



## **Work Session**

Jan 7, 2024

Overview and discussion of work to institute a district cell phone/personal device policy and revisit WCPSS long-term school-issued instructional technology strategy.

# The Reason for Revisiting our Approach

## Post-Pandemic Reassessment

- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased the use of instructional technology in classrooms worldwide. What is our long-term strategy for providing and maintaining devices to ensure equitable and effective learning?

## Cell Phones and Personal Devices

- Cell phones and personal devices are deeply integrated into students' daily lives. What policies and strategies should we adopt to balance their use in ways that support learning and student success?

# Our aims have two distinct foci:



## Student Cell Phones and Personal Devices



## School-Issued Instructional Technology

### Timeline

By the spring of  
2025 we expect  
to

Develop a district-wide **cell phone and personal device policy** that prioritizes student learning and well-being and reflects family, educator, and student needs. We anticipate this policy beginning in the **2025-2026 School Year**.

Determine guidelines for a **renewed school-issued instructional technology purchasing and use strategy** that will affect procurement and deployment beginning in **2026-2027 School Year**.

## Today's work session will focus on cell phones/personal devices because

- The timeline is more urgent
- The issue is complex and immediately important to students, families, and educators.



## Student Cell Phones and Personal Devices

Develop a district-wide **cell phone and personal device policy** that prioritizes student learning and well-being and reflects family, educator, and student needs. We anticipate this policy beginning in the **2025-2026 School Year**.

# Our Aims

- **Gather board input** to develop a clear and effective cell phone/personal device policy that supports student learning and well-being.
- **Engage the board** in reviewing school-issued instructional technology and cell phone policies to ensure informed deliberation and action as part of the educational technology plan this spring.



# Agenda

## Time Item

5 min

**Introduction**

10 min

**Framing** Student Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy

45 min

**Board Table Discussions:**

What key priorities should a district cell phone policy address to balance learning, student well-being, and the realities of personal device use in classrooms?

What do you need to know to make a good decision about cell phone/personal device policy?

10 min

Update on Feedback **Process and Timeline**

# Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy Levels



## State Level

## District Level

## School Level

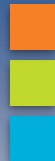
## Classroom Level

- [2024 ECS review](#) indicates national attention but typically local decisions about cell phone/personal device policy across the country; states have moved toward more restrictive approaches (LA, VA).
- Legislation to study in NC has been drafted (SB 865 did not make it out of 24-25 session).

- Typical policies indicate cell phones and other personal technology devices are not permitted to be out during instructional time with exceptions.
- Varies in terms of restrictiveness and flexibility.

- Schools have variable approaches, but commonality is that cell phones /personal devices are typically not out during instruction.
- In many cases teachers can allow for cell phones/personal devices to be used for instructional purposes (however that raises equity considerations).
- Enforcement rules set by school.

- As with all school rules, teachers are enforcing the cell phone /personal device rules day-to-day with some variability.
- Policy needs to support learning in the classroom.



## **Understandings for Discussion | Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy**

# Understandings for Discussion | Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy

For board feedback – Based on an initial scan of policy and practice

**U1: Focused attention is essential for effective learning.** Divided attention, often caused by cell phone and personal device use, presents a significant challenge to student success.

**U2: Wake County schools are actively addressing the use of cell phones and personal devices,** with common approaches but notable variations across schools and classrooms.

**U3: Cell phones and personal devices should generally remain out of sight and unused during instructional time,** except in specific, approved circumstances.

**U4: Any policy will need to account for appropriate exceptions,** such as instructional purposes, medical needs, specific learning accommodations, or principal-approved situations, while maintaining overall consistency.

# Understandings for Discussion | Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy

For board feedback - Based on an initial scan of policy and practice



**U5: Cell phone and personal device policies will likely vary by grade level** to appropriately address the developmental needs of students.

**U6: Enforcement of policies can be challenging;** therefore, policies and practices should focus on supporting student learning and well-being rather than excessively policing device use.

**U7: A cell phone policy alone is not a complete solution.** WCPSS will collaborate with families, counselors, and teachers to address student needs, including mental health, fostering partnerships that promote the safe and healthy use of cell phones and personal devices.

**U8:** Given the rapid advancement of technology, including AI, **this policy will require regular updates** to ensure it continues to prioritize student learning and well-being."

# Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy Continuum



As we consider a policy, the options can be thought of as a continuum:

## More Restrictive

Might mean

- Not at school at all
- Off and stored away
- On person, but stored away
- In a pouch

## More Flexible

Might mean

- Allowed during lunch
- Allowed during passing periods
- Allowed on campus
- Allowed when approved by teachers or administrators

Might mean

- Policy set classroom to classroom

# Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy

## Key Decision Points

	<i>What to consider...</i>	<i>Options</i>
<b>Who?</b>	The policy can indicate who decides how cell phones/personal devices will be use	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mandated district-wide policy</li> <li>2. District-wide policy that allows for flexibility by school</li> <li>3. School policy that allows flexibility by classroom</li> <li>4. Policy classroom by classroom</li> </ol>
<b>How?</b>	The policy could indicate how cell phones/personal devices are stored or kept	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In backpacks</li> <li>2. Silent or in the off position</li> <li>3. In pouches</li> <li>4. In lockers</li> <li>5. Designated storage in the classroom</li> </ol>

# Cell Phone/Personal Device Policy

## Key Decision Points



	<i>What to consider...</i>	<i>Options</i>
<b>When?</b>	The policy can indicate when students are allowed to access their cell phones/personal devices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. At local discretion</li><li>2. During transitions</li><li>3. At lunch</li><li>4. Before or after school</li><li>5. Not on campus</li></ol>
<b>Where?</b>	The policy can indicate where students are allowed to access their cell phones/personal devices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Entire campus</li><li>2. Classroom when given permission</li><li>3. Only halls and lunchrooms</li><li>4. Not in bathrooms</li><li>5. Outside of the building</li><li>6. Not on campus</li></ol>
<b>Why?</b>	The policy can indicate why cell phones/personal devices use would be allowed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To contact family in case of emergency</li><li>2. To contact family for any reason</li><li>3. For instruction</li><li>4. Predetermined needs (health, accommodations)</li></ol>



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10 min

Update on Feedback **Process and Timeline**

# Table Discussions

Use the table discussion and slides to discuss and record your thinking on the following key questions:



What key information do you need to guide your deliberation and action on a cell phone/personal device policy for 2025-2026?

As you review the understandings previewed, what do you agree with, argue with and/or what needs to be added or elaborated on?

What specific input are you hearing from parents and educators that needs to be addressed by the district-wide cell phone/personal device policy? What needs to be addressed by schools? Use slides 12 and 13 to discuss.



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15 min

Update on Feedback **Process and Timeline**

## Listening Purpose and Objectives



### School-Issued Instructional Technology

- **Gather** student, staff, and family input on current use of school-issued instructional technology and their impact on student learning (both helping and hindering).
- **Develop** a clear understanding of what instructional functions are needed to meet the learning needs of students at all grades and developmental levels and develop considerations for how that should influence a 4- or 5-year technology plan for WCPSS.



### Cell Phones/Personal Devices

- **Gather** student, staff, and family feedback about the current use of cell phones/personal devices in school to inform district-level policies.
- **Use** comparable cell phone/personal device policies in other districts or states to inform district-level policies.
- **Develop** a set of considerations for updates to current policy that strategically addresses consistency and is sensitive to student/families needs and site-based leadership.

# Three Stages of the Plan

## Phase I: Staging

In progress

- **Develop** guiding questions and surveys.
- **Engage** essential partners through focus groups.
- **Review** best practices and relevant research.
- **Compile** key findings on current educational technology.

## Phase II: Listening

Jan - Mar

- **Communicate** listening opportunities across the district.
- **Deploy** district-wide survey and conduct focus groups.
- **Identify** trends and implications from feedback.
- **Determine** key findings and recommendations.

## Phase III: Acting

Mar - April

- **Present findings and options** for a 4-5-year educational technology plan and student devices for 2026-2027.
- **Present findings and options** for updating the cell phone/personal device policy for 2025-2026.
- **We expect the board to discuss and vote on a cell phone/personal device policy this spring to be operational in the 2025 - 2026 School Year.**

