



CENTRAL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Mark E. Marshall, Ed.D.

July 10, 2026

Dear Central Unified Families,

As we prepare to welcome our students back to campus on Wednesday, August 12, our top priority remains creating the safest, healthiest, and most productive learning environments possible. To achieve this, we must address an issue that directly impacts every classroom: the growing influence of smartphone distractions on our children's focus, academic success, and mental health.

In alignment with California's Phone-Free Schools Act, Central Unified is implementing Board Policy 5131.8, establishing phone-free campuses for the entire academic day.

We are not taking this step simply to comply with a state mandate. We are doing this because extensive data shows our students need a break from digital noise. **Studies reveal that phone-free learning environments significantly improve student focus, leading to a 6.4% boost in test scores overall and up to a 14% academic gain for students who are currently struggling.** More importantly, medical research directly links excessive daily screen time and social media alerts to rising rates of adolescent anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Our classrooms must be sanctuaries where students can fully engage in their education and build genuine human connections with peers and teachers.

How it Works:

- **Elementary Schools:** Classrooms will feature secure mobile communication device lockboxes for storing student phones during the school day.
- **Middle & High Schools:** Students will check out a secure Yondr mobile communication device pouch. Students will place their turned-off phone inside their personal pouch at the morning bell, keep the locked pouch in their possession throughout the day, and unlock it at designated stations at dismissal.

What is Enclosed in This Envelope: We understand that this represents a major transition for our families. To ensure total transparency and partnership, we have enclosed the following comprehensive resources for your review:

1. **The District Standard Operating Procedure (SOP No. 4207):** Outlining the official guidelines, implementation rules, and our progressive, supportive discipline framework.
2. **A FAQ Sheet:** Addressing specific questions regarding medical accommodations (such as blood sugar monitoring), IEP/504 exceptions, and day-to-day logistics.
3. **A Yondr Informational Sheet:** Explaining exactly how the physical pouch works.

District Administration

Mark E. Marshall, Ed.D. - Superintendent

*Javan Childs, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent - Human Resources & Labor Relations · Amer Iqbal, Assistant Superintendent - Chief Business Officer
Marielyn Lopez, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent - Student and Family Services · Julia McLennan, Assistant Superintendent - Educational Services*

4. **A Distribution Flyer:** Providing information on designated pouch pick-up times.

A Note on Student Safety and Emergency Communication: We know your primary concern as a parent is student safety, and it is ours, too. Our campuses rely on dedicated emergency communication protocols and direct coordination with local first responders. In a crisis, law enforcement emphasizes that a student's full attention must remain unhindered by digital distractions so they can follow immediate safety directives. Rest assured, in any emergency event or precautionary drill, the district will communicate with you directly and immediately via ParentSquare.

Next Steps for Families: Please review the enclosed documents carefully. Additionally, please remember to complete your mandatory Data Confirmation in the Aeries Parent Portal before arriving at your school site's upcoming technology, textbook, and phone pouch distribution events in early August.

Thank you for your partnership, your trust, and your dedication to making this the most focused, successful, and connected school year yet for every student.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Lopez, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Student & Family Services
Central Unified School District