

State bans cell phone use on campuses

By Tierney Withrow
For the Post-Signal

School districts are to adopt policies restricting students from using phones and other electronics during school hours, House Bill 1481 states, and the bill also requires districts to enforce punishments for those who break the policy.

Tioga ISD, Aubrey ISD and Pilot Point ISD adopted policies stating students must have their electronics in their bags during the school day.

“We’ve chosen to allow possession on campus but prevent use, which means it can be powered off in their backpack, not on their person, along with all the other communication devices,” Aubrey ISD Superintendent Dr. Shannon Saylor said.

Prohibited devices include phones, smartwatches, earbuds and any other electronic device not supplied by the district.

“I think the watches and the earbuds will be more of an issue than the phones,” Tioga High School Principal Kirkland said. “The biggest change is going to be the lack of immediate availability to them.”

All district policies outline the ban is from the start bell to end bell and doesn’t include extracurricular activities before and after school.

“Our choices in law were to either prohibit possession or have a policy regarding storage,” Saylor said to the Aubrey ISD trustees. “We are not providing storage because these are basically \$1,500 computers that their parents own.”

Some districts have bought storage units for devices to comply with the bill.

“I don’t think we have the manpower or the ability to have everybody come and lock them up in a certain spot,” Kirkland said. “I think that’s something that would be very, very difficult to manage and require more manpower than what we probably have—not to mention the disruptions that it would cost.”

Aubrey students will receive detention for the first and second infraction and ISS placement on the third offense. Students will not receive punishment for minor infractions, such as their phone ringing.

“No discipline is black and white because we gotta consider the intent,

2025-2026

Cell Phone Policy

New Texas Law - HB 1481



What’s changing?

- All cell phones, smart watches, tablets, laptops, headphones, and earbuds are prohibited during the entire school day - including lunch and passing periods
- Devices must be turned off and stored in backpacks that will be maintained in the front of the classroom, a locker, or another secure location not on the student’s person during the day
- No exceptions for instructional use
- Exceptions only for:
 - approved medical needs (plan with School Nurse & Principal)
 - Special Education Need (IEP/504)

Disciplinary Actions

If a device is visible, vibrates, or rings, it is subject to disciplinary consequences.

- **1st Offense:** Device will be confiscated; the student may pick up the device at the end of the day
- **2nd Offense:** Device will be confiscated; parents may pick up the device at the end of the school day
- **3rd Offense:** Device will be confiscated and will not be returned until a parent meeting has occurred. School consequences in accordance with the enforcement of campus rules and Student Code of Conduct may also apply
- **4th Offense or More:** School consequences in accordance with the enforcement of campus rules and Student Code of Conduct.

Pilot Point ISD shares the guidelines regarding cell phone storage on school grounds in advance of the school year kicking off on Aug. 11.

Graphic Courtesy of Pilot Point ISD

the kids’ discipline history and the kid’s ability to understand wrongness and their actions,” Saylor said.

Pilot Point students are subject to disciplinary action if the device is visible, vibrates or rings, the district stated on Facebook. Students who violate the policy will have their device confiscated on the first and second offense. The third offense will result in a parent meeting.

Administrators are curious about how the new policy will affect stu-

dent-teacher relations as it rolls out.

“It’s going to be an adjustment,” Saylor said. “I think it’s gonna be for the good.”

Parents wanting to communicate with their child will have to contact the main office.

“It’s going to be the campus coming up with plans on how children can communicate with their parents or somebody during the school day,” Saylor said.

Aubrey office receptionists are go-

ing to be divided by last name alphabetically to make message management easier for both parents and staff.

“When parents want to get in touch with their kids, it’ll be just like the old-fashioned note system we used to do,” Saylor said.

Previously, Aubrey Middle School had a similar phone policy that required parents to contact the main office.

“Once parents got acclimated, it kind of died off of being crazy about the calls for the front office because you learn to communicate ahead of time,” Director of Student Services Jewelisha Jefferson said.

Tioga’s previous phone policy stated students had to put up devices during class time but were allowed access during lunch and passing periods.

“Our students know lunch is going to be difficult,” Kirkland said. “In between classes is going to be difficult because that’s when they’ve been allowed to have them.”

The bill has faced backlash from both students, parents and staff across the state.

“It’s just a culture shock,” TISD board President Dallas Slay said.

Kirkland agreed.

“It’s the instant connectivity, instant access, instant gratification, if you will, of whatever they need. Our students live in a world, and our adults, for that matter, live in a world where if they need to know something, they can Google it.”

Saylor recognized the policy will be a major adjustment for both students and parents.

“I do think we’re going to have to have some mental health support in place for kids because it’s going to be very difficult for them if they really aren’t practicing being away from their phone,” she said. “In our leadership meeting, we had squish balls so that people did things in their hands besides grab their phone because we do it as adults.”

The policies go into effect on the first day of school.

“This, once again, is a common-sense approach that should be put up,” Kirkland said. “They are not allowed. We are going to follow the law.”