



Alamance-Burlington School System
Student Centered, Future Focused!

CELL PHONE USE IN SCHOOLS
SURVEY DATA
JUNE 3-9, 2025

Staff Survey: 672 Responses

Family Survey: 1,700 Responses

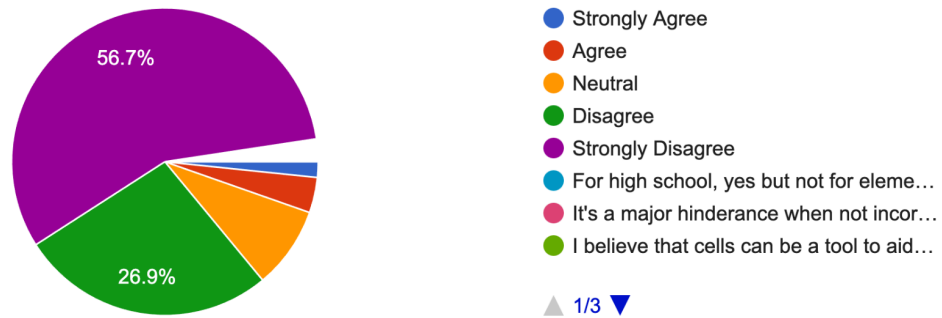
With proposed legislation limiting cell phone use in schools, we want to be proactive in updating our student technology policy. We want to better understand ABSS families' opinions on the impact of cell phones on student learning, engagement, and health. We acknowledge that technology is a powerful tool for engaging and learning in the 21st century. We also recognize that recent studies have shown that personal cell phones may be harmful if used inappropriately. We hope to support student safety, learning, and engagement.

STAFF SURVEY

672 RESPONSES

Cell phone use during school is necessary to support student learning and engagement?

672 responses



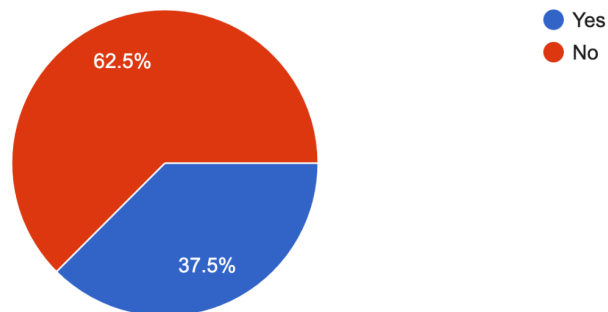
Policies and procedures must be implemented to ensure students are safe using cell phones and online services.

672 responses



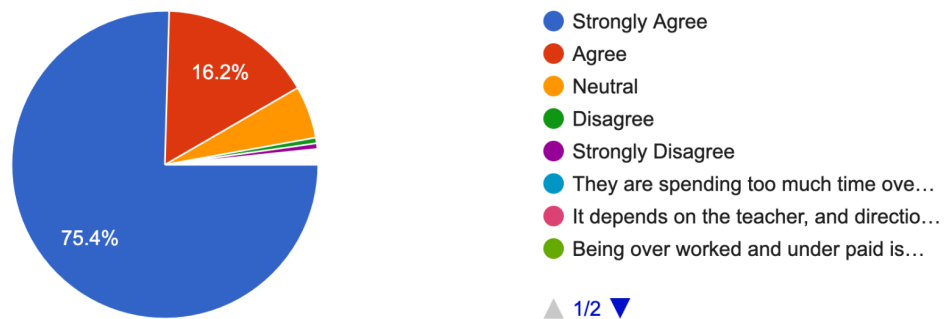
Do you believe there are benefits for students to use their cell phones during the school day?

672 responses



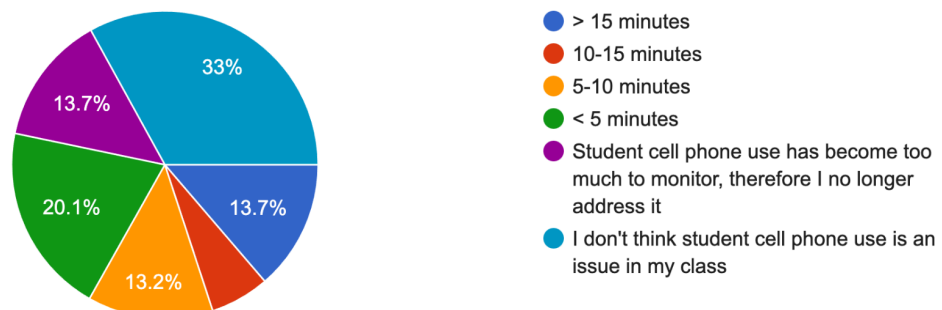
Students are spending too much time on cell phones. This can harm concentration and behavior.

672 responses



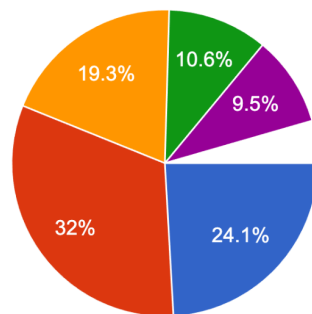
How much time do you spend addressing student cell phone use each class period?

672 responses



Cell phones are necessary to ensure student safety while traveling to and from school.

672 responses

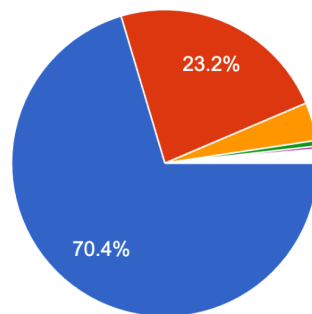


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- this is a red herring question
- Students traveling to school as a walk...
- It's nice for kids who ride the bus to ha...

▲ 1/5 ▼

Overuse of cell phones on social media platforms can increase the incidence of cyberbullying and harassment.

672 responses

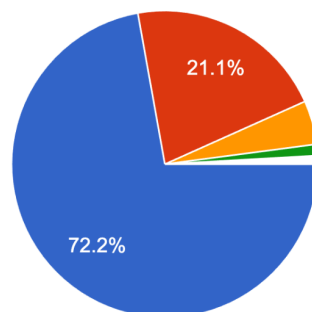


- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- It can but not for every student.
- Agree, but location and time of day wo...
- As I have written for all the above que...

▲ 1/2 ▼

Too much time spent using cell phones can reduce physical activity levels in young people and decrease communication and interpersonal skills.

672 responses



- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Not a teachers job! As a parent of two...
- It's post-textual. They don't need nuan...
- Again depends on individual student a...

▲ 1/2 ▼

I support a phone free schools solution in ABSS.

672 responses



STAFF SURVEY SYNOPSIS:

Perceptions on Cell Phone Use in School:

- **Necessity for Learning/Engagement:** Staff largely disagree that cell phone use is necessary for student learning and engagement during school hours.
 - 83.6% (56.7% Strongly Disagree + 26.9% Disagree) believe cell phone use is not necessary.
 - Only 5.4% (1.6% Strongly Agree + 3.8% Agree) believe it is necessary.
 - Notable comments include that it's a "major hindrance when not incorporated with the lesson," and while they "can be a tool...they are also a huge distraction." Several mentioned that it's unnecessary at the elementary level, but could be beneficial at secondary levels (e.g., if students lack Chromebooks).
- **Need for Policies & Procedures for Safety:** There is overwhelming agreement among staff that policies and procedures are crucial for student safety with cell phones and online services.
 - 88.5% (65.6% Agree + 22.9% Strongly Agree) believe policies are necessary.
 - Comments emphasize the need for system-wide implementation and consistent enforcement, with some noting that current policies exist but need better follow-through. Some suggest that if phones are not allowed, these policies wouldn't be needed, while others stress parental responsibility alongside school efforts.
- **Perceived Benefits:**
 - 62.5% (420 responses) believe there are NO benefits for students to use cell phones during the school day.
 - 37.5% (252 responses) believe there are benefits.
 - Among those who see benefits, the top reasons are:
 - Safety: Contact with parents and guardians (35.1% or 236 responses).
 - Research: For coursework (16.5% or 111 responses).

- Communication: Connecting with friends and parents (10.6% or 71 responses)
 - Comments indicate that while some specific uses might exist (e.g., medical monitoring, photography for art, music for independent work), these are often outweighed by distractions or can be accomplished with school-issued devices.
- Perceived Negative Consequences: There is near-unanimous agreement that negative consequences exist.
 - 98.2% (660 responses) believe there are negative consequences to cell phones during the school day.
 - The top negative consequence is Distraction and reduced engagement (96.9% or 651 responses).
 - Other highly cited negative effects include:
 - Reduced socialization and verbal communication skills (81.3%)
 - Cyberbullying (78.9%)
 - Exposure to inappropriate content (77.5%)
 - Cheating (77.5%)
 - Harassment (69.6%)
 - Increasing anxiety and depression (67.6%)
 - Comments frequently highlight phones as a "major distraction," a "downfall of public education," and facilitators of negative behaviors like planning fights, sharing vapes, and inappropriate recordings. Many also mention the impact on student attention spans and increased teacher burden.

Agreement with Specific Statements:

- Excessive Phone Use & Harm to Concentration/Behavior: Staff overwhelmingly agree.
 - 91.6% (75.4% Strongly Agree + 16.2% Agree) believe students spend too much time on cell phones, harming concentration and behavior.
 - Comments often extend this to "all technology devices" and highlight the addictive nature.
- Overuse on Social Media & Cyberbullying/Harassment: Staff overwhelmingly agree.
 - 93.6% (70.4% Strongly Agree + 23.2% Agree) believe overuse on social media increases cyberbullying and harassment.
 - Some noted that cyberbullying can occur regardless of location, emphasizing parental roles.

Time Spent Addressing Cell Phone Use:

- Staff report spending significant time addressing cell phone use.
 - More than a quarter of staff (27.4%) spend 5 minutes or more each class period addressing cell phone use (13.7% > 15 minutes, 6.2% 10-15 minutes, 13.2% 5-10 minutes).
 - Another 13.7% state that "Student cell phone use has become too much to monitor, therefore I no longer address it," indicating a level of resignation due to the scale of the issue.
 - Only 33% (222 responses) reported spending less than 5 minutes, or that it's not an issue in their class.

Cell Phones for Safety While Traveling (To/From School):

- Staff are more divided on this than on other safety-related questions
 - 56.1% (32% Agree + 24.1% Strongly Agree) believe cell phones are necessary for safety while traveling.
 - 30% (19.3% Disagree + 10.6% Strongly Disagree) disagree.

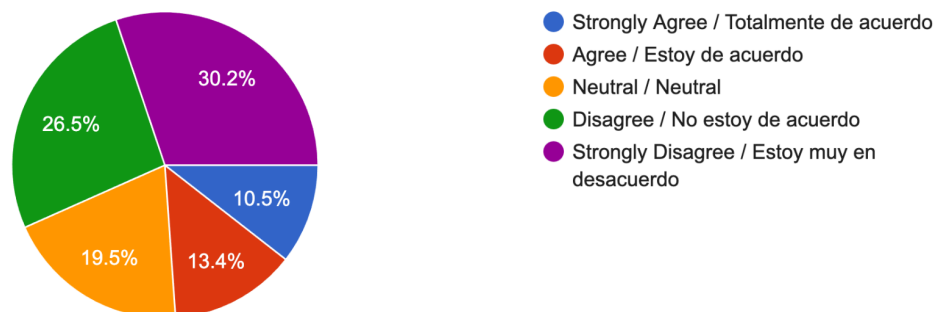
Overall Staff Sentiment (Inferred from comments):

- There's a strong sense among staff that cell phones are a major disruption to the learning environment and contribute significantly to negative student behaviors.
- Many feel overwhelmed by the constant need to manage phone use, and express a desire for clear, consistently enforced district-wide policies.
- While acknowledging some potential benefits (primarily safety-related communication), staff largely believe the negative impacts far outweigh any positives during instructional time.
- There's a call for parental responsibility in managing phone use and for the district to prioritize broader issues like behavior and mental health.

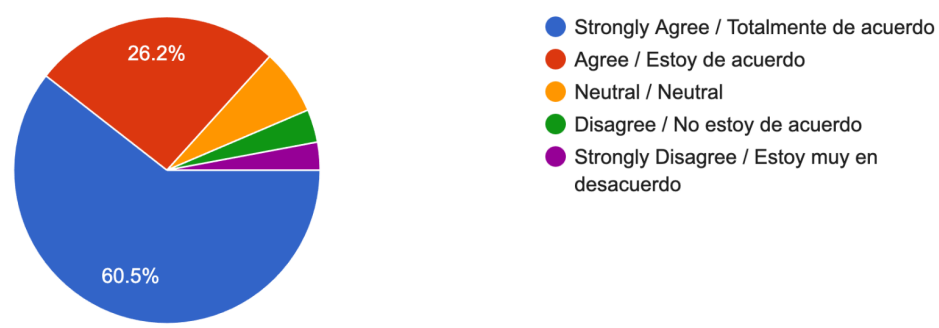
FAMILY SURVEY 1,700 RESPONSES

Cell phone use during school is necessary to support student learning and engagement? ¿Es imprescindible el uso del teléfono móvil durante la ...r el aprendizaje y la participación de los alumnos?

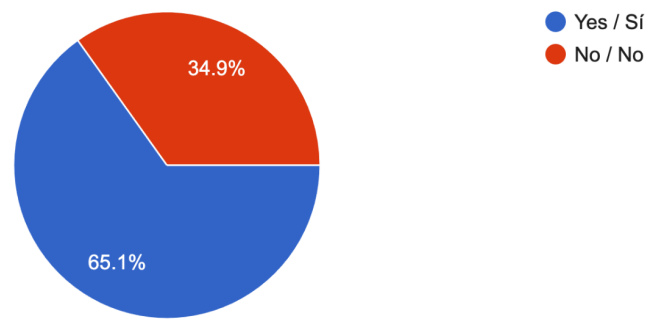
1,700 responses



Policies and procedures must be implemented to ensure students are safe using cell phones and online services. Es necesario establecer políticas...hacer uso de teléfonos móviles y servicios en línea.
1,700 responses

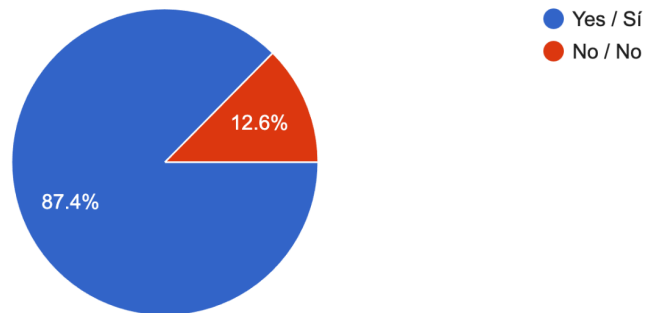


Do you believe there are benefits for students to use their cell phones during the school day? ¿Considera usted que existen ventajas para lo... teléfonos celulares durante el horario escolar?
1,700 responses



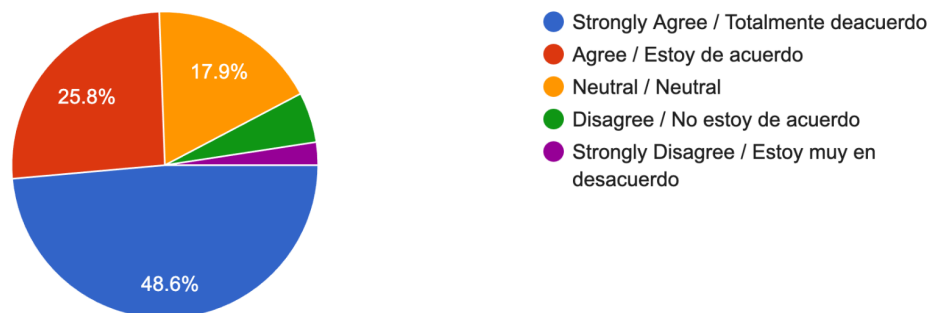
Do you believe there are negative consequences to cell phones during the school day? ¿Cree usted que existen consecuencias negativas por el uso de teléfonos celulares durante la jornada escolar?

1,700 responses



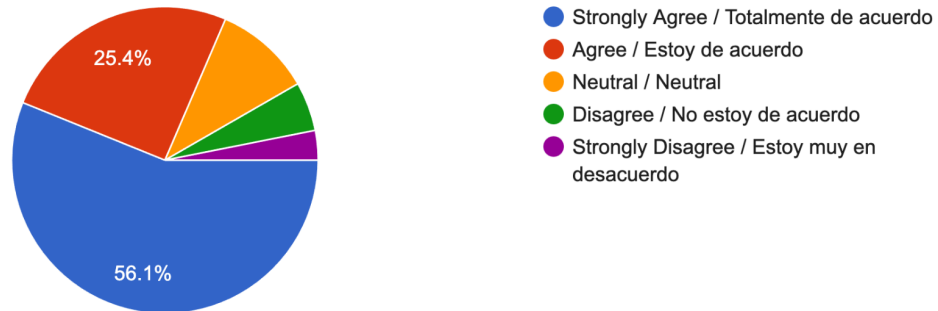
Students are spending too much time on cell phones. This can harm concentration and behavior. Los estudiantes pasan demasiado tiempo en los teléfonos celulares, lo que perjudica su concentración y comportamiento.

1,700 responses



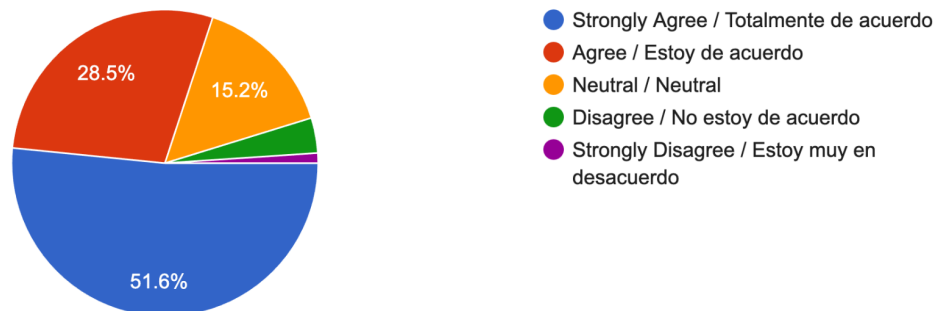
Cell phones are necessary to ensure student safety while traveling to and from school. Los teléfonos celulares son necesarios para garantizar l...diantes mientras viajan hacia y desde la escuela.

1,700 responses



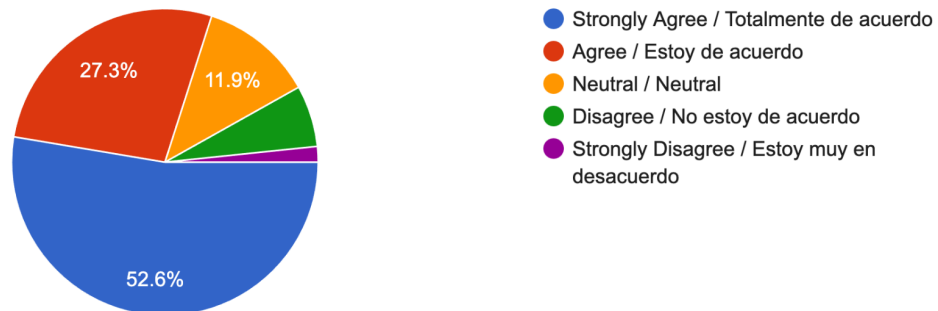
Overuse of cell phones on social media platforms can increase the incidence of cyberbullying and harassment. El uso excesivo de teléfonos celulares...cidencia del acoso y el hostigamiento cibernético.

1,700 responses



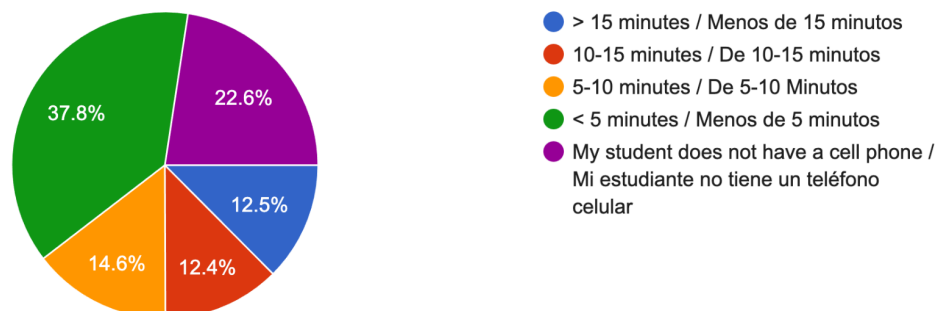
Too much time spent using cell phones can reduce physical activity levels in young people and decrease communication and interpersonal skills. ...as habilidades de comunicación e interpersonales.

1,700 responses



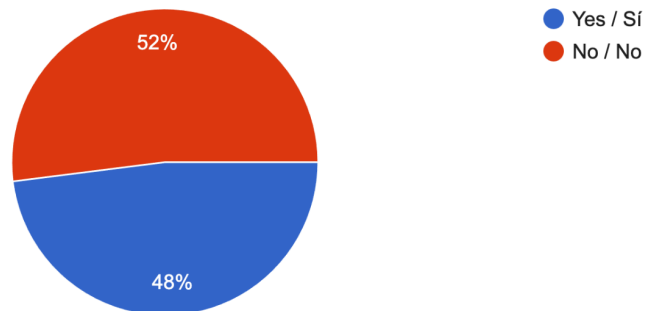
How much time do you spend communicating with your student throughout the day on a cell phone? ¿Cuánto tiempo pasa usted comunicándose co... largo del día a través de un teléfono celular?

1,700 responses



I support a phone-free schools solution in ABSS. Apoyo esta solución de escuelas sin teléfonos móviles en ABSS.

1,700 responses



FAMILY SURVEY SYNOPSIS:

Respondent Demographics:

- The vast majority of respondents (93.9% or 1,596) were Parents/Guardians of an ABSS student.
- 6.8% (116) identified as both a Parent/Guardian and a staff member.
- A very small percentage (0.7% or 12) were students.
- Respondents were connected to students across all grade levels, with a slight lean towards higher grades:
 - Grades K-5: 46.6% (792 responses)
 - Grades 6-8: 40.9% (696 responses)
 - Grades 9-12: 49.4% (839 responses)

Perceptions on Cell Phone Use in School:

- Necessity for Learning/Engagement: There is a significant split on whether cell phone use during school is necessary for learning and engagement.
 - Only 23.9% (10.5% Strongly Agree + 13.4% Agree) believe it is necessary.
 - 46% (26.5% Disagree + 19.5% Strongly Disagree) believe it is not necessary.
 - 30.2% were Neutral.
- Need for Policies & Procedures: There is overwhelming agreement that policies and procedures are needed to ensure safe cell phone and online service use.
 - 86.7% (60.5% Agree + 26.2% Strongly Agree) believe policies are necessary.
 - Only 6.4% (3.5% Disagree + 2.9% Strongly Disagree) disagreed.
- Perceived Benefits:
 - 65.1% (1,107 responses) believe there are benefits for students to use cell phones during the school day.
 - The primary perceived benefit is Safety: Contact with parents and guardians (69.1% or 1,174 responses).

- Other notable benefits include Communication with friends and parents (37%) and Research for coursework (34.3%).
- Social Media (1.8%) and Games (7.7%) were rarely cited as benefits.
- 28.4% (483 responses) explicitly stated there are no benefits.
- Perceived Negative Consequences:
 - A strong majority (87.4% or 1,486 responses) believe there are negative consequences to cell phones during the school day.
 - The top negative consequence cited is Distraction and reduced engagement (83.4% or 1,418 responses).
 - Other significant concerns include Cyberbullying (61.8%), Reduced socialization and verbal communication skills (59.5%), Exposure to inappropriate content (57.6%), and Harassment (51.5%).

Agreement with Specific Statements:

- Excessive Phone Use & Harm to Concentration/Behavior: A large majority agree or strongly agree.
 - 74.4% (48.6% Strongly Agree + 25.8% Agree) believe students spend too much time on phones, harming concentration and behavior.
- Safety Traveling To/From School: There is strong agreement that cell phones are necessary for student safety while traveling.
 - 81.5% (56.1% Agree + 25.4% Strongly Agree) agree with this statement.
- Overuse on Social Media & Cyberbullying/Harassment: Over half of respondents agree.
 - 79.9% (51.6% Strongly Agree + 28.5% Agree) believe overuse on social media increases cyberbullying and harassment.
- Reduced Physical Activity/Communication Skills: Over half of respondents agree.
 - 79.9% (52.6% Strongly Agree + 27.3% Agree) believe excessive phone use reduces physical activity and communication/interpersonal skills.

Communication Habits:

- Frequency of Parent-Student Communication via Cell Phone:
 - More than half (60.4%) communicate less than 10 minutes per day (< 5 minutes: 37.8%; 5-10 minutes: 22.6%).
 - 14.6% reported their student does not have a cell phone.

Support for Phone-Free Schools:

- Support for a phone-free solution is divided, with a slight leaning against it:
 - 52% (884 responses) do NOT support a phone-free schools solution in ABSS.
 - 48% (816 responses) DO support it.

Best Solutions for Restricting Cell Phone Use (Open-Ended - themes from responses):

- Many respondents emphasize the need for clear policies and consistent enforcement by staff.
- A significant number suggest phones be put away or collected in a designated place during class/instructional time (e.g., baskets on desks, cubbies, lockers, or classroom storage).
- Emergency communication is a concern for parents; many believe phones should be accessible for this purpose.

- Some suggest allowing phone use during breaks, lunch, or non-instructional downtime.
- Concerns about spending educational tax dollars on solutions like Yondr were raised, with some preferring policy enforcement over physical pouch systems.
- Some respondents believe parents should be responsible for teaching appropriate phone use.
- A few suggested technology solutions like cell signal blockers or restricted Wi-Fi, or limited-capability phones for younger students.
- There were also calls for teachers and staff to set examples with their own phone use.
- A noticeable sentiment against a "complete ban" exists, with emphasis on managing use rather than outright prohibition.

Additional Thoughts/Feedback (Open-Ended - themes from responses):

- Safety/Emergency Communication: This was a recurring theme, with many parents expressing the need to reach their child in emergencies, especially given current concerns about school safety.
- Many highlighted that any policy implemented must be consistently and strictly enforced to be effective.
- Some respondents expanded the discussion to include general technology overuse, not just cell phones (e.g., computers in classrooms).
- Some felt the survey was a "waste of time" and that the district should focus on "bigger things" like staffing, teacher pay, and addressing core educational issues.
- A few perceived the survey as "skewed" or merely a formality, suggesting a solution might already be decided.
- Many comments reflected a desire to balance managing distractions with allowing communication for necessary purposes.
- Specific mention of looking at Broadview Middle School's policy as a potential model.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST STAFF & FAMILY SURVEY RESULTS

COMPARISONS:

1. Agreement on Negative Consequences:
 - Families: 87.4% believe there are negative consequences.
 - Staff: 98.2% believe there are negative consequences.
 - Shared Top Concern: Both groups overwhelmingly identified "Distraction and reduced engagement" as the leading negative impact (Families: 83.4%; Staff: 96.9%).

- Other Shared Concerns: Cyberbullying, harassment, exposure to inappropriate content, and reduced socialization/communication skills were high concerns for both groups.
2. Policies and Procedures are Essential:
 - Families: 86.7% agree that policies and procedures must be implemented for safe cell phone and online service use.
 - Staff: 88.5% strongly agree/agree on the need for policies to ensure safety.
 - Shared Emphasis: Both groups implicitly (families) or explicitly (staff comments) call for clear, consistent, and well-enforced policies.
 3. Concerns about Excessive Screen Time:
 - Families: 74.4% agree students spend too much time on cell phones, harming concentration and behavior.
 - Staff: 91.6% strongly agree/agree with this statement.
 - Shared Belief: Both stakeholder groups largely perceive current levels of cell phone use as detrimental to student focus and conduct.
 4. Acknowledgement of Social Media Risks:
 - Families: 79.9% believe overuse of social media increases cyberbullying and harassment.
 - Staff: 93.6% strongly agree/agree with this statement.

CONTRASTS:

1. Necessity of Cell Phones for Learning & Engagement:
 - Families: Divided, but with a slight leaning against necessity. 46% disagree/strongly disagree that phones are necessary for learning/engagement, while 23.9% agree/strongly agree.
 - Staff: A strong majority (83.6%) actively disagree or strongly disagree that cell phone use is necessary for student learning and engagement during school hours. This indicates a much stronger professional conviction among staff that phones are generally not beneficial for instruction.
2. Perceived Benefits of Cell Phones During the School Day:
 - Families: 65.1% believe there are benefits, with "Safety: Contact with parents and guardians" being the leading reason (69.1%). "Research: For course work" was also a significant benefit (34.3%).
 - Staff: 62.5% believe there are NO benefits, a stark contrast to families. While "Safety: Contact with parents and guardians" was the top specific benefit cited by those who did see benefits (35.1%), a large portion of staff (53%) chose "N/A there

are no benefits to cell phones in schools." This highlights a significant divergence in perspective on the practical value of phones in school.

3. Support for a "Phone-Free Schools Solution":

- Families: Divided, with a slight edge against a phone-free solution (52% No vs. 48% Yes). While families recognize negative impacts, many are hesitant about a complete ban.
- Staff comments directly advocate for policies like "phones collected by home room teachers," "no phones out in class," or "phones turned off and kept in backpacks."

4. Time Spent Managing Phone Use:

- Families: Asked about their communication with students (mostly less than 10 mins/day).
- Staff: Asked about their time spent addressing student cell phone use. A significant portion (27.4%) reported spending 5 minutes or more per class period, or even that it's "too much to monitor," highlighting a direct, time-consuming burden on educators.