

Update & Discussion on Student Mobile Communications Device Policy

February 5, 2025

Purpose

Provide feedback and input gathered from educational partners to allow the CVUSD Board of Education to discuss and provide staff with direction on any updates to CVUSD Board Policy 5131.8 “Mobile Communication Devices”

Background

California Assembly Bill 3216 amended Education Code 48901.7 to read:

“The governing body of a school district, a county office of education, or a charter school shall, no later than July 1, 2026, develop and adopt, and shall update every five years, a policy to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones while the pupils are at a schoolsite or while the pupils are under the supervision and control of an employee or employees of that school district, county office of education, or charter school. The goal of the policy shall be to promote evidence-based use of smartphone practices to support pupil learning and well-being. The development of the policy shall involve significant stakeholder participation in order to ensure that the policies are responsive to the unique needs and desires of pupils, parents, and educators in each community.”

Background

Existing law, California Education Code 48901.7(b) states:

“Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a pupil shall not be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone under any of the following circumstances:

- (1) In the case of an emergency, or in response to a perceived threat of danger.
- (2) When a teacher or administrator of the school district, county office of education, or charter school grants permission to a pupil to possess or use a smartphone, subject to any reasonable limitation imposed by that teacher or administrator.
- (3) When a licensed physician and surgeon determines that the possession or use of a smartphone is necessary for the health or well-being of the pupil.
- (4) When the possession or use of a smartphone is required in a pupil’s individualized education program.”

Background

On September 4, 2024, the CVUSD Board of Education had a preliminary discussion regarding this matter and, in accordance with amendments to Education Code 48901.7, requested additional feedback and input from educational partners.

Engaging Educational Partners

- Unified Association of Conejo Teachers (UACT)
- Student District Advisory Committee (SDAC)
- Survey input from school site administrators, school counselors, psychologists, mental health staff, and members of parent district advisory councils and committees

Unified Association of Conejo Teachers (UACT)

UACT Survey Results by Grade-Span

Preschool - Elementary Schools (201 respondents)

- Total Ban: 50% For, and 50% Against
- Partial Ban: 64% For, and 36% Against
- Phones aren't an issue as much as smart watches

Middle Schools (111 respondents)

- Total Ban: 76% For, and 24% Against
- Partial Ban: 51% For, and 49% Against

High School - Post-Secondary (186 respondents)

- Total Ban: 44% For, and 56% Against
- Partial Ban: 82% For, and 18% Against

Thousand Oaks High School Updated Policy

- No cell phones or headphones may be used during class time UNLESS standardized testing protocols require it OR the use is permitted by the student's IEP
- Cell phones and headphones MAY continue to be used before school, at break, between classes, at lunch or after school
- Cell phones must be turned off and out of sight when in any classroom
- Each teacher may choose to use a cell phone holder OR have students stow them in their school bag
- Progressive discipline shall be used when students violate the policy:
 - 1st Offense: Warning
 - 2nd Offense: Device is confiscated and sent to office. The device is returned to student at the end of the day.
 - 3rd Offense: Device is confiscated and sent to office. The device is returned only after a parent conference is held.
 - 4th Offense: Device is confiscated and sent to office. Saturday School assigned and device returned.

Thousand Oaks High School Survey (34 respondents)

Has the cell phone policy increased student interaction with peers?

-Some 12%, A Fair Amount 21%, Quite a Bit 29%, Lots 18%

Has the cell phone policy increased student attention to lessons?

-Some 9%, A Fair Amount 26%, Quite a Bit 26%, Lots 29%

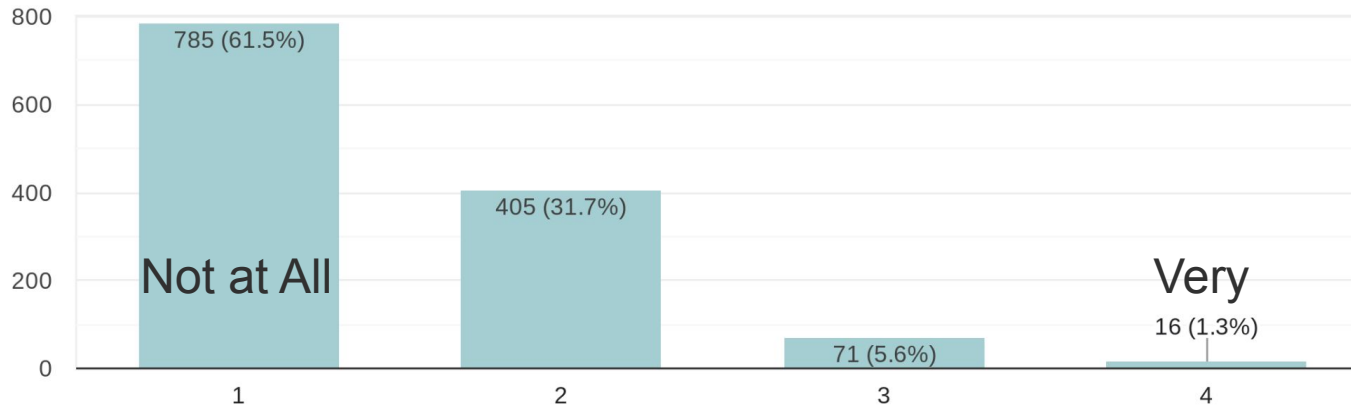
Has the cell phone policy increased student work production during class?

-Some 15%, A Fair Amount 24%, Quite a Bit 26%, Lots 26%

Student District Advisory Committee (SDAC)

How distracting is cell phone usage during class time currently?

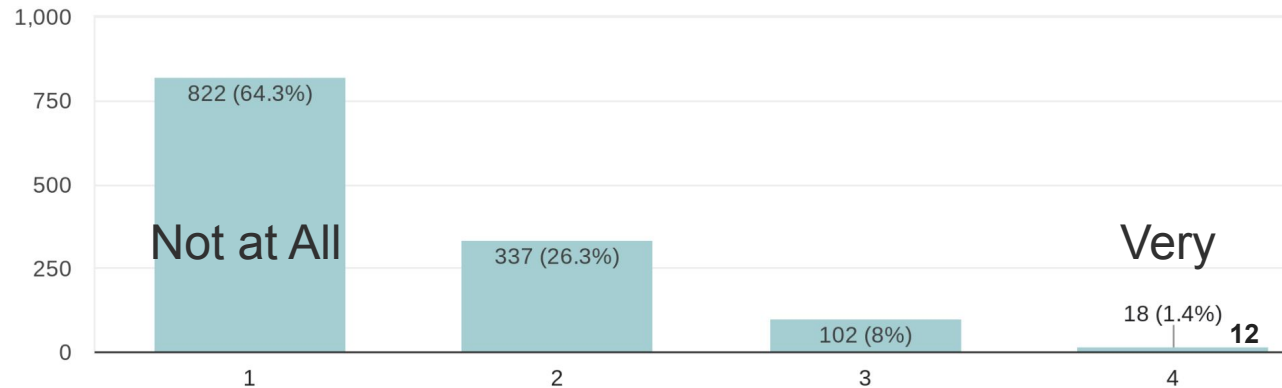
1,277 responses



Student Perceptions of Distraction by Cell Phones

How distracting is cell phone usage during passing periods and/or breaks?

1,279 responses



Student Policy Recommendations



Cell Phone Ban Recommendation

Complete Ban

0.7%

Partial Ban

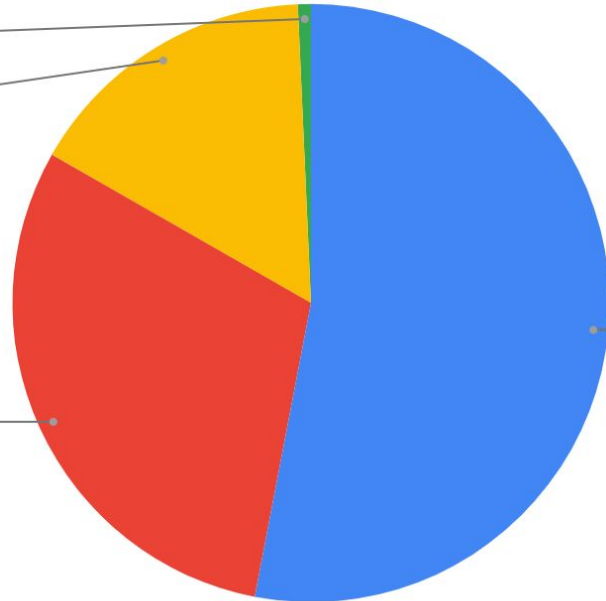
16.0%

Restriction

30.3%

No Ban

53.0%



-No Ban: Unrestricted Unless Teacher Says Otherwise

-Restriction: No Use During Class Time

-Partial Ban: Pocket Charts During Class

-Complete Ban: Off And Away All Day, Including Breaks

Takeaways From September 2024 SDAC Discussion

1. Elementary school has a bell-to-bell ban (phones must be out of sight and away).
2. Middle school has a bell-to-bell ban, but the student may request to use their phone in an administrator-designated area (phones must be out of sight and away otherwise).
3. High school has a ban during structured class time (unless a teacher grants permission), but students may use phones during unstructured class time.
4. Restrictions should apply to all mobile communication devices, including personal laptops, smart watches, earphones, etc.
5. Teacher discretion should be considered in all structured classroom environments.
6. Maintain existing policies regarding students with IEPs and students who receive permission to use devices from a licensed surgeon/physician.



Additional Feedback From CVUSD Staff

Additional Feedback Gathered

Instructional Services provided a brief survey to school administrators, counselors, psychologists, mental health staff, and parents on District Advisory Councils and Committees.

The survey gathered perspectives on a range of topics, including device misuse, impacts of devices on campus, and support of phones being locked in sealed pouches that can only be unlocked by school staff.

The survey asked about overall preferences on an updated policy with the question below:

Which approach do you prefer for student devices (i.e. smart watch, cell phone) during school hours?

- Total prohibition - Students cannot use or have devices out at anytime while at school
- Limited use - Students can only use during recess, lunch, or passing periods; or when given permission by staff.
- No restrictions - Students should be able to possess and use their device at anytime
- Unsure

Feedback from School Site Administrators

	Pre-School - Elementary School	Middle School	High School - Post-Secondary School
Respondents	14	10	18
Effectiveness of current policies	11 (79%) - Very effective 2 (14%) - Somewhat effective	6 (60%) - Somewhat effective 3 (30%) - Not effective	5 (27%) - Not effective 5 (27%) - Somewhat effective 5 (27%) - Neutral
Frequency of device misuse	11 (78%) - Rarely 3 (21%) - Never	5 (50%) - Daily 5 (50%) - Weekly	10 (55%) - Daily 4 (22%) - Weekly
Impact of devices on classroom disruption	6 (42%) - Low impact	5 (50%) - Moderate impact	6 (33%) - Moderate impact 5 (27%) - Low Impact 5 (27%) - High Impact
Impact of devices on social emotional challenges	7 (50%) - Not applicable 4 (28%) - Low impact	4 (40%) - High impact 4 (40%) - Moderate impact	8 (44%) - Moderate impact 7 (38%) - High impact
Support of locked pouches	6 (42%) - No 5 (36%) - Unsure	4 (40%) - Unsure 3 (30%) - Yes 3 (30%) - No	7 (38%) - Unsure 7 (38%) - No
Overall preferred policy	13 (93%) - Total Prohibition 1 (7%) - Unsure	8 (80%) - Total prohibition 1 (10%) - Limited use	12 (66%) - Limited use 3 (16%) - Total prohibition

Feedback from School Counselors, Psychologists, Mental Health Staff

	Pre-School - Elementary School	Middle School	High School - Post-Secondary School
Respondents	16	20	32
Frequency of challenges caused by device use	10 (63%) - Rarely 3 (19%) - Weekly 3 (19%) - Never	13 (65%) - Weekly 5 (25%) - Rarely	18 (56%) - Weekly 7 (22%) - Daily 7 (22%) - Rarely
Believe that limiting device use improves well-being	8 (50%) - Strongly agree 6 (38%) - Agree	16 (80%) - Strongly agree 3 (15%) - Agree	21 (65%) - Strongly agree 9 (28%) - Agree
Impact of devices on classroom disruption	7 (44%) - Not applicable 3 (19%) - Low impact	10 (50%) - High impact 4 (20%) - Moderate impact	18 (56%) - High impact 9 (28%) - Moderate impact
Impact of devices on social emotional challenges	7 (44%) - Not applicable 3 (19%) - Moderate impact	11 (55%) - High impact 5 (25%) - Moderate impact	19 (59%) - High impact 11 (34%) - Moderate impact
Support of locked pouches	7 (44%) - Yes 7 (44%) - No	8 (40%) - No 7 (35%) - Unsure	19 (59%) - Yes 9 (28%) - Unsure
Overall preferred policy	8 (50%) - Total prohibition 7 (44%) - Limited use	14 (70%) - Total prohibition 6 (30%) - Limited use	23 (72%) - Limited use 9 (28%) - Total prohibition

Feedback from District Parent Advisory Councils/Committees

	AADAC	DAC	DELAC	GATE DAC	LGBTQ+ AC	SEDAC	TOTAL
Respondents	0	23	3	17	6	12	61
Importance of this issue		16 (69%) - Very important	3 (100%) - Very important	8 (47%) - Very important	3 (50%) - Very important	5 (41%) - Important	34 (56%) - Very important
		6 (26%) - Important		6 (35%) - Important	3 (50%) - Important	4 (33%) - Very important	19 (31%) - Important
Support of locking pouches		14 (61%) - Yes 5 (22%) - Unsure	1 (33%) - Yes 1 (33%) - No 1 (33%) - Unsure	7 (41%) - No 5 (29%) - No 5 (29%) - Unsure	5 (83%) - No 1 (16%) - Yes	5 (41%) - Unsure 4 (33%) - Yes	25 (41%) - Yes 20 (33%) - No
Overall preferred policy		13 (57%) - Limited use	2 (66%) - Total prohibition	8 (47%) - Total prohibition	4 (66%) - Limited use	10 (83%) - Limited use	36 (59%) - Limited use
		10 (43%) - Total prohibition	1 (33%) - Limited use	8 (47%) - Limited use	1 (16%) - Total prohibition	2 (16%) - Total prohibition	23 (37%) - Total prohibition
					1 (16%) - No restrictions		

Questions?