



Board of Education Agenda Abstract

Meeting Date: July 10, 2025
Agenda Type: Discussion and Action

Subject: Update from 2024-25 Cell Phone Expectations and 1st reading of draft policy for Policy Code: 4318 Use Of Wireless Communication Devices

Division:	School Leadership and Student Services	Department:	School Leadership and Student Services
Person Responsible:	Brandy Reeves, Chief of Staff, School Leadership, and Student Services, and Dr. Robin Buckrham, Executive Director of Secondary Schools	Feedback Requested From:	Students, Parents, select teaching staff, School Leaders, and School Board Attorney

Strategic Plan Alignment: Creating a Culture of Safety and Wellness

Previous Work Session (Y/N):	No	Date:
Previous Discussion and Action (Y/N):	No	Date:

Attachment(s):

[Feedback Summary_ Cell Phone Policy Implementation \(1\).pdf](#)
[Collaboration with Atty 7-9-25 Policy Code_ 4318 Use of Wireless Communication Devices \(July 2025\).pdf](#)

PURPOSE:

During the Superintendent's Report on August 15, 2024, the Board was informed of the cell phone policy that would be in effect for the 2024–2025 school year. Following that meeting, schools implemented increased controls around student cell phone use. The Board will receive an update on how the policy was implemented throughout the year, along with key takeaways and lessons learned.

Concurrently, the North Carolina General Assembly is considering legislation that would require school districts to implement stronger controls around cell phone use in schools. **On July 2, 2025 we were made aware the legislature passed a cellphone bill and the implications are represented in the draft that we will be making changes to prior to the upcoming board meeting. In anticipation of this potential change, the Policy Committee has requested that a draft cell phone policy be brought to the full Board for review.

BACKGROUND:

In 2021-2022, Phillips Middle School implemented “away for the day” cell phone regulations for their

students. During the 2023-2024 school year, administrators, teachers and families across the district began to express concerns about excessive cell phone use at the secondary level and its effects on students physically, socially and emotionally. In response, two more of our middle school leaders chose to work with their school teams to implement their own “away for the day” cell phone restrictions. The results were mixed, with CMS showing the most success, having already implemented these practices in previous years. For the 2024-2025 school year, the momentum around the overuse of cell phones by students at the secondary level became more of a concern and all secondary school leaders agreed to implement cell phone rules. All middle schools committed to “away for the day” cell phone rules, and all high schools agreed on a universal “away during instructional time” rule for all students.

An integral part of this focus on cell phone rules in our secondary schools has been our partnership with the Winston National Center on Technology Use, Brain, and Psychological Development at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. With their help, we developed a process for collecting feedback from students, families, and teachers regarding our current cell phone regulations at the middle and high school levels. During the first and second semesters, the principals collected information, feedback, and data regarding the implementation of increased controls on student use of cell phones from teachers and parents. The Winston Center also conducted focus groups following this same timeline, with students from our middle and high schools, to gather feedback on the new cell phone restrictions. In addition to these efforts, our district Panorama Survey for students this year included questions about the current cell phone rules at the secondary level.

CHCCS Board will view this information through the lens of our current strategic plan with the understanding that the Board values the impact of thoughtful policy in promoting student learning environments that are safe, focused, and free from unnecessary distractions.

Summary of the Main Provisions of House Bill 959

On June 26th the General Assembly passed [House Bill 959 \(S.L. 2025-38\)](#), and it was signed into law by the Governor on July 1st. This legislation contains three main requirements related to the use of cell phones, the internet, and social media by public school students. Local school districts will be required to adopt or update policies on internet safety and the use of wireless devices by students by January 1.

1. **Wireless Communication Policy.** By January 1, 2026, each school district must adopt a “wireless communication policy” that “at a minimum . . . shall prohibit students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on during instructional time” (with certain exceptions).
 1. “Wireless communication device” is defined to include any portable device with communication capabilities, including cell phones, tablets, laptops, and gaming devices. Although not specifically listed, the definition would also cover smart watches that have voice, messaging, or data communication capabilities.
 2. The policy must contain these specific exceptions when students are allowed to use a wireless communication device during instructional time:

1. If authorized by a teacher (a) for educational purposes or (b) in the event of an emergency. The policy may contain parameters to be followed by teachers in granting authorization.
2. As required by a student's IEP or 504 plan. (For example, a hearing impaired student might use a smartphone to translate audible speech to written text. Schools would need to be careful to add specifics about the use of a device to the student's IEP or 504 plan.)

iii. "As required to manage a student's health care, in accordance with a documented medical condition." (For example, some diabetic students use smartphone apps to monitor blood sugar. It would be best to address permissible use of the device in the student's individual health plan if there is no IEP or 504 plan.)

1. The policy must "establish the consequences for violations of the wireless communication policy," which "may include confiscation" of the device as well as other consequences under the Code of Student Conduct.
2. Each district must submit a copy of the policy to DPI no later than September 1 of each year, and DPI will report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee the names of any districts not in compliance.

Instruction on Social Media Safety. The State Board must add a section to the standard course of study with "instruction on social media and its effects on health, including social, emotional, and physical effects." Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, the instruction must be provided once during elementary school, once during middle school, and twice during high school.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

n/a

PERSONNEL IMPACT:

n/a

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Recommendation for the CHCCS Board of Education to review the implementation of the 24-25 cell phone expectations and discuss changes to Policy Code: 4318 Use Of Wireless Communication Devices

RESOLUTION:

Be it therefore resolved, that the CHCCS Board of Education will review and discuss Policy 4318, *Use of Wireless Communication Devices*, with the draft changes as a first reading, and will consider any necessary revisions based on findings from the 2024–2025 school year implementation. With the understand that the North Carolina School Board Association will be providing additional language to support this policy.