



**LAUSD**  
UNIFIED

# **Supporting Student Mental Health:** *Providing a Phone-Free School Day* *November 12, 2024*

Andrés Chait  
Chief of School Operations



# Board Resolution 035-23/24 (June 2024)

## **“Supporting Student Mental Health and Learning Ensuring a Phone-Free School Day” Resolution**

- Development of policy to prohibit student use of cell phones and social media platforms district-wide during the entire school day
- Align with California and Federal legal requirements, for implementation beginning the second semester of the 2024/25 school year

# State Law: Use of Smartphones

## Education Code Section 48901.7

- Students shall not be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone under any of the following circumstances:
  - In the case of an emergency or in response to perceived threat of danger
  - When a teacher or administrator grants permission
  - When a licensed physician and surgeon determines it is necessary for health or well-being
  - When required in a pupil's individualized education program

## Approved by Governor on September 23, 2024 (Act to amend Section 48901.7)

- To promote evidence-based use of smartphone practices to support pupil learning and well-being, requires school districts to:
  - Adopt a policy to limit or prohibit use of smartphones by **July 1, 2026**
  - Update policy every five years
  - Engage District stakeholders in policy development
- Policy may include enforcement mechanisms that limit smartphones access

# Current District Policies

## **Bulletin –6399.2 – Social Media Policy for Students (Issued July 18, 2018)**

- Prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful activities by students online
- Prevent unauthorized disclosure of or access to sensitive information; Compliance with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- All social media on District devices and the District’s Network is always subject to District policies

## **Bulletin – 5468.0 – Use of Cellular Telephones and Other Electronic Devices by Students (Issued May 4, 2011)**

- Prohibits use of cellular phones, pagers, and any electronic signaling device by students during normal school hours or school activities, excluding the students’ lunchtime or nutrition breaks unless the school site council has adopted a stricter policy

# Research to Support Implementation

Potential Risks from excessive social media use include:

- Self-harm, risky behaviors and device-dependency
- Social comparison and low self-esteem
- Cyber-bullying and physical fights from hate-based content
- Exposure to predatory behaviors
- Overstimulation on brain's reward center, similar to addiction
- Attention problems and feelings of exclusion
- Increase in teenage anxiety, depression, and suicide
- Negative impacts to academic performance
- Exposure to harmful and inappropriate content



# Parent – Feedback & Questions

- Elementary students don't bring devices to school for the most part
- My child will violate the policy and bring their phone to school
- LAUSD is responsible for putting phones in student's hands
- Thankful for the policy and agree with the ban
- Phones should be left in backpacks
- What will be the protocol for phone use during an emergency?



*"Agree living in a new world of technology but thankful for the policy."*

*"I think phones should be left in backpacks."*

*"Parents need constant communication with kids during emergencies."*

# Student – Feedback & Questions

- Phones are used to complete tasks for school/instruction
- Advocacy for campaign for appropriate cell phone use vs. ban
- Communication with universities and colleges may be impacted
- Pouches allow you to keep your phone and is readily accessible
- What will be the protocol for phone use during an emergency?



*"Pouches allow you to keep your phone and accessible."*

*"Access is a concern during emergencies when your phone is stored in a locker in a different location."*

*"Students want to be reassured access to devices during emergencies."*



# Staff – Feedback & Questions

- Looking forward to students not being on their phones
- Appreciate students not having access to phone cameras
- Instructional time may be lost if phones are collected
- Concerns about parent 'buy-in' to the new policy
- What will be the protocol for phone use during an emergency?
- Who will be responsible for enforcing the new policy?
- How will this impact students with an IEP or Section 504 plan?



*"Students will find ways to conceal phones and access them."*

*"Implementation of policy will help increase student engagement in class."*

*"There will be loss of instructional time in the process of collecting phones."*

# Principal – Feedback & Questions

## Currently Implementing a Phone Free School Day Policy

- Inquiry into funding on products purchased
- First year of implementation was difficult but the second year was smooth
- Students leave their phones in their backpacks for the entire school day
- Phone pouches have had a very positive impact on the school community
- Consider incentives to help reinforce policy

## Currently not Implementing a Phone Free School Day Policy

- Inquiry into the funding on products being purchased
- Can multi-level span schools implement two options?

*"The best thing for my school. Pouches and magnets throughout the school where students lock/unlock phones for arrival/dismissal."*  
~Principal, King Drew MS

*"Implemented in November... and have had less fights."*  
~Principal Torres HS Renaissance

*"Students leave phone in backpack and cannot be accessed during school time and for the first 15 minutes after dismissal."*  
~Principal, Holmes MS

# Labor Partner – Feedback & Questions

## ***AALA/UTLA/Teamsters/CSEA***

- Inquiry into the funding on products purchased
- This will be great to help students self regulate behavior
- Staff enforcement of the policy is a concern
- In agreement with the research behind the new policy
- Parent buy-in will be the biggest challenge
- Provide staff with the tools to enforce the policy

*"Staff enforcement of the policy is a concern."*

*"Appreciate schools being able to adopt the option that works best for their school"*

*"Parents buy-in will be the biggest challenge."*

# External Voice – Researchers & Medical Professionals

We engaged with external partners including researchers, a medical physician and civic partners.

*“There is no way today that technology is all good and all bad. Certain content embedded in software impacts the adolescent brain. Social media provides non-interrupted feedback. These urges don’t stop. These kids are overly stressed.”*

*~Professor, University of North Carolina*

*“We are seeing the direct effects of cell phone usage resulting in increased bullying, and suicidal attempts and increased overdose visits in the ER as a result of access to drug purchases on social media.”*

*~Medical Doctor, California*

*“Research shows an increase in interaction among peers when cell phone use is limited or restricted.”*

*~Professor, Brown University, Rhode Island*

# External Voice – Other School Districts

- Students say they are less anxious
- Most are implementing phone free policies without the use of storage products
- Infeasible to access lockers during an emergency situation
- Cited cost for locker installation and loss of instructional time while accessing devices
- Primarily enforcing the storing of devices in backpacks
- Number of fights reduced and student engagement increased
- Challenges during lunch and passing periods

*"Parents are happy that phones are in the bookbags in case of emergencies."*

~Decatur School District, Illinois

*"We noticed reduction in referrals and increased student engagement."*

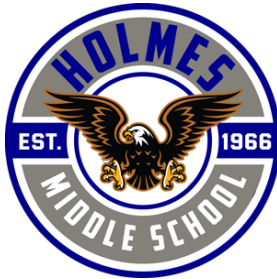
~Roseville City School District, CA

# Holmes MS – Implementing 9 years

- Phones are put away in backpacks at all times
- Includes passing periods, recess and lunch
- 15-minute 'grace period' right after dismissal, so that students may call/text parents to make arrangements for pick-up, etc.
  - If students stay longer, the phones return to backpacks
- Parent, staff and student buy-in is critical
- Increased student-to-student engagement during recess and lunch
- Reduction in incidents involving social media



Principal Kim D'Aloisio



# Dymally HS – Implementing 3 years

- Pouches are distributed to every student with a cell phone
- Cell phones turned off and stored in pouches as student enters school
- Pouch may be locked or unlocked with magnetic device
- Increased student-to-student engagement during recess and lunch
- Reduction in incidents involving social media
- Parent, staff and student buy-in is critical
- Incidents with lost or damaged pouches that need to be replaced



Principal Darvina Bradley



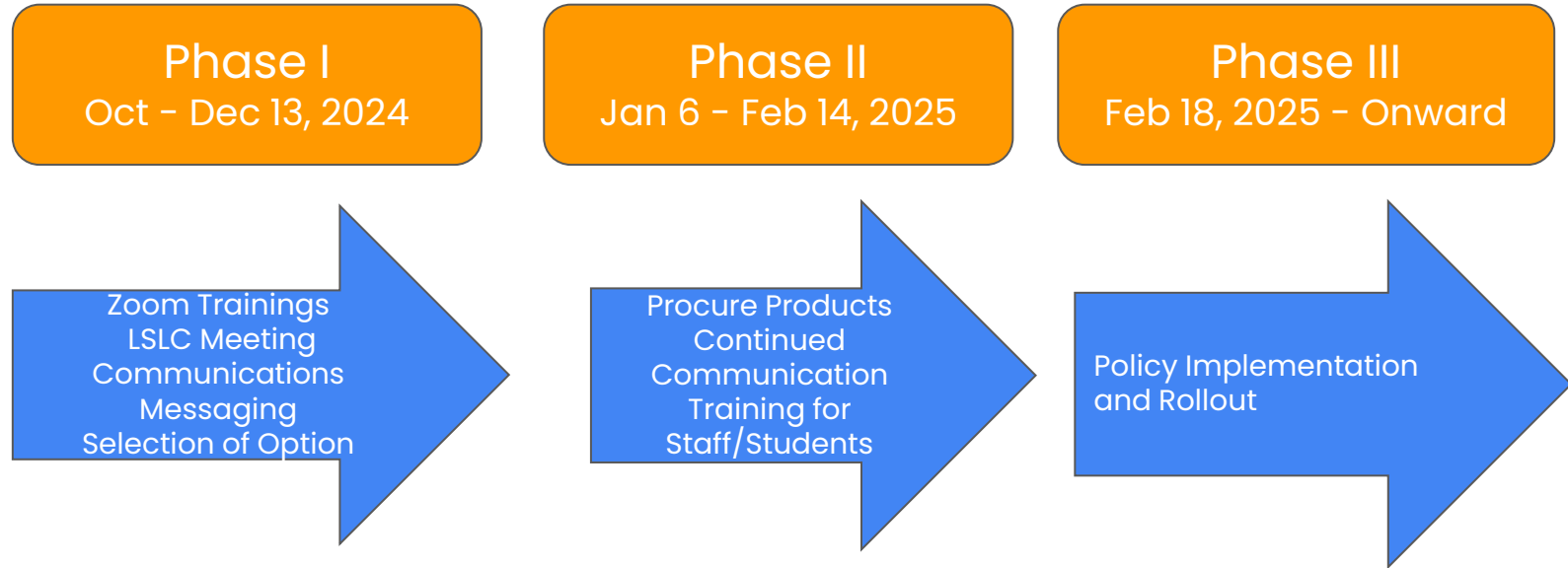
[Link](#) to video

# **Providing a Phone-Free School Day**

**IMPLEMENTATION**  
**Spring Semester 2025**




# Phased Approach to Implementation

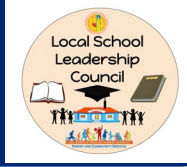


# Communication Toolkit & Resources

- Communications tools to bring awareness to all stakeholders utilizing District platforms (e.g. Principal Portal)
- Messaging Toolkits will include:
  - Presentations
  - BBC Messages
  - Communication template notifications
  - Mental Health tips and resources

 <b>Division of School Operations</b> <b>PHONE FREE POLICY COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT</b> <b>DRAFT</b>			
Messaging Toolkit			
This communication toolkit is designed to assist region and school site administrators with messaging and resources to support the implementation for a Phone Free Policy. The toolkit will be continuously updated for every phase of implementation			
Phase I (Late Oct. – Dec. 13, 2024)			
Action	Description	Links & Resources	Timeline
BBC Messages	Principal Communication	Principal BBC Message <a href="#">link</a> Written notification <a href="#">link</a> when selection is made (Parent/Students)	Oct. 28-Dec. 13, 2024 Nov. 18-Dec. 13, 2024
	Presentation	Region/AOO presentation for Principals <a href="#">link</a> LSLC Presentation <a href="#">link</a> Staff Presentation <a href="#">link</a> Student Presentation <a href="#">link</a> Parent Presentation <a href="#">link</a>	Oct. 28-Nov. 15, 2024
Phase II (Jan. 6 – Feb. 14, 2025)			
BBC Messages	Forthcoming		
Phase III (Feb. 18, 2025 – Onward)			
BBC Messages	Forthcoming		

# Local Leadership Decision



Local School Leadership Council (LSLC): shared decision-making body, including: parents, community members, school personnel, and student body representatives

- Through their LSLC, each school community will select the mode(s) of implementation for the revised policy
- Recommended timing for engagement meetings is October/November 2024
- Schools already implementing a more stringent policy
  - May continue with policy
  - Must be aligned with the guidelines set forth in the new policy bulletin
  - Requires approval by LSLC
- Every school must hold a LSLC meeting during the implementation of the new policy

# New Policy

Policy will be implemented during second semester of 2024-25 school year to address the use of cell phones/social media and other electronic devices.

- Students may not use cell phones on campus during school hours
- Devices must be turned off and stored away, depending on the selection by the LSLC
- Applies to devices that provide similar smartphone functionality such as a smart watch, earbud and smart glasses.
- Other cellular devices that do not have “smart” capability must be turned off and stored for the entire instruction day (e.g., devices that can only send/receive phone calls and text messages)
- Students may use cell phones on campus before and after school



# New Policy (Continued)

Through each school's LSLC options will be reviewed and one or more that best meet the school's need will be selected

- Any policy adopted must allow students to maintain access to their phones in case of an emergency situation
- Schools may also establish other exceptions that are relevant to their campus.
  - *For example, a high school may allow students to use their cell phones when they are on a college campus as part of a dual enrollment agreement*



# Exception – Emergencies

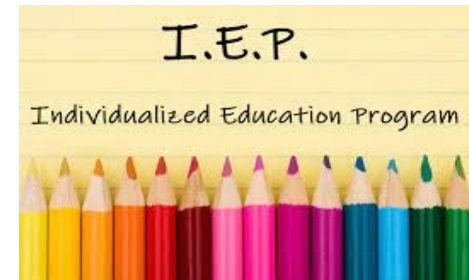


- In accordance with state guidelines, any policy adopted must allow students to maintain their phones turned off and stored to be readily accessible during an emergency (e.g., in backpacks, classroom pockets, portable storage box within a classroom setting).
- During an emergency, students will be able to access their cell phones when staff determines that it is safe to do so.
- If a student (or parent) requests that the student be allowed to use their smartphone due to a “perceived threat of danger”, then the school will convene a threat assessment, develop a safety plan, etc., before allowing the use of the phone

# Exception – Special Student Needs

This policy shall not prohibit a student from using a cellular phone or electronic device based on these exceptions:

- Health Based Needs
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- 504 Plan
- Newcomers to assist with translation
- Local Need



# Permitted Products for Implementation

Regardless of the product selected, phones are to be turned off and stored during school hours

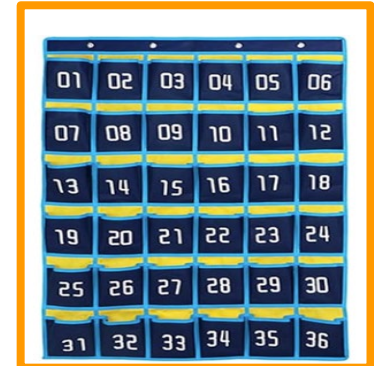
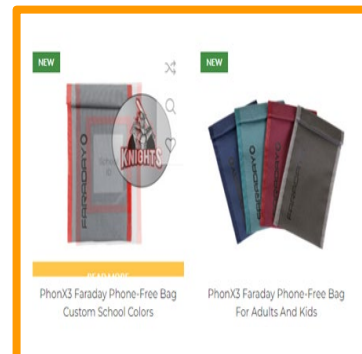
Stored in  
Backpack

Portable  
Storage

Magnetic  
Pouches

Velcro  
Pouches

Classroom  
Phone Holder



NOTE: Other cellular devices that do not have "smart" capability must also be turned off and stored for the entire instruction day (e.g., devices that can only send/receive phone calls and text messages)



# Funding Implementation/Allocation

- Funding will be provided centrally to support schools with products for implementation
  - Note: All schools may not take a product-based approach
- Division of School Operations & Procurement will provide direct support to schools in purchasing products
- One-time funding will be provided to purchase selected products

# Restorative Practices to Support Implementation

## Restorative Practices/Enforcement

- To ensure compliance, the District will implement appropriate interventions for any infractions, including:
  - Verbal reminder
  - Referral to a counselor/designee
  - Contact parent/guardian



Creating Expectations



4:1-Connection Over Correction



Community Building Activities



Check-Ins/Check-Outs

# Policy Summary and Overview

- New policy aligns with California and Federal legal requirements
- Schools will meet with school stakeholders and have the option to select one or more products to support implementation
- School leadership will message stakeholders using the Communication toolkit provided
- Implementation timeline has been reviewed to launch policy January 2025



# Q & A / Closing