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Cell Phone and Social Media Considerations for Parents

As of the 2025–2026 school year, many school districts across the country have adopted policies restricting or banning cell phone use during school hours to minimize distractions and promote student well-being. In alignment with current research, best practice, and parent feedback RVSD has adopted Board Policy 5131.8, which states that “students shall not use smartphones or other mobile communication devices (which includes smartwatches) while at a school site or under the supervision and control of a district employee.” This policy allows for students to have their phones “off and away” during the school day.

Based on the parent feedback collected in the Fall of 2025, RVSD recognizes that parents want to work in collaboration with the school district in setting clear boundaries around cell phone and social media use. We also recognize and respect that each family needs to make their own decision for what is right for their context. The following recommendations are based on current best practices and research regarding cell phone and social media use:

Commitment with Other Parents
When we make collective decisions about cell phone and social media usage, it makes it easier for parents to hold firm boundaries. Collective, committed efforts can lessen the pressure we get from our children because “their friends have one”.

Model Healthy Technology Use
As parents, we know that our children are always watching our actions and learning from what we say and do. Setting a positive example by modeling healthy technology use at home sets the foundation for healthy technology use in the future. Demonstrate balanced screen time habits and prioritize in-person interactions to reinforce the importance of these behaviors.

Delay Smartphone Introduction Until AFTER 8th Grade
Experts recommend postponing the introduction of smartphones to children until after 8th grade. This approach helps mitigate risks associated with early exposure to social media and digital distractions.

Establish Clear Home Usage Guidelines
Setting consistent rules at home regarding screen time, app usage, and online behavior can help set boundaries for tech use. Utilize the wide array of parental control tools to monitor and manage your child's device use as well as setting limits on the amount of screen time students have.

Encourage Face-to-Face Social Interactions
Promote activities that encourage face-to-face interactions, such as sports, clubs, and community events, to help your child develop strong interpersonal skills and reduce reliance on digital communication.

Foster Open Communication with Your Child
Maintain an open dialogue with your child about their experiences and challenges related to the no-cell-phone policy.

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Utilize School-Provided Communication Channels
We recognize that there are times where you may need to get in contact with your child during the school day in order to change transportation plans, communicate a family emergency, or address medical needs. Calling the front office to have that message relayed to your child is the best way to connect during the school day.

Support the District's "Off and Away" Policy
Reinforce the importance of the "Off and Away" policy, which prohibits phone use during the entire school day, including lunch and transitions. This includes social media use, communication with parents, and other app usage during the school day.

Set an End Time for Cell Phone Use
If you make the decision to give your child a cell phone, it is important to have a time where students put them away at the end of the day. Cell phone use before bed can keep children from sleeping well, leading to difficulties with attention and concentration at school. Some parents require their children to put their phones in a specific place, outside of their bedrooms, before winding down for the night.

Restrict or Eliminate Social Media and Text Groups
Developmentally, elementary and middle school students aren't ready for the social dynamics presented through large text groups, social media, and even online gaming. These are also the places where students tend to experience or "try on" language that we collectively agree is inappropriate and can experience bullying within these settings.

Other Resources for Families:
Wait Until 8th
Screen Sense
Kids IRL
Common Sense Media
Parental Controls (Apple, Google, Microsoft, other parental control apps)