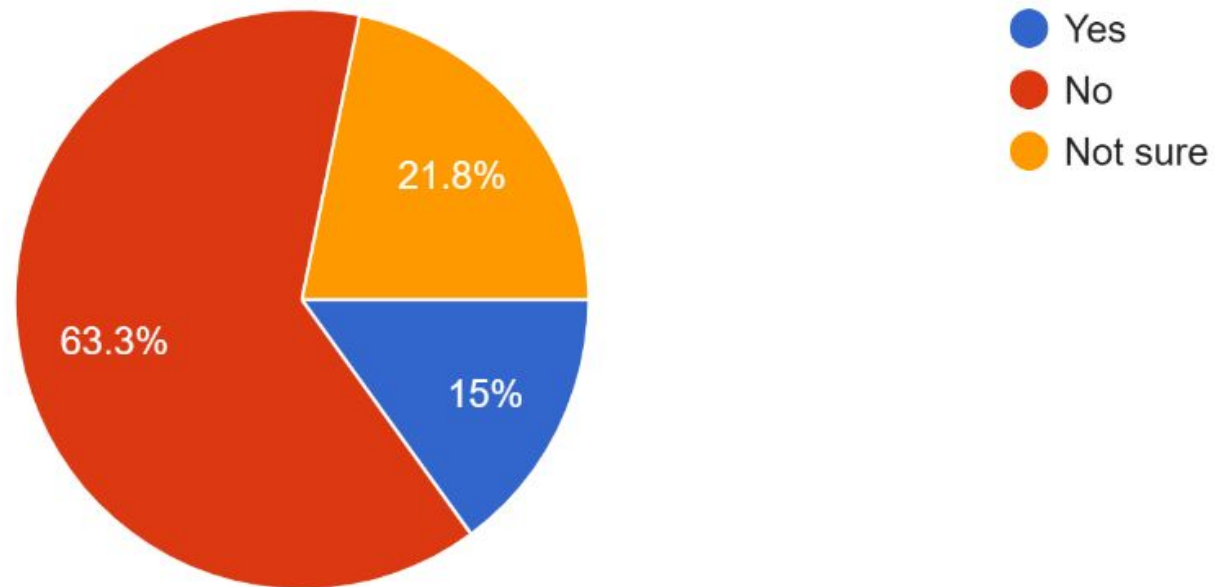
1,511 responses



STUDENTS

8. Some school districts have considered policies that require students to secure cell phones in pouches, lockers, or out of sight throughout the school day, and students would not have access to phones except for emergencies. Is this something we should consider as part of our cell phone policy?

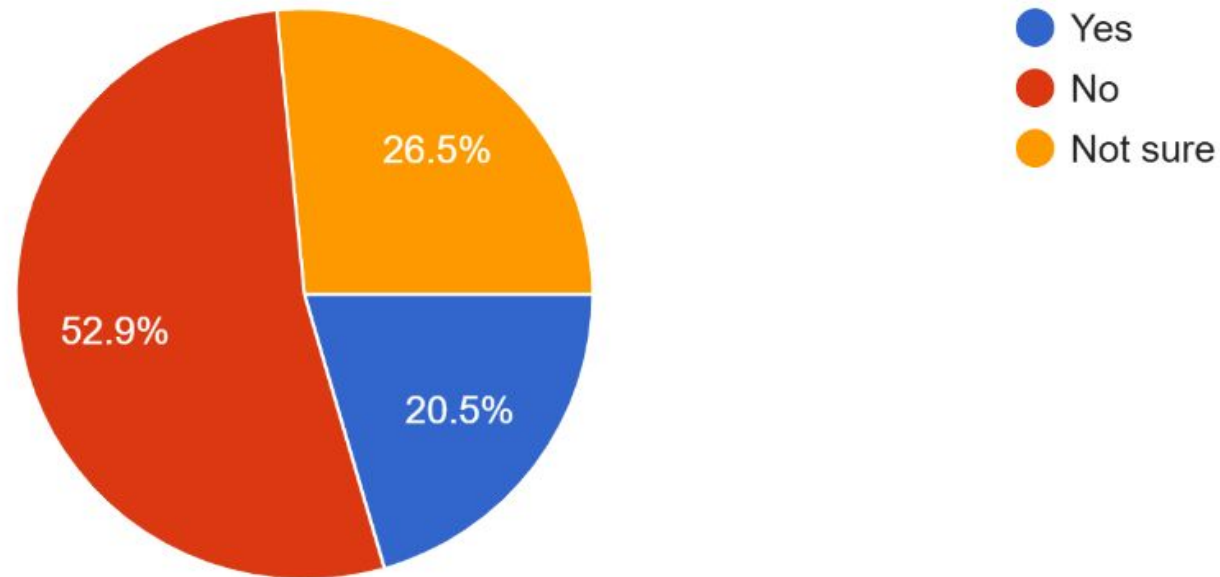
1,511 responses



STUDENTS

9. Should the school district consider outlining consequences in its cell phone use policy like consequences in the discipline policy? (e.g. – Warning, take phone for the day, detention, referral to Student Assistance Team for help, suspension, etc.).

1,511 responses



SURVEY COMMENTS - PARENTS

Most parents who responded seem to favor limits on phone use in school but do not support a full ban.

While many value cell phones as an important tool for after-school communication and emergencies, they also recognize the potential distractions and negative impacts on learning.

There is broad support for clear rules that balance accessibility with appropriate limitations to minimize classroom disruptions.

A few parents criticized the survey itself, suggesting that it was biased in favor of allowing phones in schools.

PARENT COMMENTS BY CATEGORY

- Communication and safety (emergency contact, after school coordination, etc.) ~ 210
- Concerned/Opposed to cell phone use in school (distractions from learning, social and emotional impact, etc.) ~ 180
- Concern about policy implementation (restricted use in classroom, balanced approach, fairness, etc.) ~ 145
- Student rights and convenience ~ 50
- Special circumstances (medical needs, limit use due to signal, smartwatch considerations, etc.) ~45



SURVEY COMMENTS - STAFF

- Most staff agree that cell phones are a major distraction and should be restricted during instructional time.
- Some teachers agree there are benefits for emergency communication, medical needs, or classroom activities.
- The majority believe that stronger enforcement, consistency, and clear consequences are necessary to prevent disruptions to learning.
- Many said they would also appreciate smartwatches be included in the policy and suggested limiting parental communication during school hours.

***SURVEY
COMMENTS -
STUDENTS***

that students are not necessarily opposed to reasonable phone policies but want policies that reflect fairness, trust, and practicality rather than blanket restrictions.



Many believe that allowing limited phone use in certain situations would help them stay engaged and focused while still respecting school rules.

COMMON THEMES FROM COMMENTS

Concerns About Cell Phone Use

- *All groups recognize phones can be distracting, but students believe the issue is overblown.*
- *Staff is the most concerned about academic dishonesty, classroom disruptions, and phone addiction.*
- *Parents acknowledge social media and cyberbullying concerns but are split on whether a total ban is necessary.*
- *Inconsistent enforcement is frustrating for both students and staff.*

Preferred Classroom Cell Phone Policies

- *Students and some parents prefer a balanced approach with restricted but allowed phone access.*
- *Staff overwhelmingly favors strict restrictions, with many advocating a full ban in class.*
- *Parents and students are more open to flexible policies than staff.*

HOW DO WE APPROACH A REVISED POLICY?

All three groups recognize the role of cell phones in emergency communication and after-school logistics.

Staff sees phones primarily as a distraction, while students and parents prefer a more flexible approach.

Consistency in enforcement is a major issue that needs to be addressed for any policy to be effective.

A compromise policy - restricting phone use during instruction but allowing limited access during designated times - may be the best solution to balance different concerns.

What has taken place since 2-12-25 Policy Meeting?

- Added definitions to the policy
- Clarified some language
- Visited Strath Haven HS classrooms and cafeteria
- Administrators spoke with other high schools with a total ban on phones
- Responded to hundreds of emails about the policy
 - Many want to ban cell phones K-12 all day (Many were Elem and MS parents)
 - Many do not want to ban phones all day – (Many were HS parents)

So how do other school districts implement off and away all day?

Montoursville - 584 students

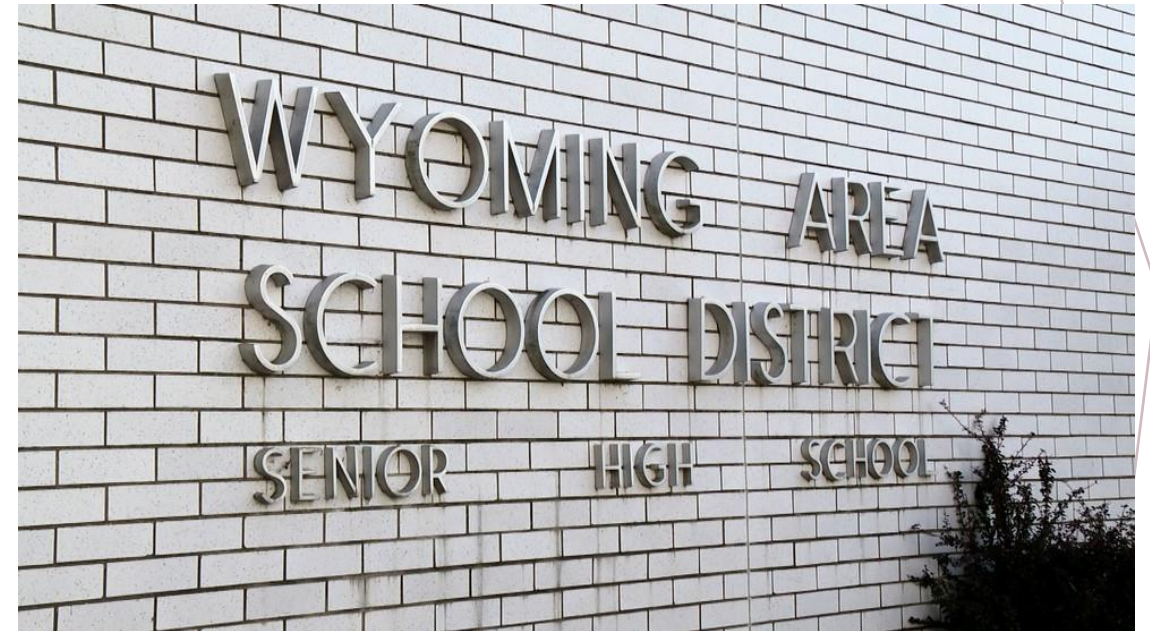
- Started January 1st; fall semester was all preparation (lot of parent and student communication). Students knew it was happening immediately after winter break.
- As long as they are away, teachers are not looking for them; discipline issues have reduced (ie social media conflicts); were clear with teachers that the school board made the decision, and they had no latitude in their ; admin addresses students immediately.
- Administration said it went more smoothly than expected. The semester of prep and communication was key. Some parents bought kids burner phones



So how do other school districts implement off and away all day?

Wyoming Area- 2000 students in HS

- Started in February, 2025 – Too early to provide data on effectiveness
- Feb meeting to amend policy, next year to Youndr pouches, Assigned a Youndr bag, enter the building with the electronics already in them,
- Metal detectors every day – pouch the phone after walking through the scanner
- Implementation piece will be a challenge and developing consequences, and what about families that refuse to comply - they have cyber platform that they feel students will turn to.



***So how do other school districts implement off and away all day?
Washington Twp- 400 students in HS***



- Started at beginning of 2024-25 school year
- Communicated the changes all last year in 2023-24.
- Youndr pouches + lockable cart in the dean's office. Dean is responsible for cell phone related discipline.
- Dean + Attendance Officer + Principal; Kids were initially breaking Youndr pouches, but it became less of an issue over time

***So how do other school districts implement off and away all day?
Millcreek SD– 2200 students in HS***



- Started discussing it fall 2023;
- Presented a couple of times to the school board; their administrators were the driving force behind the change
- They focused on the increased student engagement the summer before implementing off and away all day.
- If we see kids with a cell phone in the hallway or in class, then the teacher takes it. Teachers call down to the office and one of the people from the office comes to take the phone.

***So how do other school districts implement off and away all day?
Ringgold SD- 900 students in HS***



- They have a "no tolerance" - no phones on district property whatsoever. Students must turn off their devices prior to getting on the school bus. The strict policy was the result of an incident where kids filmed a fight.
- The way the policy is written, it is unenforceable; "half fighting it/half just going with the flow." Zero tolerance doesn't fix it.
- Yes, it is working but the policy is difficult to implement;
- May not have phones out at all. Difficult to enforce; students need phones for a variety of reasons (ie diabetic) but creates conflict;
- Students leaving the classroom more frequently

So how do other school districts implement off and away all day?

Derry Twp SD- 1079 students in HS



DERRY TOWNSHIP
SCHOOL DISTRICT

- Started discussing in Spring 2024 for implementation in fall 2024;
- Policy is working with board support – Students have 1:1 iPad which still allows access to items they want.
- The issue was a few teachers...some thought it was still optional.
- No phones out from 7:33 to 2:25 – They do not use Youndr pouches but are teaching students to be responsible.

Focus at Strath Haven High School – Things are better than the fall
1175 students in HS



- More consistent implementation of Phones off during instructional time
- Signage in the school
- Students are seeing more consistent enforcement
- Teachers are having more discussion about the topic
- Middle School staff preparing for spring fever and phones

***POLICY
AREAS TO
CONSIDER***

Clearly defined use
of phones

Progressive
Discipline/Consequences for violations

Restorative
Practices

Include other
electronic devices

The role of parents

Teacher and
administrative
responsibilities

Educate students on
responsible digital
education

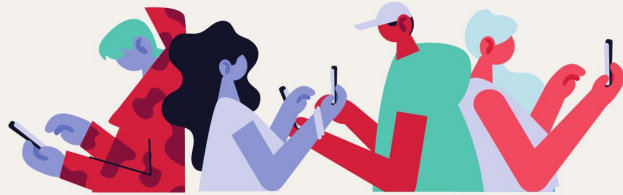
Special
considerations for
cell phone use in
school.

Administrative recommendations

- The policy needs to be approved by the school board
- First round of administrative regulations should be approved by the board (although not required)
- Review of edits to the policy and the regulations



Cell phones off



Learning on

THANK YOU