

Renton Technology Coordinating Council (RTCC)

Meeting Minutes

March 31, 2026

ATTENDING

Dr. Ellen Dorr, Dr. Avanti Bergquist, Alex Castro-Wilson, Chris Cronas, Dr. Bob Ettinger, Kristine Farwell, Mawiyah Fields, Jennifer Hefford-Anderson, Woody Sobey, Susan Talley, and Kerrie Thornton

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Cell Phone Guidance Review
 - Data Survey Review
- New Staff Device Decision
- Celebrations

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ellen welcomed the council and thanked them for their attendance. She extended a special welcome to the newest member of RTCC, Chris Cronas. She advised the council to access the meeting slide deck, as they would be reviewing a significant amount of data (linked in the slides) during the meeting.

With a new council member, Ellen provided a more in-depth overview of the role of RTCC. She explained that the council serves as a forum for reviewing the district's technology plan. In the past, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) required districts to maintain a separate technology plan, but that requirement has since been removed. Now, technology planning is guided by alignment with the district core values and how decisions support the strategic framework.

Ellen described how the council's work is typically centered on a few priority focus areas each year (identified by the council) to address varying needs across the district. For example, the council helped to develop a digital policy for Artificial Intelligence (AI) when it first began to emerge prominently in schools. More recently, the council tested and reviewed laptops to ensure that the new device selected would meet the needs of our staff members.

Ellen went on to describe how the work of the council has evolved over time. In earlier years, RTCC had subcommittees dedicated to specific topics, such as internet filtering. Today, those topics are generally explored by the full council as one of the priority focus areas. This shift has created a more unified approach, with review/discussion consistently centered on how technology decisions can best support student performance and achievement.

Ellen went over the agenda and asked everyone to introduce themselves by sharing their name, role, and something they are looking forward to or hope to accomplish over Spring Break.

See [addendum](#) for individual responses.

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.

Ellen 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 gave the council time to review the [February 3, 2026 Meeting Minutes](#), and asked for questions, corrections, clarifications, or additions. There were none.

CELL PHONE GUIDANCE REVIEW

Ellen opened by reviewing the RTCC Priorities for the 25-26 school year and shared how the council would be spending their time for the remainder of the meetings.

- **March 31st (today):** Review cell phone guidance survey results.
- **May 26th:** Explore digital citizenship.

Ellen shared some high-level information about the surveys. She reminded the council that four surveys were sent out: students, families, staff, and administrators. She noted that while the administrator survey was executed, those results were reviewed by Cabinet and the District Instructional Leadership Team (DILT), as there wasn't a significant amount of data to dig into. Cabinet and DILT focused on identifying trends in the administrator responses. Some key takeaways they identified were:

- **Elementary:** What is currently in place at elementary schools is working well.
- **Secondary:** There was variability in both the effectiveness of the pouch as a tool for guidance management and the consistency of enforcement.
 - **Ellen:** This echoes the informal feedback we received from the Superintendent student visits earlier this year. We do have a solution for a better pouch and are in the process of pursuing it for secondary schools.

Survey Overview

Ellen shared an overview of the survey results with the council. She noted that the council had access to all the data collected and was welcome to review it, but for this meeting she created a slide deck for each group of responses to make it easier for the council to review and reflect on them.

Students: 743 responses	Families: 343 individual responses	Staff: 216 responses
463 Middle School 280 High School	176 Elementary 174 Middle School 130 High School	44 Elementary 79 Middle School 93 High School

Perception of Enforcement

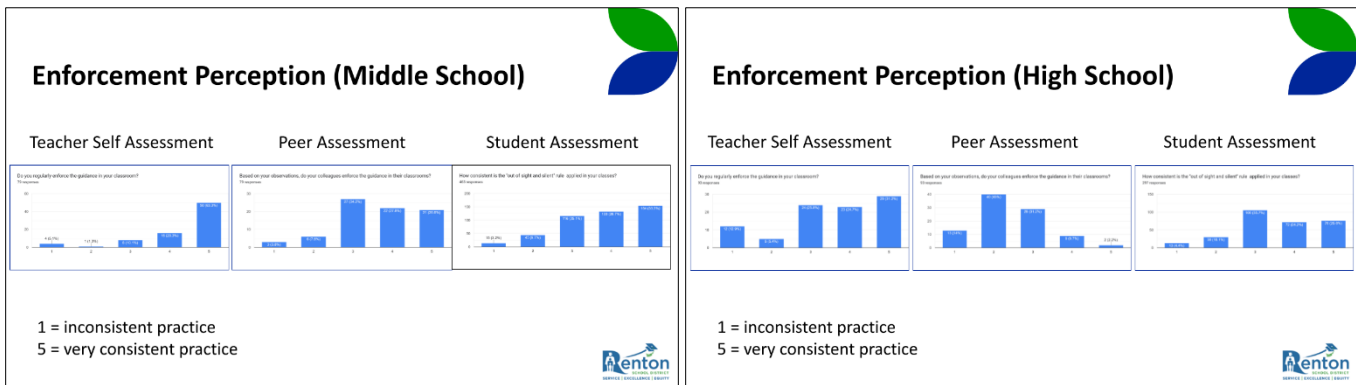
One of the things we wanted to ask about was consistency in enforcement. This was a key consideration when RTCC originally developed the guidance because we recognized that the success of the guidance was dependent on how well it could be understood, implemented, and enforced. The questions we asked in the student and staff surveys were:

- **Secondary Students:** How consistent is the "out of sight and silent" rule applied in your classes?
- **Staff:** Do you regularly enforce the guidance in your classroom?
- **Staff:** Based on your observations, do your colleagues enforce the guidance in their classrooms?

Ellen commented on the following:

- At middle school, teachers self-report more regular enforcement, but the peer assessment is more varied.

- At high school, staff self-report a range of relatively consistent enforcement, but perceive that their peers are not very consistent. There are also a fair number of staff who self-report that they do not enforce it at all.
- Middle school students report more consistent practices than high school students.



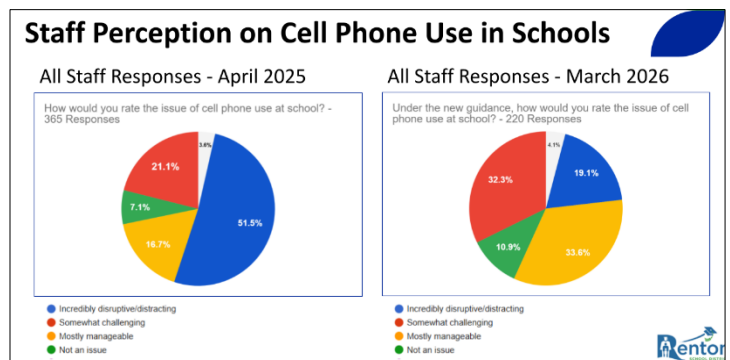
Perception of Cell Phone Use in Schools (Staff)

We wanted to make sure we had comparative data from our initial cell phone survey last spring, especially regarding the perception of cell phone use in schools. The question we asked in April 2025, and March 2026 (after guidance implementation) was: “How would you rate the issue of cell phone use at schools?”

- **Blue:** Incredibly disruptive/distracting
- **Red:** Somewhat challenging
- **Yellow:** Mostly manageable
- **Green:** Not an Issue
- **Grey:** Other / write-in responses

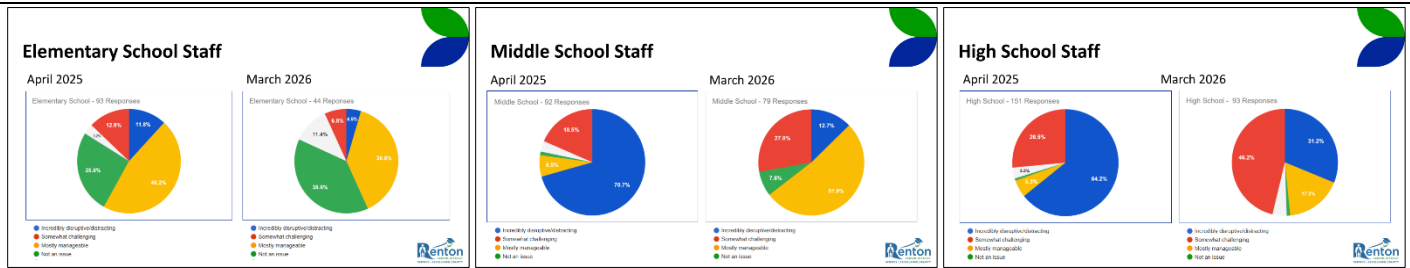
Ellen commented on the all-staff comparison (to the right):

- The perception that cell phone use in schools was “incredibly disruptive/distracting” decreased from ~52% to ~19%.
- Since last year, the perception that cell phone use in schools is “somewhat challenging” or “mostly manageable” has increased, while the perception that it is “incredibly disruptive” has declined—an overall improvement in how cell phone use is viewed.



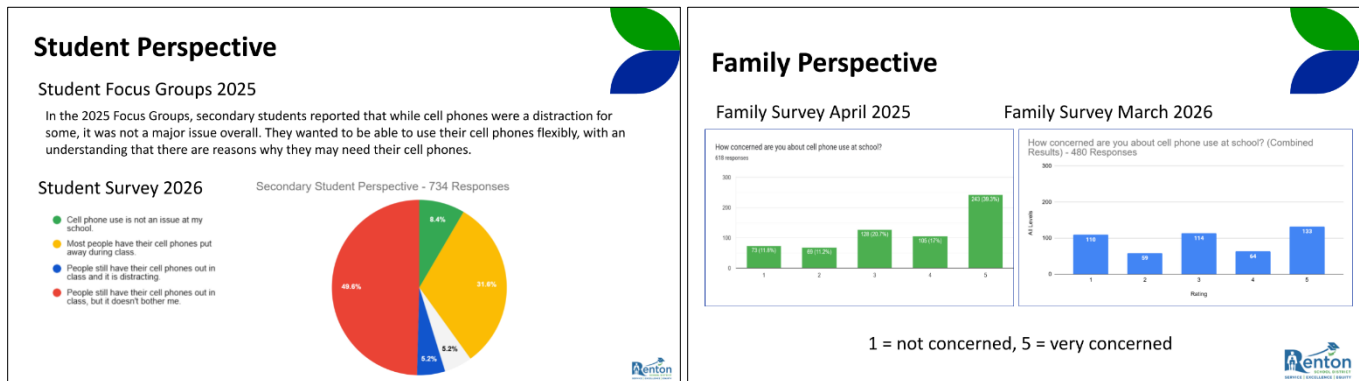
Ellen then looked specifically at perception at each grade level.

- **Elementary:** In 2025, most staff considered cell phone use to be either “mostly manageable” or “not an issue,” and that trend has continued.
- **Middle Schools:** The most notable shift is that the percent of staff respondents who considered cell phone use “incredibly disruptive” decreased from ~70% to ~13%.
- **High Schools:** We are seeing a shift from cell phones being viewed as “incredibly disruptive” to being considered either “somewhat challenging” or “mostly manageable.” While the improvement is not as significant as what we saw at the middle school level, it is still worth noting.



Perception of Cell Phone Use in Schools (Students & Families)

- Students:** Ellen explained that in 2025 students were not surveyed. Instead, she held focus groups with them to discuss the topic of cell phones. As a result, we don't have a direct comparison between this year and last year. However, student respondents in 2026 largely report the following:
 - People still have their cell phones out in class, but it doesn't bother me (~50%).
 - Most people have their cell phones put away during class (~32%).
- Families:** Families were asked how concerned they were about use of cell phones in school. While the results varied, we do see the percentage of respondents who reported being "concerned" or "very concerned," decreasing from ~60% in 2025 to ~41% in 2026.

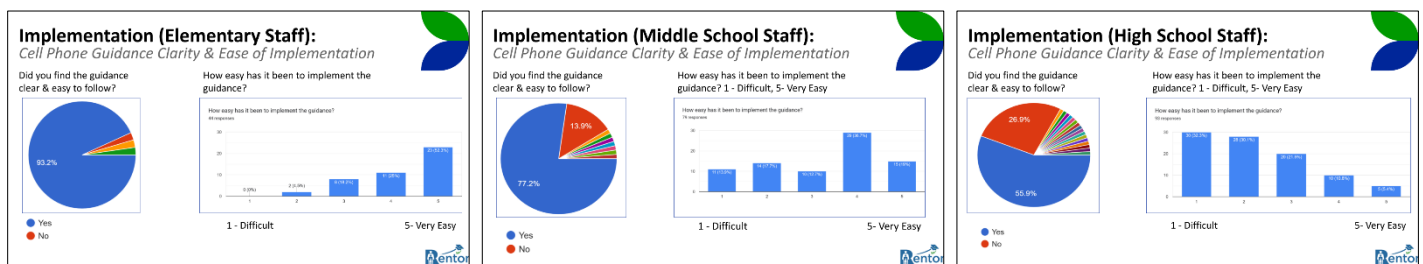


Implementation (Staff)

We asked the staff two questions regarding implementation:

- Did you find the guidance clear and easy to follow?
- How easy has it been to implement the guidance?

The trend here is similar for both questions by level: the clarity and ease of implementation decrease the higher the grade band. Elementary schools found the guidance clear and easy to follow, with ~75% of respondents finding it easy or very easy to implement. In middle schools, we see a slight shift down in both clarity and ease of implementation. In high school, there was a higher percentage of respondents who did not find the guidance clear (or gave an alternate response) and a high percentage of respondents (~64%) finding it "difficult" or "very difficult" to implement.

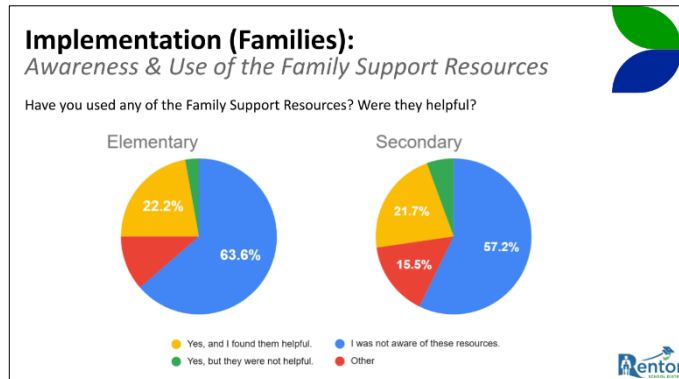
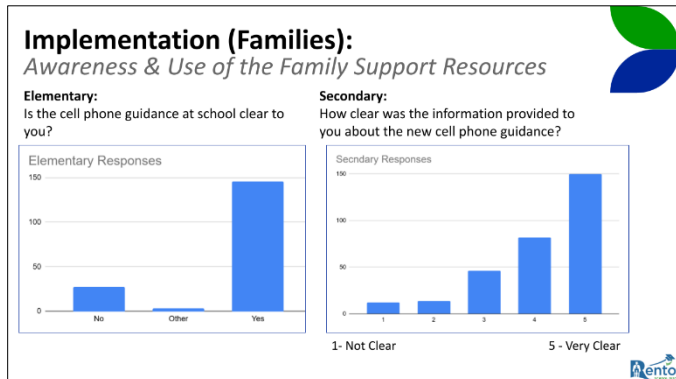


Implementation (Families)

We also asked families two questions regarding implementation.

- The first question was focused on the clarity of the guidance. Did they understand it? Were they provided clear information?
- The second question was about their awareness of the family support resources. Did they use the resources and were they helpful?

While clarity regarding the guidance was high, we learned that many families were not aware of the support resources available.



RTCC Survey Results Review Activity

For a more in-depth review of survey results, Ellen split the council up into three groups. Each group was assigned a set of survey results: students, families, or staff. Prior to the meeting, Ellen prepared a slide deck for each survey group. She walked the council through one set of slides to show them how to navigate the quantitative and qualitative feedback for their group. All slide decks had a link to open-ended feedback. Some groups had coding options available on the open-ended responses, while others had a space to take notes. Ellen asked the council to review the responses and see if they could identify any trends.

Ellen highlighted one section of the family survey results that she asked the Families Group to give special attention to. The question was: “Was there an instance where you were unable to reach your child? What happened?” She explained that this was one of the biggest concerns among families during the development of the guidance, so she pulled those responses out specifically for review.

Alex asked a clarifying question about whether the families were able to complete the survey for each student. Ellen confirmed that families were able to complete the survey by level (elementary, middle, and high school), so a family could respond for each grade band in which their children were enrolled.

Ellen gave table groups time to review their sections, then brought the council back together to share what they discussed. She asked each table group to answer the following questions:

- What are the key takeaways from the surveys and the input shared?
- What should be next steps, including communication ideas?

Staff Group: Chris, Susan, and Woody

- **Chris:** There appears to be a correlation between the respondents who shared they are struggling with behavior and the need for support around understanding how to address the behavior. One comment from the high school survey framed cell phone use in the context of addiction. If there is not a ready-made intervention we

can train staff on – something to help students who have addictive behavior toward their phone - staff are going to continue to struggle with this. The support needed to implement the policy has to be more robust than simply saying “no.” If every student responded to a good talking-to, we would not have behavior programs. We likened it to the anti-smoking programs many of us experienced growing up. Hopefully, there will be some funding that comes from the lawsuits that have been arising regarding cell phones/social media, like there was with the tobacco litigation in the 1980s (which eventually helped fund Tier 1 interventions). However, we are a long way from that. For now, it seems teachers need more support in how to address this behavior and how to understand it, rather than viewing every interaction through the lens of a power struggle.

- **Woody:** There were a lot of people who thought they were not seeing any impact from the guidance implementation because the students were just transitioning from their cell phones to their Chromebooks.
- **Mawiayah:** Some staff say that not everyone is enforcing the guidance. I don’t think they know how to enforce it. Maybe their administrators didn’t sit down and talk with them about it?
 - **Ellen:** I know Secondary administrators reviewed the guidance with staff, since it was part of the August Days. They each had a slide deck to share with their teams on how to introduce and explain the guidance to students, and to clarify the systems their school had in place for enforcement. Nelsen did that during August Days, right?
 - **Mawiayah:** Yes, and we revisit it when we go over our discipline data per CPA requirement. We do include cell phone infractions in that.
 - **Ellen:** The other thing to be aware of with these surveys is that they were optional. Generally, people who take the time to complete an optional survey often have strong opinions. So, it could be people who are struggling more with the guidance who wanted to provide feedback. However, that is not to say that this claim is not true. Inconsistency has been consistently identified in the feedback from all stakeholders.
- **Avanti:** I do wonder about that though. Is the inconsistency in enforcement at high school correlated to the guidance not working well at high school?
 - **Ellen:** I also wonder what *part* is not working well. For example, one thing that came up frequently in the written responses was that the pouch itself was not sufficient. That made it harder to enforce the guidance because students could still get their phones out or damage the pouch. So, one thing we can do is remove that variable by using a different pouch that does not have those deficiencies and is effective when it is being used.

Students Group: Alex, Jennifer, Kerrie, and Kristine

- **Jennifer:** The students have hilarious responses. One student even submitted a whole essay and requested feedback. If only we knew which student, we could provide that feedback.
 - **Ellen:** Definitely! If you give students open-ended questions, they will definitely give back some funny responses. We do know that all the middle school responses were from McKnight.
- **Jennifer:** It was interesting to see that kids say that the other kids are using their phones, but they aren’t doing it themselves. But in general, the middle school students were pretty honest and direct. They aren’t super happy about the guidance saying it “sucks” or is “suss.” But there are also other students who say they are more “locked in.” I just wish the responses weren’t only from McKnight.
 - **Ellen:** Agreed. The student survey was sent to all secondary administrators, but ultimately only was administered to students at McKnight, Hazen, and Lindbergh. So, we are missing a lot of viewpoints.
- **Jennifer:** I also found it interesting how many middle schoolers said they don’t have a phone. That was not something I expected.

- **Kerrie:** Of the results I was able to get through, there were a couple of things that stood out. The first is students report being bored in class now (without their phones). The goal of implementing the cell phone guidance was to limit distraction so that students are more engaged in learning, but these responses are saying they are not engaged. Alex reviewed the Spanish results, and many of those students said they are not engaged or were *unable* to engage, which has a different implication. The second thing I noted among the responses was students basically saying: “let us decide for ourselves,” which is something we heard in focus groups last year.
- **Alex:** In the middle school responses, it also seems like they don’t necessarily want to get rid of the policy, they just want to find some compromises and balance. A few students advocated for a three-warning policy. Some said that pouches were a waste of money, and we should use that money to have more sports teams or other programs. I appreciated that they advocated for things they would like to see.
- **Jennifer:** Tying back to what Chris was saying, many students reference that “power struggle” in their responses, talking about arguing in class and how they are mad at a teacher. One of the questions asked about changes in the classroom, and there were several responses saying that their teacher is mean, which can be an indication of that power struggle.
 - **Ellen:** It sounds similar to what we experienced with GoGuardian Teacher (classroom management software) where students said things like: “I don’t love it, but I get it.” They understand why we need to have a policy, but they would like it to be different.
- **Avanti:** Regarding the part where students want to decide for themselves, did you notice that more in middle school or high school?
 - **Kerrie:** It was in both, but I didn’t get to review enough of the high school responses to get a big enough sample size.
 - **Jennifer:** It was more in the middle school responses than high school.
 - **Avanti:** Developmentally, I could see why the middle school students would want more independence here, but I would still not go in that direction for this age group.
 - **Ellen:** It also makes me think about what we heard in the student focus groups. Students do not want to be pouches proactively. They understand using the pouch as a consequence of misuse, but they would not want to have their cell phones taken away as soon as they come into the building.

Families Group: Avanti, Bob, and Mawiyah

- **Avanti:** It seemed like there were more middle school families who wanted to ban phones completely.
 - **Bob:** Yes, that was the top request with middle school families.
- **Bob:** There were a handful of positive responses and a handful of comments to enforce the policy better. In fact, I think the comment to “enforce better” was the most common at high school.
- **Avanti:** In terms of the question about parents being unable to reach their kids during school, it does seem more difficult in middle and high school to get messages to the kids than in elementary school.
 - **Ellen:** Yes, it does seem it is not as reliable at secondary.

RTCC Review Next Steps

Staff Group: Chris, Susan, and Woody

- **Chris:** Provide support in understanding the function of behavior and how to build a responsive behavior plan for students that will yield results.
- **Woody:** Retrain staff on GoGuardian Teacher for management of Chromebook use.

Students Group: Alex, Jennifer, Kerrie, and Kristine

- **Alex:** Investigate how we can support our multi-lingual students so that they are better able to engage in the classroom – whether co-teaching or providing other support, especially if they don't have access to tools they are used to having with their phone, like Google Translate. Also, just really listen to student feedback and hear what they are saying. Some of the kids reported they feel stressed that they can't see the clock in class because the clock is covered or not working, and it makes them want to check their phone to see the time, but they are worried they will get in trouble. Those are things that have simple fixes.
 - **Bob:** My memory at McNight is that the clocks are digital and that teachers cover them up so that students aren't counting the minutes to the end of class. But it's an interesting thing to note that it sparks wanting to look at their phone.

Families Group: Avanti, Bob, and Mawiayah

- **Bob:** The only thing I would say for next steps is having high schools reflect the enforcement data back to their staff and see what they have to say about it. That feels like the most actionable thing within our zone of control.
 - **Avanti:** Yes, and maybe even reflect back that families are asking for stronger enforcement at high schools.
 - **Ellen:** Yes, that might be a better framing: it's not that staff are claiming their peers are not enforcing the policy, but that families are noticing it isn't consistently enforced. And we knew this was going to be the most challenging part of establishing a policy, which is why we tried to make the guidance as simple and easy to follow as possible, with a clear tagline.
- **Bob:** I am mostly interested to know why teachers are not enforcing it. Are they not enforcing it because they don't believe in it? Are they not enforcing it because they want phones available for instructional purposes? Are they not enforcing it because they want to avoid power struggles? There are a lot of potential reasons. That question needs to come before we push enforcement.
 - **Avanti:** From what I recall last year, it was primarily high school staff that said: "I'm not going to do that." Is that right?
 - **Ellen:** Yes, there were some people who responded that way.
 - **Avanti:** Yes, so that is where my mind went immediately, but Bob is right, there could be a lot of reasons for not enforcing the cell phone guidance.
 - **Ellen:** And if you (or anyone) would like to, you can really dig into what staff said regarding enforcement by accessing the link in the slides with all the staff responses.
- **Alex:** Is there a way for us to see the discipline data between this year and last year? I am curious about the social-emotional impact. I think it would be interesting to see.
 - **Ellen:** I would have to look at the discipline code. There was not supposed to be one for cell phones.
 - **Chris:** It would be interesting to disaggregate that information, because what happens is that cell phone use will result in a consequence, which may result in an action on the student's part, that then leads to a disciplinary action.
 - **Avanti:** I do wonder if there is less discipline because there are no cell phones.

Ellen thanked everyone for their engagement in this work and in the conversation.

NEW STAFF DEVICE SELECTION

Before closing the meeting, Ellen gave a brief update on the staff device selection. After receiving feedback from various stakeholders, we have selected the HP X Convertible device. We have moved forward with purchasing to secure our place in line. We have also already placed our orders for student iPads and Chromebooks.

CELEBRATIONS

Ellen closed the meeting by inviting the council members to share any gratitude or celebrations.

- **Mawiayah:** Thank you for synthesizing and putting together the data for us to review.
 - **Chris:** I agree. You guys did a nice job on that.
- **Avanti:** I appreciate all the work and getting the feedback.
- **Susan:** I appreciate Kerrie for her excellent notes.
- **Ellen:** I appreciate the collective approach to this work, the different perspectives, and people asking good questions.
- **Alex:** Welcome to Chris, thank you for joining the group.

MEETING ADJOURNED

5:50 PM

ADDENDUM

Dr. Ellen Dorr, *Chief of Technology and Strategic Initiatives*

During breaks we (Technology Services) sometimes complete tasks that have a higher impact. So, Monday, while the district office is closed, we will be upgrading the Data Center. The network will be down for two hours, so it's a good opportunity to get it done while staff aren't working. I'll also be meeting with the State Auditor's Office regarding the IT Policy Audit to help provide more information about the guidance in place.

Dr. Avanti Bergquist, *Board Member*

We are taking a cruise from Tampa to Portugal.

Alex Castro-Wilson, *Special Education Teacher, Bryn Mawr Elementary*

I will be working on my doctoral homework. Then, at the end of break, I'll attend the annual Union Rep Assembly in Spokane.

Chris Cronas, *Principal, Sartori Elementary*

I am going to Sedona with my wife. I've never been there. We will do some hiking and relax. I hope to accomplish nothing.

Dr. Bob Ettinger, *Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment*

My kids go to school in Seattle, so their spring break is different than mine. I will definitely be working for some of the break, but I am hoping to go on a hike as well.

Kristine Farwell, *Director of Technology Customer Services*

Surprisingly, I do not have a technology services project going on, so I am looking forward to taking a couple of days off and celebrating my birthday.

Mawiayah Fields, *Assistant Principal, Nelsen Middle School*

Go Hawks! I am looking forward to sleeping in but still being very productive. I am a doctoral student, so there is some work I want to accomplish. I also want to get started on some end-of-year evaluation work.

Jennifer Hefford-Anderson, *District Assistant Principal on Special Assignment*

I am also a student, so I will be doing homework for my doctorate. My kids have the week off, so we are going to try to see a Mariners game and do stuff around the house.

Woody Sobey, *Career & Technical Education Instructional Facilitator*

One thing I want to accomplish is completing a biometric scan so I can get my Visa to move to the UK in August. I am looking forward to taking a group of eight students to Juneau, Alaska to participate in the Native Youth Olympics.

Kerrie Thornton, *Information & Communication Specialist*

I am looking forward to having the house to myself this weekend. At work, however, I am looking forward to getting some work done on the RSDnet (district intranet) modernization.

Susan Talley, *Board Member (and Woody's Best Friend)*

I just want to rest. I am tired. Our break is the week after yours, so I have a little longer to wait.