

IOWA CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

# PERSONAL DEVICE POLICY

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May 12, 2026



**IOWA CITY COMMUNITY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

All In for All Kids

# Objectives

**Review  
Survey  
Results**

**1**

**Discuss Next  
Steps to Policy**

**2**

**Questions &  
Discussion**

**3**

# Potential Timeline for Policy Revisions

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## **January 13 & April 14, 2026**

Board Presentation, Discussion, Guidance

## **April 15-25 2026**

Stakeholder Surveys/Engagement, ICCSD-ICEA Team

## **May 12, 2026**

Presentation to Board, Review Survey Data, Policy Decision/Vote

## **May - June 2026**

INFORM AND EDUCATE

## **August 2026**

IMPLEMENT

# Feedback/Engagement

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## **Fall 2024**

Qualtrics surveys to staff, students, families.  
Focus: Preferences on policy options

## **Spring 2024**

Qualtrics surveys to staff and students.  
Focus: Implementation, Training, Policy Impact

## **Spring 2026**

Qualtrics surveys to staff and families.  
Focus: Policy Impact, Preferences on policy options

# Staff Information & Summary

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## Secondary

- An overwhelming majority of staff has seen an improvement in engagement, a staff member's ability to teach and/or support, and student behavior since the new policy was implemented.
- A majority of staff want middle school and high school to have the same policy.

## Elementary

- Nearly 2/3 of staff would support an elementary personal device policy.

# Family Information & Summary

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## Secondary

- A strong majority of families believe the current policy is effective and the positive impact it has on student learning and engagement.
- A clear majority believe the current policy just about right regarding the balance of phone use and want to keep the current cell phone policy.
- In high school, the distribution of responses were somewhat balanced in terms of supporting or not supporting a bell to bell ban.

## Elementary

- A strong majority of families would support an updated policy.
- An overwhelming majority of students don't bring their phone to school.

# Note on Respondent Data

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The total respondent number is the number of each individual person who took the survey. However, each respondent could select multiple grade levels, depending on the number of children that they have. Therefore, the total responses by grade level will be higher than the overall number of respondents.

# Information & Summary

## Respondents

	Elementary	Middle	High	Other	Total
Staff	366	288	276	27	957
Families	919	654	647	NA	2,220

# Staff Survey Results

*Which of the following most accurately describes your preference regarding our district's cell phone policy?*

	Change the policy to allow students to have more access to and use of their cell phones during the school day	Keep the current cell phone policy.	Change the current policy to restrict students from having access to or use of cell phones during the entire school day (this would exclude students with medical or IEP/504 exceptions).
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Middle School</b>	6	161	94
<b>High School</b>	2	154	104

# Staff Survey Results

*Which of the following statements do you most agree with?*

	Middle school and high school should have the same policy.	Middle school should have a more restrictive policy than high school.	High school should have a more restrictive policy than middle school.
<b>Totals</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Middle School</b>	145	113	3
<b>High School</b>	161	90	6

# Family Survey Results

*Based on your experience or your child's experience, how would you describe the current balance of phone use (restricted during class, allowed during passing time and lunch)?*

	About Right	Too Restrictive	Not Restrictive Enough	Not Sure
Middle School	333	20	190	24
High School	373	42	161	30

# Family Survey Results

*Which of the following most accurately describes your preference regarding our district's cell phone policy?*

	Change the policy to allow students to have more access to and use of their cell phones during the school day	Keep the current cell phone policy	Change the current policy to restrict students from having access to or use of cell phones during the entire school day (this would exclude students with medical or IEP/504 exceptions).
Middle School	25	331	212
High School	51	379	175

# Family Survey Results

*Would you support a stronger policy that restricts phone use for the entire school day (bell-to-bell)?*

	Strongly Support	Support	Neutral	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Middle School	185	88	92	84	119
High School	145	100	97	108	156

# Staff Survey Results

*Consideration is being given to a change in the elementary personal device policy. The new policy under consideration would allow students to bring a cell phone to school for before or after school use, but cell phone use during the school day would be prohibited. Exceptions will be made for students with documented medical needs or an IEP/504 plan. Please indicate your level of support for this policy change. **(Currently exists in elementary handbook)***

	Strongly Support	Support	No Opinion	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Elementary	134	82	49	44	41

# Questions & Discussion

# Appendix

# Staff Survey Results

*How has the district's cell phone policy affected student engagement during instructional time at the secondary level?*

	Significantly Improved	Somewhat Improved	No Change	Somewhat Worsened	Significantly Worsened	I don't Know
<b>Totals</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Middle School</b>	151	74	21	3	0	12
<b>High School</b>	143	91	14	4	1	5

# Staff Survey Results

*How has our district's cell phone policy affected your ability to teach and/or support students during instructional time?*

	Significantly Improved	Somewhat Improved	No Change	Somewhat Worsened	Significantly Worsened	I don't Know
<b>Totals</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Middle School</b>	149	66	25	6	1	14
<b>High School</b>	137	88	24	3	1	5

# Staff Survey Results

*Have you noticed a change in student behavior since the district's cell phone policy was implemented?*

	Significantly Improved	Somewhat Improved	No Change	Somewhat Worsened	Significantly Worsened	I don't Know
<b>Totals</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Middle School</b>	108	80	45	13	2	12
<b>High School</b>	91	117	36	7	1	7

# Family Survey Results

*Overall, how familiar are you with the current cell phone policy?*

	Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Not Very Familiar	Not At All Familiar
Middle School	305	234	28	3
High School	324	259	17	6

# Family Survey Results

*Based on your experience or your child's experience, how effective is the current policy at reducing distractions during class time?*

	Very Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Very Effective	Not Effective At All	Not Sure
Middle School	212	227	65	15	48
High School	205	269	66	30	33

# Summary Responses–Staff

What would be the biggest challenges to a policy restricting students from having access to or use of cell phones during the entire school day?

1. **Enforcement, consistency, and follow-through**

The dominant concern was whether any stricter policy could be enforced consistently across classrooms, hallways, lunch, bathrooms, study halls, and open periods. Many comments emphasized that the current policy already depends heavily on teacher follow-through, and inconsistent enforcement makes rules ineffective.

2. **Staff workload and “phone police” concerns**

Many respondents worried that stricter rules would place too much burden on teachers, paras, office staff, lunch supervisors, and administrators. Comments often mentioned lost instructional time, more confrontations, more documentation, and damage to staff morale.

3. **Parent/student communication needs**

A major concern was that families rely on phones for transportation changes, appointments, illness, athletics, jobs, emergencies, and after-school plans. Many predicted increased parent pushback and a heavier burden on the main office if students could not check messages.

4. **Student pushback, refusal, sneaking, and behavior issues**

Respondents frequently anticipated students hiding phones, refusing to turn them over, using phones in bathrooms, arguing with staff, or becoming more defiant if access were restricted all day.

5. **Unstructured times are hardest to manage**

Hallways, passing periods, lunch, bathrooms, study halls, libraries, and open periods were repeatedly named as the most difficult settings to monitor.

# Summary Responses–Staff

What would be the biggest challenges to a policy restricting students from having access to or use of cell phones during the entire school day?

6. **Current policy is working or preferred by many**  
Many comments argued that the current policy protects instructional time while still allowing reasonable access during lunch or passing time. Several said stricter restrictions are unnecessary, unrealistic, or could backfire.
7. **Need for clear procedures, consequences, and administrative support**  
Respondents wanted a clear plan for confiscation, reporting, repeat offenses, storage, parent pickup, consequences, and administrator follow-through.
8. **Chromebooks and other devices may be a bigger issue**  
Many comments said students would simply shift to Chromebooks, smartwatches, earbuds, personal laptops, iPads, or gaming sites. Several suggested revising Chromebook or “all devices” policies instead of focusing only on phones.
9. **Parent/community buy-in and emergency concerns**  
Comments often noted that parents may resist because of safety fears, school emergencies, shootings, anxiety, or a desire for constant access to their children.
10. **Student responsibility, age differences, and developmental concerns**  
Some respondents argued students, especially high schoolers, need to learn responsible phone use because of jobs, driving, caregiving, college applications, and real-world responsibilities. Others favored stricter rules for middle school but more flexibility for high school.

# Summary Responses–Families

What concerns, if any, do you have about a bell-to-bell cell phone restriction?

1. **Parent–student communication during the school day**

By far the most frequent theme. Parents want the ability to text or receive messages about pickups, schedule changes, appointments, extracurriculars, work, and reminders. Many emphasized that passing time and lunch currently provide a practical, low-disruption window for this communication.

2. **Emergency and safety concerns**

A major concern was access to phones during emergencies (e.g., school shootings, medical issues, lockdowns). Many parents want their child to be able to contact them, call 911, or confirm safety immediately.

3. **Logistical coordination (transportation, activities, jobs)**

Closely related to communication, many comments specifically highlighted the need for real-time updates about rides, sports schedule changes, work shifts, and after-school plans—especially for high school students with complex schedules.

4. **Student mental health, anxiety, and emotional support**

Many parents described phones as a coping tool for students with anxiety, social struggles, or emotional needs. Being able to check in with a parent was seen as important for well-being, especially for students without formal accommodations.

5. **Preference for a balanced approach (not full ban)**

A large portion of respondents supported restrictions during class but allowing access during lunch or passing time. Many described this as a reasonable “middle ground” that maintains focus while preserving communication and autonomy.

# Summary

## Responses—Families

What concerns, if any, do you have about a bell-to-bell cell phone restriction?

6. **Belief that phones are part of modern life / need to teach responsibility**  
Many argued that students should learn appropriate phone use rather than face complete restriction. Comparisons were made to real-world expectations in jobs and adulthood, where limited phone use is allowed.
7. **Concerns about practicality and enforcement**  
Some comments questioned whether a full-day ban is realistic or enforceable, and worried it would add burden to staff or lead to inconsistent implementation.
8. **Impact on school operations (office workload, communication systems)**  
Many noted that restricting phones would increase calls to the main office, disrupt classes, and strain staff if all communication had to go through school channels.
9. **Support for stricter restrictions (minority view)**  
A smaller group supported full bans, citing reduced distractions, better focus, improved social interaction, and research on screen time.
10. **Equity, special needs, and accommodations**  
Some parents raised concerns about students with IEPs, 504s, medical needs, or unique family situations who rely on phone access.

# Summary Responses–Families

What feedback, if any, do you have about the current policy?

- 1. General support for the current policy (“good balance”)**  
The most common theme was that the current policy is working well. Many described it as a balanced approach—limiting distractions during class while still allowing access during lunch or passing time.
- 2. Inconsistent enforcement across teachers/schools**  
A very frequent concern was that the policy is not applied consistently. Comments noted variation by teacher, school, or substitute, which undermines effectiveness and creates frustration.
- 3. Chromebooks and other devices as a major (or bigger) distraction**  
One of the strongest recurring themes was that Chromebooks—not phones—are now the primary issue. Many said students shift to games, YouTube, messaging, or cheating via school devices when phones are restricted.
- 4. Support for restricting phones during class time**  
Broad agreement existed that phones should not be used during instructional time. Many credited this with improved focus, grades, and classroom engagement.
- 5. Calls for stronger restrictions (especially outside class)**  
A sizable group advocated for stricter policies—particularly limiting phones during lunch, passing time, or implementing a full-day ban—to improve social interaction and reduce distraction.

# Summary

## Responses—Families

What feedback, if any, do you have about the current policy?

6. **Concerns about over-restriction / preference to keep current approach**  
Another large group opposed further restrictions, arguing that the current policy is sufficient and that additional limits would be unnecessary, unrealistic, or counterproductive.
7. **Need for better enforcement rather than new rules**  
Many comments emphasized that the issue is not the policy itself but lack of consistent enforcement. The common sentiment: “fix implementation, not the policy.”
8. **Impact on social interaction and student relationships**
  - o Comments were split:
    - i. Some said phones (especially at lunch) reduce face-to-face interaction and social skill development.
    - ii. Others noted phones can help socially (e.g., reducing isolation or providing something to do).
9. **Belief that phones harm learning, focus, and mental health**  
Many respondents cited research or personal observation that phones reduce attention span, increase distraction, and contribute to anxiety or overuse.
10. **Desire to teach responsible technology use**  
A recurring theme was that students need to learn how to manage devices appropriately rather than have them fully removed, especially at the high school level.