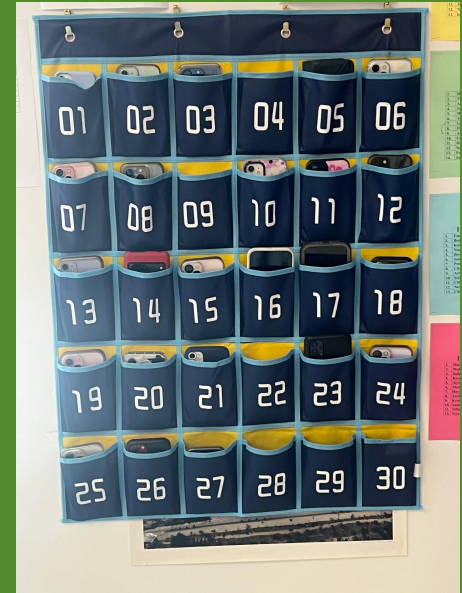


Addressing Cell Phone Use In School

The Yondr and Classroom Pouch Pilots at Day and North

Monday, May 6, 2024
Newton School Committee



Responding to Cell Phones at the NPS Secondary Level

❖ Middle Schools

- Cell phones are expected to be “off and away”
- Middle school educators respond to issues with student phones, and administrators confiscate phones for repeated violations

❖ High Schools

- Phones are expected to be away during classes except where permitted by teachers
- Individual teachers have instituted various classroom rules to maintain student focus on education and best practices are shared in each school

❖ Some useful classroom applications

- Quizlet/Kahoot answering, calculator, note taking, timers

Current Challenges with Student Cell Phone Usage

- ❖ “Off and Away” phones remain a distraction
- ❖ Phones are often accessed outside of classrooms, in bathrooms, and outside of the view of the teacher, potentially creating distractions from learning
- ❖ “Attention Fragmentation”. Students average 192 alerts or “buzzes” a day even when phone is on silent and away (Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation*)
- ❖ The “pull of the phone” leads to:
 - Frequent meetings in bathrooms and less public spaces to access social media
 - More frequent signing out of classrooms and less focus in classroom
 - Texting parents rather than seeing and adult or nurse when ill or distraught
 - Ordering food and meeting delivery people
- ❖ Negative interactions with students, many of whom were emotionally distraught or angry when phones were confiscated.
- ❖ Larger concerns about impact of phones and social media on adolescent development inside and outside of school

2023 DESE Grant:

“Approaches to Address Student Cell Phone Use”

- ❖ Funding provided for Day Middle School and Newton North High School to pilot additional strategies to manage cell phone usage
- ❖ Planning in Summer 2023 for fall implementation
- ❖ \$25,000 in funding for FY24
- ❖ Day Middle School- Pilot of Yondr product
- ❖ Newton North - Universal application of classroom cell phone holders (Shoe trees) at Newton North



Day Middle School Yondr Program Pilot

Timeline

August 2023:

- ❖ Yondr Site Visit and Implementation Planning

September/October 2023:

- ❖ Stakeholder Meetings: Parents, Staff, Students, Central Administration, Middle School Principals, School Committee, PTO
- ❖ Staff Training
- ❖ Student Interactive Modeling in Advisory
- ❖ Review of beginning of the year feedback and data
- ❖ First Phone Parent Education around Cell Phone use outside of the home
- ❖ Pre- roll out surveys with stakeholder groups

November 2023:

- ❖ Rollout of Yondr Program

The Yondr Program in Practice

Morning:

- ❖ Day Administration greets students at each door. Supervise students as they turn off phones and put phones, watches and wireless earbuds in their pouch and lock them magnetically w the Yondr system.
- ❖ Exemption list - Parents/Caregivers sign affidavit stating child has no device or it is at home
- ❖ Velcro pouches for students with unique needs and for staff
- ❖ Periodic phone checks
- ❖ Magnets at doors at the end of the day to unlock on the way out





Day Parent Education Partnerships

- ❖ NPS Smartphone Working Group 2017-18
- ❖ Community Wide Presentation on Screenagers 2018
- ❖ Day School Council Cell Phone Parent Forms 2017, 2018 and 2019.
- ❖ The combined NPS Middle School PTO Boards funded a presentation by Dr. Catherine Pearlman, author of First Phone. Fall 2022

Addressing Individual and Parent Concerns

- ❖ Parent/Caregiver Exemption or “Opt Out” Form
- ❖ Consult with Emergency Responders regarding student cell phone use in a crisis.
- ❖ Velcro Pouches for students in crisis or who need access for a medical or mental health needs, temporary or ongoing.
- ❖ Feedback from parents about accomplishing cell phone free goal using different strategy - worry of the alignment with values

Positive Outcomes

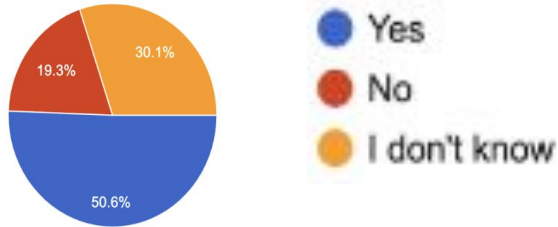
- Significant decrease in the frequency of students cell phone issues during the school day.
 - **2022-23 (Nov-May)** - 363 reported incidents of students not abiding by the phone policy
 - **2023-24 (Oct-April)** - 21 reported incidents of students not abiding by the phone policy
- Issues that have decreased include:
 - Decrease in the duration of time students leave class for bathroom or other destinations
 - Decrease in social media related bullying instances this school year.
 - Decrease in vandalism of shared spaces such as hallways and bathrooms.
- Overwhelming positive response from the Day Faculty and front office administrative staff based upon a staff survey.
- Replaced cell phones interactions with more in person opportunities to interact through an increase in outdoor time and opportunities to play interactive games in shared spaces like the cafeteria and in the enrichment block.

Parent Feedback: School Council Survey March 2024

Yondr Pouches

Yondr Pouches. Do you believe the Yondr Pouch Program has had a positive impact on your child's mental health and engagement this year?

249 responses



- ❖ **63** respondents find the program is effective / in support of the program
- ❖ **18** respondents are not in support of the program
- ❖ **18** respondents recommend using an alternative approach for phones in schools
- ❖ **13** respondents are seeking more communication and/or organization of the program
- ❖ **8** respondents have follow- up comments and/or inquiries of funding for future pouches
- ❖ **6** respondents commented on the effectiveness of monitoring cell phone usage / Yondr pouches
- ❖ **7** respondents would like data of the program
- ❖ **6** respondents are concerned about student safety and well-being
- ❖ **4** respondents are seeking education of the program and education with phones and children

Sample Feedback

Teacher Perspective

“This year has been so refreshing. I honestly have forgotten about the phones! I have only had one instance of a phone being out and it was two minutes before dismissal. ... kids are talking to each other, playing games, drawing, making fake nails, reading etc.... Last year outside, kids were hunched in groups over one person's phone. Now they are playing, talking, walking and enjoying being outside with others ... This is so much better for their mental health, focus, engagement with peers and teachers and their ability to have 6-7 hours of phone free time 5 day of the week. I cannot imagine what this could be like if we go back to the way things were.”

“During this current school year the absence of smartphones has made my job as an educator significantly better. Prior to this school year, one of the more frustrating experiences was to walk into the boys bathroom and find 4-5 boys on their cell phones....The Yondr pouches were a phenomenal idea with a direct impact on reducing mental health issues and bullying and increasing class time.”

Parent/Family Perspective

“Our family salutes FA Day for taking a strong stance on cellphone use. We are truly grateful that our child is screen-free for his entire school day, 8 am to 2:30 pm. If he has a problem at school, he figures it out himself, instead of texting home. This is critical for his growth, maturation and sense of competence..”

“ We have been reading reviews and articles about The Anxious Generation and plan to read it. Knowing that her school is already following one of the four proposed norms makes us feel incredibly grateful and proud of our community. The policy/program has surely improved the quality of the school and learning experience for the entire community: students, teachers, and administrators.”

Newton North Classroom Cell Phone Holder Pilot

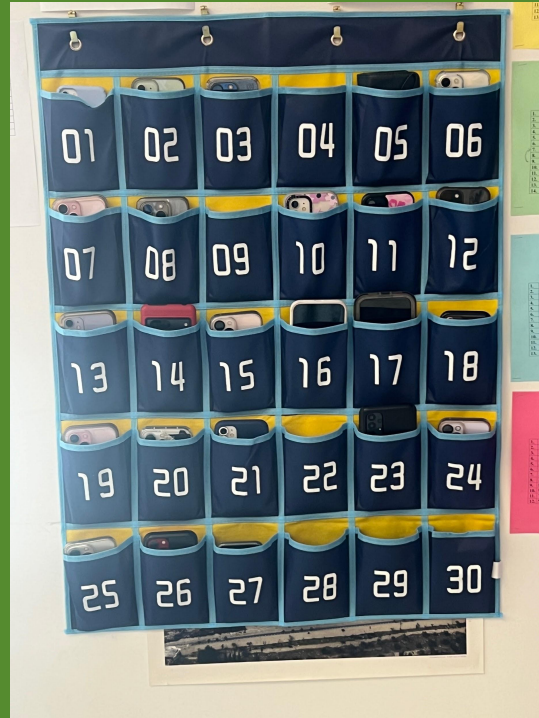
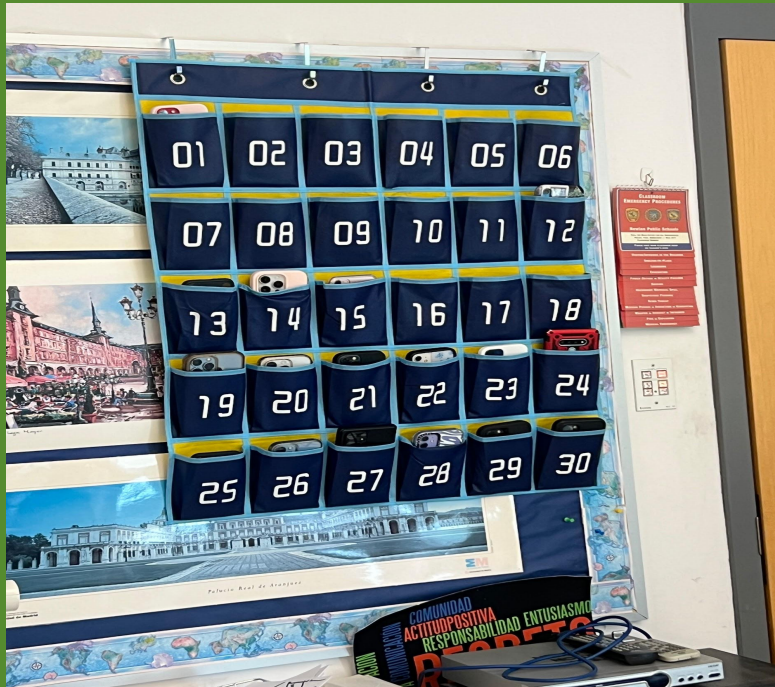
Description of Newton North Pilot

- Expansion of cell phone holders (shoe trees) to all classrooms
- Cell Phone holders addresses student cell phone distraction in classrooms
- Goal is to have 100% of teachers using cell phone holders
- According to NNHS Deans, when cell phone holders are used, cell phone misuse goes down
- In an Open Campus and Vibrant Extracurricular school environment cell phone holders are a manageable first step. Addressing cell phone use outside of classroom is much more challenging.

Parent Education and Partnership

- ❖ North PTSO Grant funding
- ❖ 2018 Community Wide Presentation on Screenagers
- ❖ NNHS PTSO Parent Programs on Cell Phones, Bullying, Harassment, and Distraction

Classroom Cell Phone Holders



Challenges



Next Steps

Continue to evaluate and seek input on Yondr program in middle school

- ❖ Explore funding for ongoing programming at one or more middle schools
- ❖ Possibly shift financing model from “lease” to “own”.
- ❖ Cost \$30 per pouch (parent support, grant funding)

Share best practices for schools and classrooms in using the classroom holder model

- ❖ Low cost, sustainable, addresses cellphones in classrooms only



Next Steps

Consider additional options to address student cell phone use in schools

- ❖ Includes DIY lockboxes and other classroom best practices emerging from DESE Grant recipients.

Set goals to determine the scope of the needs to be addressed going forward in relation to financial and personnel costs. Layered goals include:

- ❖ Addressing cellphone distraction in classroom learning environments
- ❖ Creating a cellphone free space in schools more generally
- ❖ Addressing societal concerns about cellphone and social media use in adolescents more generally