

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington School Board
FROM: School Health Advisory Board
DATE: May 16, 2024
SUBJECT: Final Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION #1:

1. **Background:** The School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) assists with the development of health policy in the school division and the evaluation of the status of school health, health education, the school environment, and health services.
2. **Recommendation:** System-wide implementation to codify and mirror current APS Middle Schools' and FCPS¹ "Away for the Day" policy for all student personal electronic devices as proposed in SHAB's 2019 report, (see Appendix A). Of note: this is the fourth year in a row this has been recommended by SHAB (and this year as well as twice previously it was a unanimous decision). Please note that [FCPS has now proposed](#) an even more stringent cell phone policy which it is in the [process of developing](#). SHAB supports a full "Away for the Day" policy for all grade levels. Appropriate accommodations for students with IEPs, 504s, or medical conditions should be given.
3. **Rationale for consideration:**
 - a. Mounting data indicates harm to children of having cell phones:
 - i. Student Health
 1. Mental health issues.²
 2. Childhood myopia incidence (increase with excessive screen time).³⁴
 3. Reduced physical activity– potentially impacting student obesity levels, participation in sports, and play/socialization during the lunch hour.
 - ii. School Environment/Climate
 1. Increased likelihood of online bullying⁵ (various state school districts have filed [lawsuit](#) against the social media companies).
 2. Reduced in-person interaction between students to build relationships and interpersonal skills
 - iii. Academic
 1. Multitasking leading to reduced comprehension and distraction during class time⁶.
 - iv. School Security
 1. Planning meet ups for drug sales and fights
 2. Concerns during lockdowns ⁷(Contribute to fear and rumors, distraction, create a less safe emergency response).
 - b. A 2023 survey SHAB did of the Middle School principals supports the benefit to the students and staff of having an "Away for the Day" cell phone policy. The five schools *unanimously*

¹ <https://www.fcps.edu/news/student-rights-and-responsibilities-srr-updates-cell-phone-use-schools>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/health/mental-health-crisis-teens.html>

³ <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2784348>

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9512310/#:~:text=The%20behavioral%20changes%20during%20the,Ma%20D%20et%20al>

⁵ https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739?mod=hp_lead_pos7

⁶ <https://northernvirginiamag.com/family/education/2022/10/24/fcps-cell-phone-policy/>

⁷ <https://schoolsecurity.org/trends/cell-phones-and-text-messaging-in-schools/>

responded that it has been well received by parents and teachers and had a positive impact on the students (**see Appendix B**).

- c. Many schools nationwide have successfully implemented this policy and seen positive effects (**see Appendix C**), including neighboring FCPS.
4. **Proposed methods:** The administration would create the policy using the SHAB draft [“Away for the Day” policy](#) (see Appendix A) as a template making sure to include all personal devices including smart watches. The administration would then support principals and classroom teachers in implementing this school wide policy.
5. **Budgetary Implications:** None additional unless a storage pouch like Yondr is purchased. A system-wide policy will establish student and community expectations, thus reducing staff time needed to apply unique and individual strategies as well as reduce time spent redirecting students from their devices for teaching and learning.
6. **Strategic Plan Alignment:**
 - a. Supports core values of **Integrity and Inclusivity** (fostering direct person to person visual and verbal communication and participation that is available to persons of all means and backgrounds, and promoting a welcoming school environment) and Stewardship (by maximizing the unique benefits of in-person education and preparing students to be engaged citizens.)
 - b. Meets **Student Well-Being** goal – “Create an environment that fosters the growth of the whole child. APS will nurture all students’ intellectual, physical, mental, and social-emotional growth in healthy, safe, and supportive learning environments”. The “Away for the Day” policy gives the students the opportunity for the social-emotional growth that they are lacking due to the personal devices they currently use at school. It will help to establish a culture of physical, social, emotional, and mental health wellness.

Summary: The committee respectfully requests a written APS policy (PIP) that mandates “off and away” for all personal electronic devices during school hours in every school.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendix A

[Away for the Day Personal Electronic Device Policy \(Draft\)](#)

Prepared by [APS School Health Advisory Board, Screen Use Subcommittee, December 2019](#)

The Screen Use Subcommittee (SUS) of the School Health Advisory Board (SHAB) is recommending that Arlington Public Schools implement a personal electronic device “off and away for the day” policy for all students to minimize distractions and increase focus on academics. This policy would include cell phones, smart watches, non-school issued tablets and air pods. Headphones may only be used when requested and/or approved by a teacher for instructional purposes. Students receive school issued iPads or laptops to complete class assignments and homework, so there is no need for other devices at school for students to succeed.

Cell phone use during school hours is negatively affecting children both academically and emotionally according to current research⁸. Many studies link cell phone use among school-aged kids to depression,

⁸ <https://www.awayfortheday.org/research#research-emotional>

anxiety, lowered executive function, shortened attention span, lower academic scores,^{9,10,11} and even suicide¹².

School is a time to learn how to interact with each other and to develop good communication skills and interpersonal connections. Experts in childhood behavior believe it is very important for children to have eye-to-eye contact when talking to each other. This helps to create healthy social relationships. The constant distraction of playing games, being in chat groups, texting, photo taking, internet searches, and social media check-ins on cell phones is detrimental to the social dynamic of the school community^{13,14}.

This policy will enable students to be more mindful and engaged in class. Cell phones, even when not in use, distract students and teachers alike in the classroom when they buzz or ring. Studies have shown that it can take the brain up to 10 minutes after this distraction to refocus on the subject that is being taught¹⁵. Eliminating cell phones and other personal electronic devices during the school day will ensure that students are learning to their fullest potential. Schools across the country are implementing similar policies and have found the results to be very positive. Testing scores have improved, and students are happier and more engaged.

The “off and away for the day” policy will also mean that students will not be allowed to use cell phones on school buses during field trips or in extended day. Extended day will have a phone available for student use when necessary.

Cell phone use will be permitted on school buses after school with earbuds so they do not disturb other children. Children should not access or share inappropriate content. If a student does go to sites that contain content that is offensive and shows it to others on the bus the student and the parents/guardians will be notified.

⁹ THE IMPACT OF MOBILE PHONE USAGE ON STUDENT LEARNING

Ref: Kuznekoff et al. (2013) *Communication Education* v. 62, 233-252

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03634523.2013.767917>

¹⁰ NON-ACADEMIC INTERNET USE IN THE CLASSROOM IS NEGATIVELY RELATED TO CLASSROOM LEARNING REGARDLESS OF INTELLECTUAL ABILITY

Ref: Ravizza et al (2014), *Computers & Education* v.78, 109-114

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131514001298>

¹¹ EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF OFF-TASK MULTI-TASKING WITH TECHNOLOGY ON REAL-TIME CLASSROOM LEARNING. Ref: Wood et

al. (2012) *Computers & Education*, 58(1), 365–374 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131511002077>

¹² Jean M. Twenge, PhD. *iGen*. New York: Atria Books (an imprint of Simon & Schuster), 2017.

¹³ Decreases in Psychological Well-Being Among American Adolescents After 2012 and Links to Screen Time During the Rise of Smartphone Technology

Ref: Jean Twenge et al (2018) *Emotion* <http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-02758-001>

¹⁴ R. Dwyer, K. Kushlev, E. Dunn Smartphone use undermines enjoyment of face-to-face social interactions

¹⁵ J. Exp. Soc. Psychol., 78 (2018), pp. 233-239 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022103117301737>

The Distracting Effects of a Ringing Cell Phone: An Investigation of the Laboratory and the Classroom Setting

Jill T. Shelton, Emily M. Elliott, Sharon D. Lynn, and Amanda L. Exner

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3018855/>

Parents and students will still be able to contact each other during the day when needed. There are phones in every classroom so that the main office can contact the student if a parent calls, and the student can call the parent when they need to. The office and classroom phones will be available if other phone calls need to be made or received because of work, childcare, or other emergencies. Exemptions to the policy will be made by the school administration for students with special circumstances. Students in this case must keep the cell phone out of sight and may not bring it out for any reason during the school day except to send or receive a text message or phone call, or use an approved app.

The recommended “off and away for the day” policy will be as follows:

There is to be no use of personal electronic devices once students enter school. All electronic devices brought to school must be turned off and stored in the student’s locker. In the event a locker is not available, the device must be turned off and stored in a backpack. The student is responsible for making sure no one else is able to open the locker. Arlington Public School administration is not responsible for the loss of any device brought to school by the student. It is important for students to never share their locker combination with another student. Students with special needs who cannot properly lock their locker may store their cell phone in an approved alternate location.

If a student chooses to use an electronic device, staff members will confiscate the device and bring it to the main office to be secured until the end of the school day. Consequences for unauthorized use of electronic devices are as follows:

- 1st time: Student may retrieve his/her device at the end of the school day from the main office with a reminder of this policy.
- 2nd time: Student may retrieve his/her device at the end of the school day from the main office with a reminder of this policy. An email will be sent home to the student’s parent/guardian as a courtesy notification.
- 3rd time: The student’s parent/guardian will need to pick up the device from the main office. Please note that after the second infraction, the device will only be released to the student’s parent/guardian.
- Subsequent infractions: The student’s parent/guardian will need to pick up the device from the main office, as well as have a conference with the student’s administrator. A consequence will be assigned.

Appendix B: SHAB 2023 APS MS Principal Survey Results

Here are the answers to the questions we asked:

Do you find it a successful policy?

- yes we do! It is especially effective in sixth and seventh grades – eighth we struggle with more – as they want to carry their phones around.
- Yes. While our campus, like many others, faced new challenges this year with the rise of mental health and substance abuse concerns, we dealt with fewer problems with cell phones. We still get cyber bullying and problems with online interactions, but these are not occurring during the school day, but rather at home on the weekend or in the evening. We have much fewer problems with stolen and lost cell phones. In the past, admin time could get tied up with trying to help locate a lost or stolen device. This has been reduced significantly. And the recaptured time has been **better focused on instruction**. Finally, we don’t get the noncompliance and defiance with turning over a device for the day or for the parent to come pick up. In the past, prior to this

policy, this situation—asking for the cell phone so the parent could pick it up—could escalate into a power struggle. With our Away for the Day policy and daily reminders, students just turn in the phone

- Yes, having the expectations that cell phones were in lockers helped with student behaviors, and also less social media induced drama during lunches.

Was there much push back from families when you implemented it?

- Parents were supportive.
- We have had no push back – really only support. I introduced this concept to students in the Fall by talking about the distraction that the phones create, even if students are not on them, actively, they are waiting for the buzz or notification – Parents really understand the distraction point.
- No. After last year, parents were all for more structure.

Do teachers find it a hassle or helpful for classroom management?

- Teachers find it very helpful to have a school policy that is easy to implement.
- I think it has **helped support teachers** and led to better management given that everyone knows you aren't supposed to have a cell phone in class.

How could we as a committee help the policy and its implementation (possibly in a specific PIP?) and in what way can School Health Advisory Board help you all with endorsing this policy at the administrative level?

- A specific pip that included this language would be helpful. It would be nice to have the “back up” of policy if and when families do push back.
- Having the support of a PIP and also the endorsement of the School Health Advisory Board would be great.
- If the language is in a PIP, the expectation is that schools will abide by it, so that would be the support behind the expectation

One concern of parents was brought up by a principal: In addition to those I would like to add that due to the increase of school violence over the past few years, some parents were opposed to students not having access to phones due to safety concerns. We feel this could be addressed by conveying to parents the facts about accessible phones for teachers and classrooms and having a specific safety concern exemption in the PIP.

All responses from APS Middle School principals agree: an “Away for the Day” policy is beneficial to both the students and the teachers and it would be helpful if there was a standard APS policy for all of the schools.

Appendix C: Nationwide Landscape of Away for the Day and Evidence of Benefit

Many public schools have implemented this type of policy and have seen it create a more socially interactive student body. The students were happier and more focused during the day as well. CBS news just recently reported that according to the Department of Education 77% of public schools now have this type of policy. Another success story is Fairfax public school's implementation of a district wide Cell phone policy for the 22/23 school year¹⁶. Northern Virginia Magazine wrote an article about how it is being received. It said that since the policy was enacted, “the principals say it's been a nonissue inside the classroom. They've had few incidents with students; and procedures are in place in case students don't comply and note, even those students have been responding well to the new policy.

¹⁶ <https://www.fcps.edu/news/student-rights-and-responsibilities-srr-updates-cell-phone-use-schools>

Teachers agree that the policy has freed up distraction in the classroom, increasing attention and participation that's been suffering following an era of virtual learning.¹⁷"

There are also multiple studies which show that when cell phones are banned from classrooms standardized test scores went up and the increases were much greater for those previously well-below proficiency. One study published by the London School of Economics looked at the impact of banning cellphones at schools on exam scores. Researchers found that students in schools with phone bans got on average 6% higher test scores and that low-performing students benefited the most with 14% higher scores. They concluded in the study that **"Restricting mobile phone use can be a low-cost policy to reduce educational inequalities."**

There are many studies showing the increase in myopia among children since the pandemic. There is a consensus among the researchers that, as stated in this [study](#), "Our review found that children used near-viewing devices such as smartphones and tablets more than other electronic devices such as televisions or personal computers. We discovered that strict home quarantine, reduced time spent outdoors, and increased screen time are associated with myopia progression in children during the pandemic. Increased use of mobile phones and tablets was also associated with myopia progression."

Giving the students a break from screens from their own devices during the day will help with this ongoing eye health problem.

The students spend a large amount of time at school learning by way of school issued devices. During breaks It would be healthier for the students emotionally and physically to not use a personal device. School should be a place where the students learn how to interact with each other face-to-face with eye contact and converse with each other without a device in their hand to distract them. They also will be more inclined to move about during breaks if they are not looking at their device, which is healthier for their bodies. Additionally, legislators nation-wide have grown concerned about social media use in children¹⁸.

An Education Next article called Take away their cellphones by Doug Lemov founder of Teach Like a Champion discusses why it is far better to restrict cell phones:

"I often hear: 'the role of schools is to teach young people to make better choices. We should talk to them about cell phones, not restrict them.'

The argument that 'schools should teach young people the skill of managing technology' is patently unrealistic. Schools are not designed to address, much less unravel, psychological dependence on portable supercomputers designed to disrupt and hold our attention. Teachers already have a daunting list of educational priorities. They are not trained counselors, and the school counselors on staff are in woefully short supply.

It's magical thinking to propose that an epidemic that has doubled rates of mental health issues and changed every aspect of social interaction among millions of people is going to go away when a teacher says, 'Guys, always use good judgment with your phones.' We're not really wrestling with the problem if our response assumes that the average teacher, via a few pithy lessons, can battle a device that has addicted a generation into submission.

¹⁷ <https://northernvirginiamag.com/family/education/2022/10/24/fcps-cell-phone-policy/>

¹⁸ <https://www.arlnow.com/press-releases/warner-introduces-legislation-to-make-social-media-safer-for-kids/>

Restriction is a far better strategy. These efforts won't be simple to execute, but the alternative is simply too damaging to students' learning and well-being. Keep cellphones turned off and out of sight during the school day—and give students and educators a fighting chance to focus, reconnect, and build school cultures that nurture belonging and academic success.”

School systems that have implemented this type of cell phone policy have had very positive results for the students and teachers. Parents have been very supportive and the students adapted to the change quickly. It is a policy that can work when presented for the right reasons.”

Appendix D: Away for the Day: Success Stories From Schools Who Have Implemented It

As noted above, many school systems have implemented Away for the Day policies with excellent results. Below are specific testimonials from schools who have implemented it.

As of 2022, more than 75% of US K-12 public schools banned non-academic cell phone use (Source: <https://stateline.org/2024/03/13/if-schools-wont-ban-kids-cellphones-some-lawmakers-say-they-will/#:~:text=More%20than%20three%2Dquarters%20of,enforced%20weakly%2C%20if%20at%20all>)

Parents want it: in one survey, more than 80% of parents said they did not want their children to be able to access phones during school (Source: <https://www.awayfortheday.org/research>).

Teachers and administrators like it because it has reduced disciplinary incidents and led to happier, more engaged students and a better learning environment:

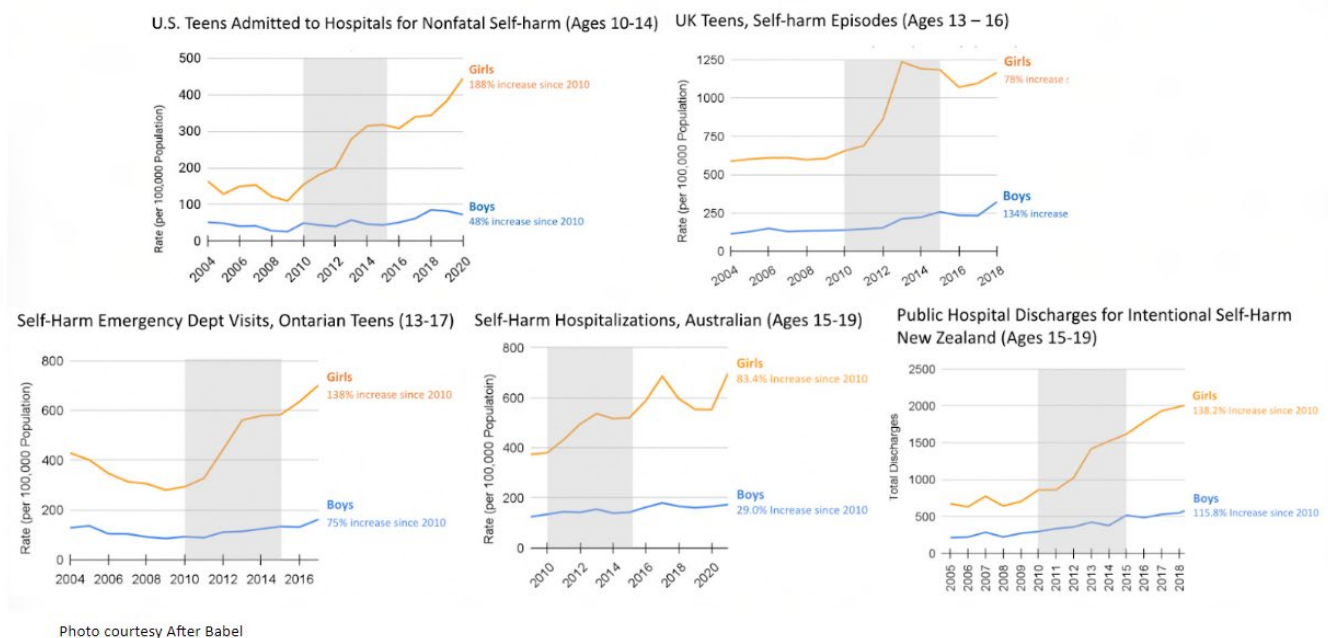
- In Pittsburgh, the superintendent said post-ban that “the majority of our teachers would say that it is much better. There are fewer distractions.” (Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/05/09/school-cellphone-ban-yondr/>)
- In Philadelphia, 27 public schools ban cell phone usage, with Assistant Superintendent Jonathan Brown saying “It’s completely changed the tone of the hallways.” He also added that there is more student engagement, fewer fights, calmer hallways, even a decrease in parents coming to school threatening teachers. (Source: <https://archive.ph/yYLgN#selection-679.0-679.206>)
- VA Beach schools also banned cell phones with the Chief Schools Officer saying the district has “seen some great strides” in reduced disciplinary incidents. (Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/05/09/school-cellphone-ban-yondr/>)
- In Colorado, where a district banned phones, the superintendent said he sees more interaction between teachers and students, more focus, and less conflict in hallways. And very few students are second-time offenders. “The majority of our students, when we surveyed them, were thankful for it because it has reduced the stress in their life,” (Source: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/05/09/school-cellphone-ban-yondr/>)

Here is what other principals and school administrators are saying (Source: <https://www.awayfortheday.org/voices-of-change>)

- “Things are much better! Parents who attended the orientation before school started applauded when I announced the change. Teachers are raving about the better classroom atmosphere they feel the new policy promotes. Kids are not balking and I truly think they enjoy the forced down-time, but at dismissal, they are like “flies on sugar” to check their phones. I would still say 80%+ of the conflicts we deal with have some social media/cell phone component, but almost always it occurs off campus and outside of the school day.” —Rob Thomas, Principal, Twelve Corners Middle School, Rochester, NY
- “This is our second year, and teachers and parents love it. Students follow the rules and the teachers and parents appreciate the leverage it gives them with the students.” —A. Robert Jessen, PhD, Monte Del Sol Charter School, Sante Fe, NM
- “Students honestly said they were surprised at how much less stress they felt knowing they couldn’t check their phone during class. They hadn’t realized how distracting their phone was until they didn’t have it.” — Cassie Sinichko, Director of Operations, GW Community Schools, Springfield, VA

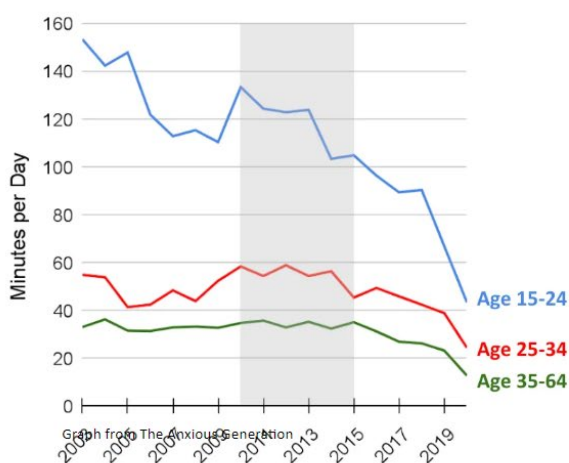
There are many potential benefits to schools when Away for the Day is implemented, in addition to the numerous benefits to student well-being. Given our current budget and staffing challenges, reduced fighting, bullying and other disciplinary incidents, and more engaged students and an improved learning environment can reduce the need for staffing and improve morale among educators and principals. Away for the Day is a change that can produce major benefits all around for APS.

Appendix E: Slides from ACTL Presentation



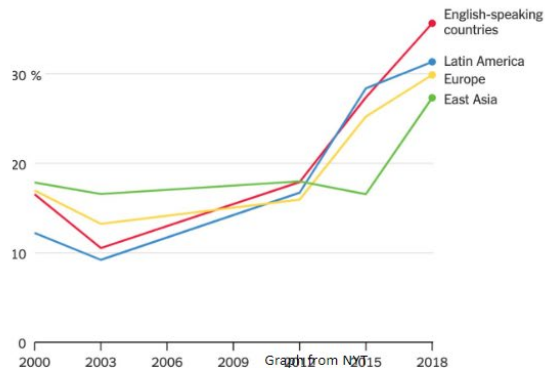
Slide 1:

Lastly, our recommendation since 2019 has been, as I'm sure you are all aware, Away for the Day. This impacts not only the school environment, but academics, mental health and student health, myopia, brain health, reduced physical activity, loneliness, bullying, safety and more. For example, there has been a spike in anxiety, depression, and self-harm among adolescent girls that began in the early 2010s. The grey area on this graph is when adolescence changed to a phone-based form; adolescents went from nearly all owning flip phones (or other basic phones) to nearly all owning smartphones with high-speed data plans and continuous (and nearly unlimited) access to the internet and social media. 2012 was the first year that a [majority of Americans owned a smartphone](#); by 2015, [two-thirds of teens](#) did too. This was also the period when social media use moved from [optional to ubiquitous](#) among adolescents. As an article in the [New York Times](#) states, "By 2012, as the world now knows, the major platforms had created an outrage machine that made life online far uglier, faster, more polarized and more likely to incite performative shaming. In addition, as Instagram grew in popularity over the next decade, it had particularly [strong effects on girls](#) and young women, inviting them to "compare and despair" as they scrolled through posts from friends and strangers showing faces, bodies and lives that had been edited and re-edited until many were closer to perfection than to reality." In my mind, Away for the Day is also Away from Social Media for the day.



Lonely at School

The share of students reporting high levels of loneliness at school has increased sharply since the early 2010s.

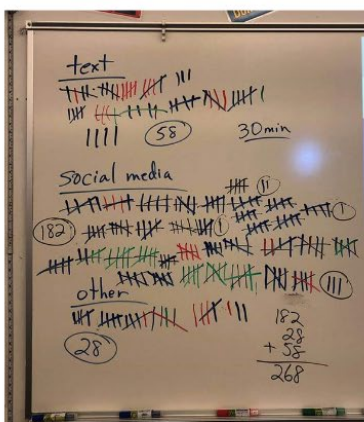


Slide 2:

Phones and devices also impact our students lives AT school WHILE at school. Their interactions with their peers, learning conflict and interpersonal relationships is wildly different in person than it is over text or social media. You can see the possible influence in the slides above. As we all know, Bullying that happens over social media or text or messages and images can last forever. Children also can't handle being bored anymore and will often choose screens over a real-life interaction (even adults are guilty of this) - The overstimulation caused by devices creates a feedback loop whereby most other experiences pale in comparison, causing kids to crave more and more stimulation. This sensory seeking behavior and inability to control one's attention are why personal devices also increase the incidence and severity of ADHD as shown in a studies. According to NIH, "Based on the current meta-analysis results, our study found a positive correlation between screen time and the risk of ADHD. **Excessive screen exposure may significantly contribute to the development of ADHD in children. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce screen time per day in children to prevent the occurrence of ADHD.**" ScienceDirect. "Longitudinal analyses indicate a directional effect of white matter microstructure on the ADHD scale, and a bi-directional effect between the ADHD scale and longer screen time utilization." The university of California San Francisco cohort study showed a causal

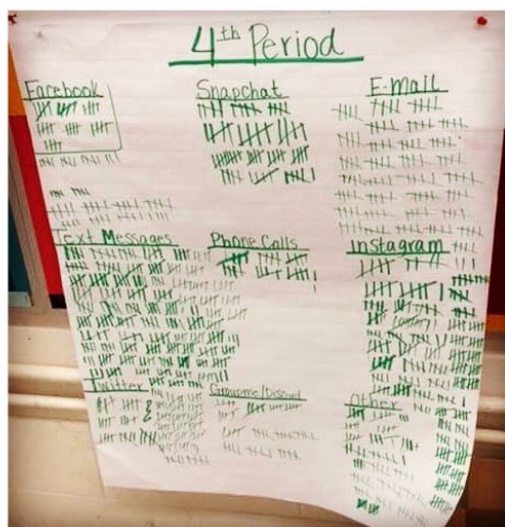
relationship with video games, streaming videos and social media and increases in OCD for preteens. Per [a Meta-analysis and systematic review](#), smart phone use can literally change the structure of the developing brain. "...the impact was more pronounced in adolescents than in adults.... Conclusions: Our findings demonstrated a potential association of excessive smartphone use with a reduced brain volume and altered activations." Schools can and should be more a break from screens to help with screen addiction.

SHAB also wants to support our on-the-ground educators and staff. A 2023 survey SHAB did of the Middle School principals supports the benefit to the students and staff of having an “Away for the Day” cell phone and smart device policy. The five schools *unanimously responded* that it has been well received by parents and teachers and had a positive impact on the students. All of the principals said an APS Policy or PIP would help support them and teachers in their interactions with students and families.



One half hour of a math class in the US

Up to 95% of U.S. teenagers own a **cell phone** and kids receive about 500 **notifications** a day – many during school hours.



Canadian class for one period

Slide 3:

Additionally, the phones and smart devices are a distraction. A Canadian math teacher asked her students in one class period to mark how many notifications their phones got. The image above is one class period of one class. per CBS 2023 Up to 95% of U.S. teenagers own a **cell phone** and kids receive about 500 **notifications** a day – many during school hours. They quoted a teacher saying that the “no-phone” movement has been a game changer and she “Saw kids’ faces again.” Think about how hard it is for you to stay on task and sustain a train of thought while working on your computer. Email, texts, and alerts of all kinds continually present opportunities to do something easier and more fun. If you are over age 25, you have a fully mature frontal cortex to help you resist temptation and maintain focus, and yet you probably still have difficulty doing so. Now imagine a phone or a smart watch in a child’s pocket, buzzing every few minutes with an invitation to do something other than pay attention. There’s no mature frontal cortex to help them stay on task. A study called [“Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One’s Own Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity,”](#) The students involved in the study came into a lab and took tests that are commonly used to measure memory capacity and intelligence. They were randomly assigned to one of three groups, given the following instructions: (1) Put your phone on your desk, (2) leave it in your pocket or bag, or (3) leave it out in another room. None of these

conditions involve active phone use—just the potential distraction of knowing your phone is there, with texts and social-media posts waiting. The results were clear: The closer the phone was to students’ awareness, the worse they performed on the tests. Even just having a phone in one’s pocket sapped students’ abilities.

Lastly, phones are a safety concern. Smart devices are used for meetings for drug activity. Additionally, cell phone and smart device use during a tragedy can detract from school safety and create a less safe environment by distracting students from listening to staff and teachers and creating noise that would be unsafe in a lockdown. Experts quoted in [the Washington Post](#) said, “The general rule is, when you’re in a lockdown, educators and safety officials don’t want kids on the phones because you want their full 100 percent attention on the teacher or other educators.” Per [National School Safety and Security Services](#), “A phone can make unwanted noises, and in a silent lockdown, even a vibration could be too loud. Depending on their age, kids might also be tempted to post about an ongoing incident to social media, which experts say could both inspire other potential gunmen seeking fame or reveal details about their location. Even the ability to call 911 isn’t a good reason, because an entire school full of people calling at once could overload a switchboard.” Also, “[Cell phone use also accelerates the unintentional \(and potentially intentional\) spread of misinformation, rumors, and fear.](#)”

STAFF RESPONSE:

APS staff acknowledge that media and technology are important in the lives and educational experience of students, and that this presents challenges in helping students use technology in a healthy and responsible manner. We support the concept of limiting the use of cell phones and related technology in the classroom and modeling digital citizenship in schools and the community. We recommend the following:

- Review mid-year survey data from students, families, and staff who piloted a limited-use protocol at Wakefield High School in the 2023-24 school year and qualitative feedback from the broader community.
- Consider the developmental needs of students at different grade levels, the differences in school communities, the potential impact on student discipline outcomes, and the impact on teacher and administrator time in any discussion of cell phone and technology use policies.
- Intentional embedding of digital citizenship curriculum in core curricular content and social-emotional learning to provide students with knowledge and skills to help them navigate confidently and responsibly through a rapidly changing technological world.
- Engage with the CCPTA and school PTAs to encourage the delivery of the Ready, Set, Go! curriculum and other family education programs on digital citizenship supported by the National PTA: <https://www.pta.org/home/programs/connected/ready-tech-go>
- Development of a periodic evaluation/review of educational and personal technology use by students to include feedback from students, staff, and parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION #2:

Recommendation:

The School Health Advisory Committee strongly recommends that Arlington Public Schools implement 20-20-20 guidelines for screen use as part of the Healthy and Safe School Environment section of the Policy Implementation Procedure I-10.30 PIP-1,

Support for Students -Wellness or as a general practice recommended to teachers to remind students in class with additional infographics provided by APS to be posted at schools.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Student Well-Being: Establish and promote a culture of physical, social, emotional, and mental health wellness.

Budget Implications: Negligible

Appendix:

It has been well documented that looking at a screen for long periods of time results in eye strain and dryness, headaches and increasing nearsightedness. To help reduce the impact of screens, teachers and staff would instruct students at the beginning of class to follow the 20-20-20 rule and would remind them of this, as necessary, during class when using the school-issued device.

The American Association of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, American Academy of Ophthalmology and American Optometric Association all state on their websites that this rule helps the eyes when using a screen. The references are below.

American Association of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus
<https://aapos.org/glossary/screen-time-and-online-learning>

Take frequent breaks from electronic screens to decrease eye strain. A simple rule to follow is the 20/20/20 rule. This means when using screens for a long time such as e-learning or playing video games, have your child to take a 20 second break every 20 minutes and look at something at a distance (at least 20 feet away), for example have your child look down the hall or out the window. Remember looking at a distance lets the eyes relax. Taking these breaks and looking away from the screen and at a distance will allow your child's eyes to relax and help decrease eye strain. This can help decrease some of the symptoms caused by long periods of near work such as headaches and increasing nearsightedness.

American Academy of Ophthalmology
<https://www.aoa.org/newsroom/news-releases/detail/protect-your-eyes-from-too-much-screen-time>

Give your eyes a break: Remember to blink and follow the 20-20-20 rule. Take a break every 20 minutes by looking at an object 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Looking into the distance allows your eyes to relax.

American Optometric Association
<https://www.aoa.org/healthy-eyes/eye-and-vision-conditions/computer-vision-syndrome?sso=y>

Rest breaks. To prevent eyestrain, try to rest eyes when using the computer for long periods. Resting the eyes for 15 minutes after two hours of continuous computer use. Also, for every 20 minutes of computer viewing, look into the distance for 20 seconds to allow the eyes a chance to refocus.

[SHAB 2020 Recommendations for "General Use of Screens in APS"](#)

Because real-life and multi-sensory experiences have been proven to be more meaningful than virtual learning experiences on electronic devices, screens should be used for specific purposes rather than as a total replacement for hands-on, project-based learning. Authentic books and hand-writing notes on paper have been proven to be more effective technology in reading processes and knowledge acquisition. Near screens and educational apps lack multisensory input and pose health risks, so screens should be implemented when other methods of meeting curricular objectives have been exhausted. Diverse modalities for learning should be offered, even when schools are required to implement distance learning. Safe configurations for school-issued and home devices:

1. Place a blue light filter on screens.
2. Make sure the monitor is at eye level when seated in front of the screen.
3. Keep monitors at least 25 (updated from 20) inches from eyes (adult's arm length).
4. Use a chair that can adjust in height to the child's sight.
5. Minimize reflections and screen glare by adjusting contrast and brightness settings and the light in the room (lamps, overhead, sunshine, etc.) to match the lighting on the screen. The screen and room lighting should be similar.
6. Ensure the feet are resting flat on the floor.
7. Keep track of time with a timer.
8. Consider volume and the surrounding sounds so as to not block them out. Consider setting a volume limit.

STAFF RESPONSE:

APS staff supports the concept of promoting practices like the "20-20-20 rule" which encourage students to take frequent breaks from electronic screens, engage in multiple modalities for student learning, and implement a variety of instructional strategies to provide a plethora of learning experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION #3:

We applaud that ASHRAE standards for new construction have been added to the Policy Implementation Procedure I-10.30 PIP-1, Support for Students -Wellness:

"When schools are built or undergo major renovations, their HVAC systems are built in accordance with the most recent ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) 62.1 Standards for that type of construction."

However, we also recommend that APS follow best practices for HVAC Maintenance, including regular, timely HEPA filter replacements, and meeting or exceeding air exchange rates, as recommended by ASHRAE for existing and new school division buildings and spaces. We also recommend that the school division transparently update parents and staff with timely, easy-to-understand reporting of 1) the status of air exchange rates in APS classroom and school building spaces, 2) the HEPA filter replacement schedule, and 3) routine HVAC maintenance efforts.

Budget Implications: Ongoing costs associated with planned preventative maintenance would not be new costs for the division, however filter replacements and upgrades would be new since HEPA and MERV13 filters were installed post 2020, however these should already be accounted for in budget projections prior to our recommendation so would not be a new budget costs. Our recommendation mainly consists of transparent reporting of these replacements and continuing to follow best practices.

Strategic Plan Alignment: Aligns with the KPIs in the current strategic plan (see Appendix).

Appendix:

Policy Implementation Procedure I-10.30 PIP-1, Support for Students -Wellness

[https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CZATHY7431A5/\\$file/I-10.30%20Combined.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CZATHY7431A5/$file/I-10.30%20Combined.pdf)

Strategic Plan Monitoring KPI

KPI-OE-1.a. - % of quarterly HVAC preventive maintenance completed

<https://www.apsva.us/wp-content/uploads/sites/57/2023/12/FY-2024-School-Boards-Adopted-Budget-Document.pdf>

-Start on page 432 (440 of 666 on PDF)

-Maintenance begins on page 446 (454 of 666 on PDF)

[https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CKZJOY4E587C/\\$file/F-1%20FINAL11_102022%20Operations%20Monitoring%20Report%20Working%20Document-3%20Rev.%20110922%200912%20AM.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CKZJOY4E587C/$file/F-1%20FINAL11_102022%20Operations%20Monitoring%20Report%20Working%20Document-3%20Rev.%20110922%200912%20AM.pdf)

Nov 10, 2022 – Operational Efficiency Monitoring Report

[https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CX8QW96B26A3/\\$file/F-1%20Facilities%20%26%20Operations%20Update.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/arlington/Board.nsf/files/CX8QW96B26A3/$file/F-1%20Facilities%20%26%20Operations%20Update.pdf)

Nov 9, 2023 – Operational Efficiency Monitoring Report

<https://www.apsva.us/engage/development-of-the-2024-30-strategic-plan/>,

Scroll to “Steering Committee Meeting Materials”

Then “January 10, 2024”

Then “[2018-24 – Strategic Plan – Scorecard Updated 7 Feb 2024](#)”

Facilities data starts on page 8. Please be sure to see the notes on page 10 that explain the reasons why data is not listed for certain years

STAFF RESPONSE:

APS staff supports the following SHAB recommendations:

- To use the most recent updates to ASHRAE 62.1 Standards and local jurisdiction building codes in new school HVAC construction,
- To maintain HVAC systems and filter replacements in accordance with ASHRAE recommendations and the capabilities of the HVAC systems, and
- To maintain school air exchange rates as recommended by ASHRAE and routine HVAC maintenance and develop a reporting protocol.

SHAB Committee Members:

Alison Babb (Chair)

Sheila Kelly (Vice Chair)

Desiree Jaworski

Vell Rives

Lainee Morgan

Kate Froeb

Lori Pines

Mary Sanders
Pablo Moulden
Maria Jacoby
Melissa Schwaber
Keirsten Kelly*
Candice Lopez*
Medha Tare*
Christopher Day*

*Not present for the vote

Committee Vote: voted en bloc – 11 in favor, 0 opposed