

## QuickPoint! - Limits on School-Day Phone Use Will Free Students to Learn

By Kathryn Hickok

The Board of Portland Public Schools has been working to craft a district-wide [policy regarding cell phone use](#) at school. During the Policy Committee's December 2 meeting, board members discussed a [draft policy](#) that would require personal electronic devices to be "off and away" during the school day, including lunchtime and in hallways, "so that the device cannot disrupt students or the learning environment."

During [Monday's discussion](#), board members said many educators support clear and enforceable restrictions on cell phone use. They cited learning disruptions, technology addiction, and students cutting classes to be on their phones. School staff who testified in support of a phone-free school day described their experiences with class interruptions and behavior-related safety problems. Board member Patte Sullivan said, "Of all the emails I've received [from teachers], nothing...has said we don't want restrictions. They really want restrictions. They want to teach."

Sometimes freedom requires saying "no" to one thing to say "yes" to something that's more important. Unrestricted use of electronic devices at school has degraded the academic environment and students' social experiences. Setting limits on technology use will help give students the freedom to focus on what's more valuable and important. Creating distance between students and screens would put the focus back on learning, which is what school is all about.

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