

Student Voice on Personal Electronic Device Policy Implementation: Recommendations for Year 2



Executive Summary

In July 2025, Governor Kotek issued [Executive Order 25-09 \(EO 25-09\)](#) requiring all Oregon public school districts to adopt policies restricting student use of personal electronic devices (PEDs; including cell phones / smart phones) during the entire school day. Districts were required to adopt policies by October 31, 2025, and implement them by January 1, 2026. To understand student experiences with implementation, ODE administered the **Student Voice Survey on Cell Phones and Learning** during the early spring of the 2025-26 school year, collecting responses from over 6,000 students across 76 school districts. Respondents represented communities across Oregon, including rural, suburban, and urban schools of varying sizes. ODE also engaged members of the Oregon Youth Advisory Council (YAC), who represent 15 of the state's 19 education service districts in a structured series of listening sessions, data review discussions, and collaborative analysis from November 2025 through June 2026. The findings presented in this brief reflect an early and still-evolving implementation period. Survey responses indicate that student perceptions positively change as the policy becomes part of daily school routines, and YAC members expressed genuine long-term optimism that reducing the presence of social media in schools will benefit future generations of students. These results should be read as a snapshot of where implementation stands today, not a final measure of the policy's impact.

The findings demonstrate that the policy is in place across Oregon schools, and students acknowledge real benefits, including increased face-to-face interactions with their peers and teachers and reduced digital harassment. At the same time, consistent implementation and reinforcement is uneven, communication about the purpose of the policy has been limited, and specific student populations are experiencing their school's policies differently. This brief presents the key findings from student voice data and offers recommendations for strengthening implementation in Year 2 and beyond.

For a concise overview of key findings, recommendations, and implementation considerations, see the accompanying [one-page summary](#).

Context and Scope

EO 25-09 was issued in response to a growing body of research linking high personal electronic device and social media use to negative outcomes for student mental health, self-esteem, and academic performance. ODE summarizes this research in [Fostering Student Learning, Well-Being, and Belonging: Guidance for Personal Electronic Device Policies in accordance with Executive Order 25-09](#). The order requires districts to prohibit student PED use from the start to the end of the school day, define how devices will be stored, provide exemptions for medical needs, IEPs, 504 plans, and individual circumstances, and ensure that consequences for violations do not result in lost instructional time.

Implementation has been widespread. Overall, 97% of surveyed students confirmed their school has a PED policy in place. However, having a policy, like HQIM, in place does not guarantee consistent student experience. The student voice data reveals significant variation in how the policy is experienced across schools, classrooms, grade levels, and student populations. Understanding these differences is essential for moving from compliance to meaningful, equitable implementation.

Key Findings

- I. Students understand the expectations and want more information about the purpose.** Across all data sources, students showed a strong understanding of policy expectations and consequences. This reflects schools' success in communicating the policy's core components. At the same time, students wanted more information about why the policy was adopted and what were the intended benefits. As one YAC high school student shared, "Administrators tend to overemphasize what the specific rules are, but barely, if at all, explain why the policy would improve our school experience." Communication came primarily through start-of-year announcements, morning reminders, and digital contacts (e.g. through student information system messages and broad school email reminders) that students reported were not reaching them effectively. ODE's recent [Elevating Voices in Education \(EVE\) Workforce Survey](#) corroborates this gap from the staff side: only 31% of school staff said the policy reflects feedback from students, teachers, and families, and 45% said they did not know. YAC students recommended schools facilitate ongoing conversation about the purpose behind the policy. Survey data supports this: communication quality was the strongest predictor of positive student experiences in the survey.
- II. Students notice differences in how policies are implemented.** Across most YAC sessions, students consistently described differences in how the policy is applied, including which classrooms have more consistent adherence. This variation is not only seen between schools or districts, but also across classrooms within the same building. Within the survey, over half of students reported that phones are still used "sometimes" or "often" indicating that many schools are still adjusting to full implementation. Staff consistency was described as difficult to sustain over time, particularly in larger schools where the logistics of compliance monitoring present ongoing challenges. Similarly, the EVE Workforce survey data suggests this inconsistency may be partly structural: 33% of staff did not know when their district's policy started, 22% did not know how students are expected to store devices, and 45% did not know which student groups receive exemptions.
- III. Students report different experiences with fairness and compliance.** Sixty-six percent of students who took the survey felt that the policy was enforced fairly and consistently. Of the racial and ethnic groups surveyed, Black and African American students had the lowest fairness scores, nearly 10 percentage points below the overall average. YAC students independently identified this disparity as the most concerning pattern in the findings. Students with disabilities reported lower perceptions of fairness than their peers (57% compared with 67%) and they were more likely to report that the policy causes them stress (56% vs. 43%). Student survey data and YAC student input also described enforcement sometimes being applied more aggressively toward students who are already receiving behavioral supports while the same behavior goes unaddressed for peers not currently involved in the discipline process.
- IV. Student experiences differ between middle and high school.** Middle school implementation was consistently described as structured, uniform, and closely supervised. High school was described as a fundamentally different environment, with greater student autonomy and more varied expectations. Participants also noted that students often need personal devices for employment coordination, dual-credit authentication, and family communication, needs that current exemption processes do not consistently address. For instance, they more frequently agreed that the policy improved class time (59% vs 45%), helped them stay focused (57% vs 42%), and created a safe environment (52% vs 32%). They also reported significantly less stress in connection with the policy than high schoolers, suggesting that the policy's benefits and burdens are distributed differently across grades.
- V. Students report policy benefits alongside new challenges.** Students described several positive changes following implementation, which were independently confirmed by EVE Workforce Survey data. More than half of educators (56%) reported that the policy reduces classroom distractions, and 52% reported improved social interactions including less social media harassment, fewer incidents of unauthorized photos and videos, and more face-to-face interaction during lunch and passing periods. Students also

highlighted challenges. Some observed that distractions have shifted from phones to school-issued laptops, with students finding ways to access non-instructional content despite district internet protections. These findings suggest that districts may benefit from considering the broader digital environment and overall screen time, not just phone use, as they continue to refine implementation. Students are already recognizing positive changes, and attention to other devices may help sustain those gains.

- VI. Student experiences continue to evolve as implementation matures.** Students emphasized that survey responses were collected during the first months of implementation, when schools were still adjusting to new expectations and routines. Survey data analysis indicates that students who had attended school under a policy for a full year or more expressed the least concern overall and described implementation as normalized. Multiple YAC students expressed genuine long-term optimism that reducing social media presence in schools will benefit future generations.

Policy Considerations

Based on the convergence of survey data and input recommendations, ODE offers the following considerations for districts as they refine implementation for Year 2 and beyond. ODE's [PED Policy Toolkit](#), including guidance documents, FAQs, and communication templates, provides resources to support districts in addressing each of these areas.

- I. Communicate the purpose of PED policies alongside the expectations.** Feedback indicates that PED policy implementation is more effective when school leaders communicate the purpose alongside expectations and consequences. Students report stronger support for the policy when schools explain its purpose, goals, and benefits alongside expectations and consequences. Ongoing conversations with students about the policy's rationale and intended outcomes can strengthen student understanding and support. Framing the policy as supporting students, rather than restricting them, is associated with greater buy-in and stronger student ownership of the expectations. YAC feedback also highlights peer-to-peer communication as a promising strategy, with students often reporting greater receptiveness to messages delivered by their peers. This suggests an opportunity to elevate student leaders as ambassadors who can help communicate the purpose, benefits, and expectations of the policy in ways that feel authentic and relatable to students.
- II. Support consistent implementation across classrooms.** Student feedback indicates that inconsistent monitoring is the primary driver of low fairness perceptions. Consistent PED policy implementation improves when districts provide regular training and ongoing support for all school staff, including clear expectations for substitute teachers. Evidence suggests that relying solely on initial, start-of-year communication is insufficient. Monitoring implementation patterns and addressing inconsistencies proactively is associated with more equitable and consistent policy application across classrooms.
- III. Monitor equitable implementation across student groups.** Data indicates disparities in PED policy implementation, including differences in fairness perceptions by race, disproportionate impacts on students with disabilities, and harsher enforcement for students already navigating behavioral support systems. Evidence suggests that reviewing discipline data disaggregated by race, disability status, and disciplinary history helps identify patterns in policy implementation. Comparing discipline data for the EO with other discipline categories is also an important practice for recognizing potential inequities within a district's implementation. Ongoing monitoring and adjustment, rather than one-time reviews, are associated with more consistent and equitable practices.
- IV. Strengthen and clarify the exemption process for high school students.** Students perceived the third exemption category under EO 25-09, allowing individual exemptions for specific student needs or educational outcomes, as being applied inconsistently. EVE survey data reinforces this concern: 61% of

school staff selected 'I don't know' when asked whether the exemption process is fair, the highest uncertainty rate on any EO-related question in the workforce survey. In some cases, students with needs like employment communication or dual-credit authentication are being formally denied while informal phone use is permitted for loosely defined activities, such as associated student body (ASB) and / or school student leadership activities. Clear, transparent, and consistent exemption processes can help students, families, and staff understand how decisions are made for reviewing and granting exemptions.

- V. **Model the learning environment schools want to create.** While EO 25-09 does not regulate staff device use, students perceive staff behavior as part of the policy environment. Teachers using phones during instructional time, including accessing social media, can make it harder for students to view the policy as a shared commitment to the learning environment.
- VI. **Commit to tracking progress over time.** Administering the Student Voice Survey in Years 2 and 3 would allow ODE and districts to distinguish between early-adoption friction and durable policy impact, track whether positive outcomes increase as the policy normalizes, and identify areas where implementation adjustments are producing measurable change.

Consulted Sources

[Executive Order No. 25-09, Personal Electronic Device Policy for School Districts](#), Office of the Governor, State of Oregon (July 2, 2025)

[Fostering Student Learning, Well-Being, and Belonging: Guidance for Personal Electronic Device Policies](#), Oregon Department of Education (v2.0 August, 2025, [v1.0 October, 2024](#))

[FAQ: Implementation of Executive Order 25-09](#), Oregon Department of Education (Updated October 2, 2025)

Student Voice Survey on Cell Phones and Learning, Oregon Department of Education, Digital Learning (2025-26)

Youth Advisory Council Listening Sessions and Data Review Discussions, Oregon Department of Education (November 2025 through June 2026)