



State of Utah

SPENCER J. COX
Governor

DEIDRE M. HENDERSON
Lieutenant Governor

Office of the Governor

Jan. 4, 2024

Dear School and District Leaders,

Thank you for your service to students and families in our state. Your work is difficult and complex, but I have felt the care you take in ensuring that our students are prepared for future opportunities. As frontline leaders, I'm writing to ask you to remove cell phones from classrooms by creating a collaborative and cohesive LEA-wide policy framework that reaches every classroom.

Many schools in our state have already moved forward with schoolwide cell phone policies that limit student access and have shared experiences that are supported by [national data too compelling to ignore](#). When phones are kept in backpacks or lockers, learning improves, distractions are fewer, student engagement increases and opportunities for human connection are fostered. Students across our state have told me they are worried about the effects of overuse of social media and other distracting apps on their mental health and peer relationships.

Delta High School in Millard School District is a “cell phone-free” school. Students put their phones in a clear pocket that hangs in front of the classroom. According to Assistant Principal Jared Christensen, “It was a battle to begin with, but it has been so worth it. Students and parents have all adapted, our teachers are happier and learning has increased.”

Evergreen Junior High in Granite School District does not allow cell phones to be out anytime during the school day. Students cannot use phones in classrooms, halls or lunchrooms. “It’s so much easier to just ban them altogether,” said Principal Ryan Shaw. “Learning has improved, and our scores reflect that. Bullying and fighting have decreased. The students connect with each other in a more meaningful way. We are grateful for the support we have from our community council - it’s been critical.”

One of the reasons Evergreen Junior High has been so successful with implementation of their cell phone policy is they proactively educate parents on the benefits. We recommend you engage with parents and collaborate as you look at cell phone policies for your schools.

My hope is that as you discuss the holistic policy needs of your district or school, you consider related communication policies as well. Options other than social media platforms are available to allow students and parents to connect with coaches and school programs without requiring them to set up personal social media accounts.

I will reach out in the coming months to see how implementation is going in your school, but feel free to contact my team in the meantime if you have any questions, thoughts or experiences you would like to share.

Thank you for your help in these efforts.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Spencer J. Cox". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Spencer J. Cox
Governor

cc: Aimee Winder Newton, awn@utah.gov
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