

New Phone Policy: What Wooster Students Really Think

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The Washoe County School District recently implemented a new phone policy and it got students at Wooster High School talking. Phones and earbuds are now required to be put away during class, and not everyone's on board with it. We talked to students from different grades to get their take on why the policy was implemented, how it affects their daily school experience, and what an ideal policy would look like.



"Phone Away & Learn Today", www.washoeschools.net

Why Was the Policy Made?

Many students believe the policy was introduced to reduce distractions. "Kids weren't paying attention," said Alana, a senior. "Teachers got upset because we were doing whatever we wanted." Ociel Chavez, another senior, thinks the policy was triggered by students abusing the privilege of phone use. "Some students who had permission to use their phones started taking advantage of it," he said. Anonymous Senior shared that the policy was likely created to improve focus: "Phones were causing distractions, and teachers got frustrated with students not paying attention in class." Anonymous freshman also weighed in, believing the policy affects learning: "I think it affects the learning and all that."

Do Students Agree with It?

Opinions on the policy are divided. Alfonzo, a senior, disagrees, saying that it feels unfair. "Some people like it when it's quiet or no distractions." Ociel Chavez has mixed feelings: "I disagree a little bit. Some parents feel it's unsafe and want the policy rewritten so phones can still be used without being a distraction." On the other hand, another anonymous student believes the policy helps with engagement: "I agree and disagree," he said. "It helps us engage more in class, but it's tough when work is done, and we can't use our phones or even listen to music." Anonymous freshmen also thinks it's tough: "People just don't feel like they can do their work anymore, and it affects their motivation."

What Would an Ideal Policy Look Like?

Most students seem to agree on a more balanced approach. "Maybe they should let us use our phones if we finish our work first," said Anonymous Freshmen. Alfonzo suggested a similar idea, saying, "Maybe they should let the music play for like five minutes, so students aren't distracted by their phones." Chavez proposed a policy where students with higher grades could use their phones. "If you have a certain grade, you should be allowed to use your phone," he said. "But if your grade is lower, the phone should be taken away." Anonymous Senior said an ideal policy would focus on balance and respect: "It should allow students to use phones during breaks or once they've finished their tasks."

How Has Policy Affected School Life?

For some, the policy hasn't made a significant impact. "It doesn't affect me," said Chavez. "I wasn't really using my phone anyway." Anonymous Senior shared a similar sentiment: "It doesn't impact me much, but it does affect students who need their phones for research or when they're finished with their work." However, Anonymous Junior shared that the policy helps them focus more: "It helps me focus more and helps me listen to the teacher more."

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When is it Appropriate to Use Your Phone?

Most students agree that phones should be used once tasks are done or during breaks. “It’s okay to use your phone when work is done,” said Anonymous Freshman. “Also, when you’re not doing anything else.” Chavez agreed: “I think it’s okay when you’re doing research or when there’s free time.” Anonymous Senior added, “It’s fine when there’s nothing to do, like when your work is finished or during lunch” (editor’s note: phones and earbuds are permitted during lunch).

Anonymous Junior believes it’s appropriate to use phones “after the teacher is done teaching.”

Benefits of the Policy

Despite some complaints, many students see the upside of the policy. “It helps me focus and finish my work on time,” said Anonymous Sophomore. Chavez also mentioned the benefit of less distraction: “The policy keeps people paying attention and more involved in the class.” Anonymous Senior agreed: “Without phones, students can work better and finish tasks faster.” Anonymous Junior believes the policy “would probably improve some of the average grades in the future.”

Negatives of the Policy

Students pointed out several negatives. Freshman Anonymous expressed frustration: “It’s gonna make the students hate you.” Alfonzo noted that not having access to phones could be inconvenient during emergencies: “You can’t get your phone during a code red or in emergencies,” he said. Chavez agreed, adding that cooperation among students can be an issue, especially when they resist the policy: “Some students don’t want to cooperate, and that can be a problem.”

Anonymous Junior also pointed out the inconvenience of not being able to use phones for schoolwork: “ [The policy] shortened the use of a device that helps us.”

While the new phone policy has its pros and cons, it’s clear that students are finding ways to adapt. Whether or not they agree with it, the policy has sparked a larger conversation about balance, respect, and how we can stay focused in school without feeling overly restricted.
