



***Dr. Michelle Rodriguez,***  
***Superintendent of Schools***  
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Dr. Michelle Rodriguez

May 28, 2025

Dear Students, Staff, and Families of Stockton Unified,

Beginning in the 2025–2026 school year, Stockton Unified School District (SUSD) will implement a new district-wide policy limiting student cell phone use during the school day. This change is to promote a more focused and supportive school environment. The policy is rooted in growing concerns about the impact of cell phones on student learning, mental health, and school safety. A 2024 Pew Research Center study found that 72% of teens say they often or sometimes feel more peaceful and less distracted when they do not have their smartphones. The United Nations recently issued a global recommendation for schools to ban cell phones, and one in four countries has already acted. In California, Assembly Bill 3216 requires school districts to establish clear policies on student smartphone use by July 1, 2026. SUSD is taking proactive steps now to align with this guidance and create a supportive school environment.

Over the past several months, we conducted surveys gathering input from thousands of SUSD students, families, and staff members. The feedback showed a shared desire to reduce distractions in the classroom, limit opportunities for cyberbullying during the school day, and support student engagement in instruction while recognizing the complex relationship between youth and technology. In response, SUSD formed a Cell Phone Policy Taskforce, comprised of over 40 students, parents, teachers, counselors, campus security monitors, office staff, site administrators, and district leadership. This group worked collaboratively to craft the policy that balances the need for structure with an understanding of students' developmental and safety needs (BP 5131.8).

Under this new policy, students will not be allowed to use their phones during instructional time. SUSD will be purchasing iPads for classes and courses which need additional technology above and beyond the district-issued Chromebooks. Phones must be turned off and stored in backpacks during class. If a student fails to follow this expectation, the phone will be placed in a designated storage area within the classroom or office. This expectation applies to all students, in all classrooms, across all school sites unless for documented exceptions. Exceptions will be made for students who require cell phone access for medical reasons, as documented in a health plan, or as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 Plan, or Student Study Team accommodations.

High school students will still be permitted to use their phones during noninstructional time, including during passing periods and lunch. For students in grades K–8, phones may only be used after school hours once they have left campus—commonly referred to as “gate-to-gate.”

Board Policy 5131.8 will align with SUSD's Board Policy 5131, which recognizes that while mobile devices can be beneficial in some contexts, they may also disrupt the instructional program. Students retain the right to use phones in emergency situations or when explicitly authorized by a teacher or administrator. Students are reminded that devices may not be used in ways that infringe on the privacy of others. Inappropriate use of mobile devices may lead to disciplinary action and possible removal of device.



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To ensure consistency and fairness in enforcement, the SUSD Cell Phone Taskforce identified the following consequences which will apply to all students TK-12 grade:

### **1st Offense**

- One verbal warning documented in Synergy (SUSD student information system)
- Parent contact made by the teacher

### **2nd Offense**

- Cell phone stored in classroom pocket chart until end of class (grades TK-8) and period (grades 9-12)
- Documented in Synergy and parent contact made by the teacher
- If the student refuses to provide the cell phone, this escalates to a 3rd offense

### **3rd Offense**

- Cell phone stored in the office until end of the day, to be picked up by parent or emergency contact (grades TK-8) or the student (grades 9-12)
- Documented in Synergy and parent contact made by site administration
- For high school, the HERO system will be used for possible detention assignment
- If the student refuses to provide the cell phone, this escalates to a 4th offense

### **4th Offense**

- Student is placed on the “No Go” list for school and district events
- Student must complete an after-school mini-course on responsible cell phone use and policy compliance
- For high school, the HERO system used to assign detention

### **Additional Consequences**

- If cell phone use is coupled with another offense (e.g., defiance, harassment), additional consequences will be applied in alignment with the district’s discipline matrix for the related offense



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To ensure that all students, staff, and families are well-informed about the new SUSD cell phone policy, additional communication will follow throughout the summer, including a postcard mailed to families, updates on social media, school marquee messages, and new signage across campuses. The policy will also be highlighted during student orientations, Back to School Nights, and will be included in the First Day of School Packet. Staff will receive an overview and implementation guidance during the first days back before the school year begins. Our goal is to ensure consistent messaging and a smooth implementation across the district.

We care about the safety and success of each and every student. Thank you for your continued partnership in ensuring that our schools remain safe, distraction-free learning environments where all students can thrive.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michelle Rodriguez  
Superintendent of Schools  
Stockton Unified School District