

# Portable Communication Devices

## *Focus Groups & Policy*

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January 22, 2023

# Focus Groups

<https://www.hcps.org/superintendent/Research.aspx>



INCLEMENT WEATHER  
& SCHOOL CLOSINGS



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## Student Cell Phones Strategic Focus Group Report

What role should HCPS play in navigating the advantages and disadvantages of cell phones for students?

What are *productive policies* for managing cell phones in schools?

The Office of Strategic Initiatives conducts focus groups dedicated to specific questions directed by the Superintendent for creative brainstorming and problem-solving by diverse stakeholders.

August 15, 2023

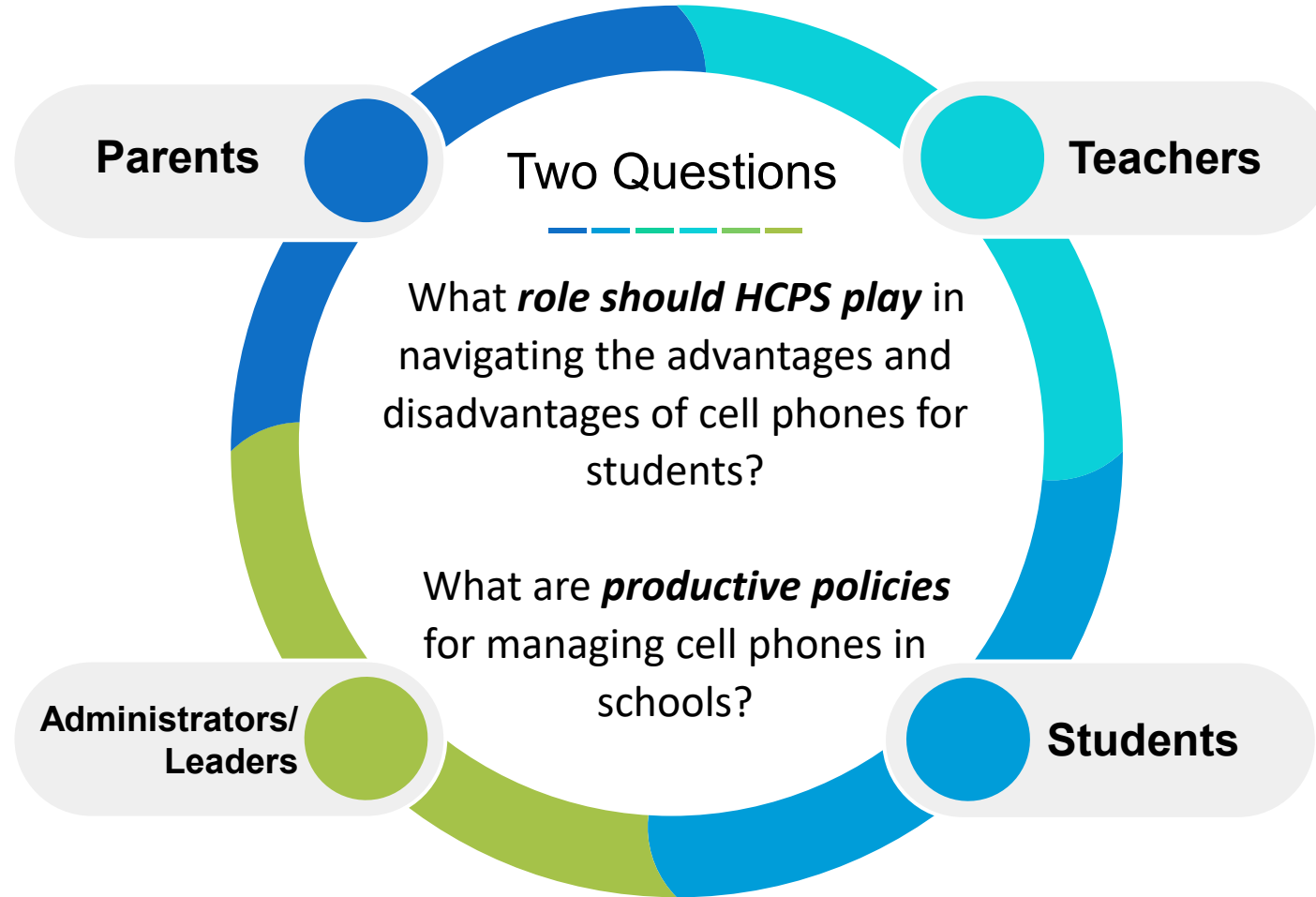
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June 2023

## Advantages

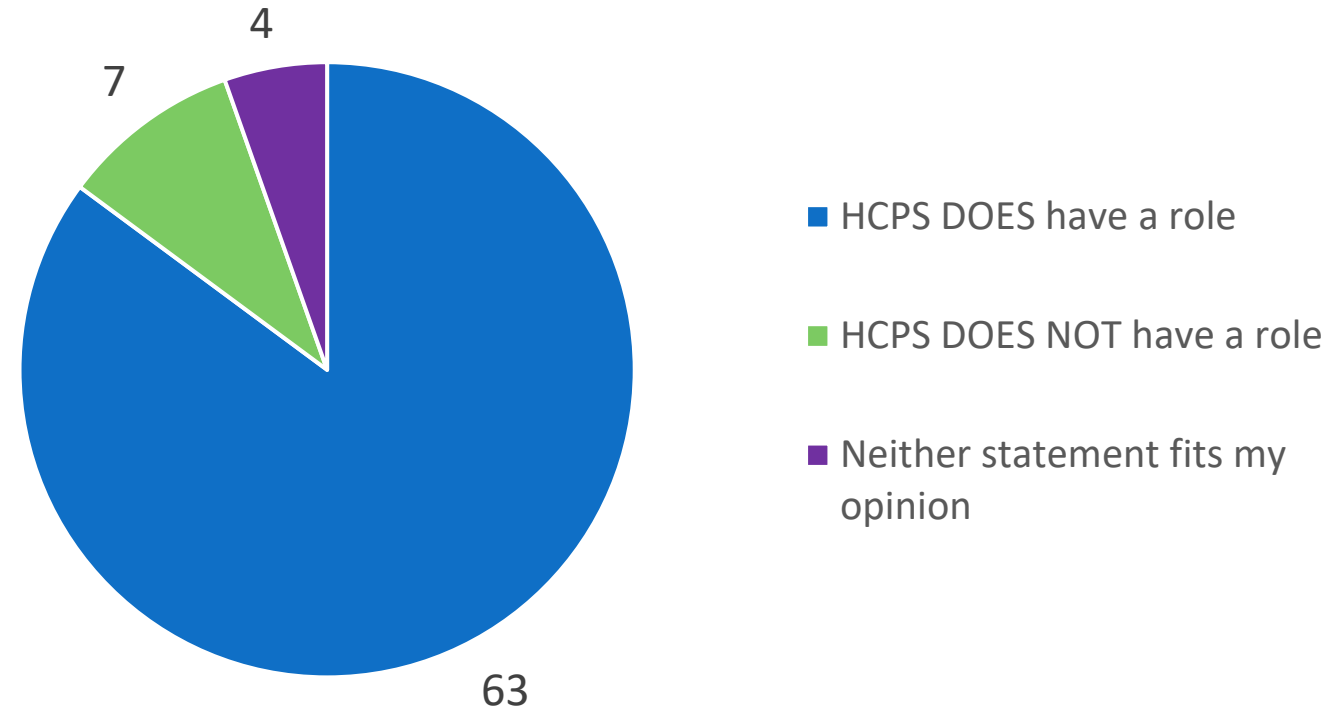
- The ability for teachers to work with different learning styles and ability levels.
- Ability to navigate schedule logistics for after-school activities or pick-up.
- Ability to problem-solve forgotten items or responsibilities.
- Ability to record lessons or notes that will help with studying and learning.
- Access to parents for mental and physical health concerns.
- Access to tools that help with student organization, homework, and responsibility reminders.
- Accessibility tools for vision and hearing.
- Aids in communication with students and/or guardians.
- Beneficial instructional tool.
- Benefits for students with learning deficits.
- It can enhance instruction and engagement.
- Cell phones are a part of modern life and the future.
- Communication specific to active shooter/lockdowns.
- Emergency contact with parents and others.
- The feeling of safety.
- Feeling that cell phones improve mental health by being able to contact family, listen to music, relax through games, use calming tools, connect with friends, or distract from hard times.
- General access to parents.
- It supports quiet and occupied behavior.
- Language translation capabilities are important for English language learners.
- It makes lunch and breaks enjoyable.
- Medical monitoring tools.
- Music aids in work completion.
- Quick access to internet tools for schoolwork.
- Recording of videos of concerning behavior as evidence.
- Serves as backup to school device if forgotten or battery is dead.
- Supports multimedia schoolwork in a way that is difficult or not possible on a laptop or Chromebook.
- Supports students contacting parents before or after school.
- The ease of accessibility, mobility, and familiarity of cell phones for students exceeds laptops or Chromebooks.
- Tools for struggling students.
- Tracking of student's location.

## Disadvantages

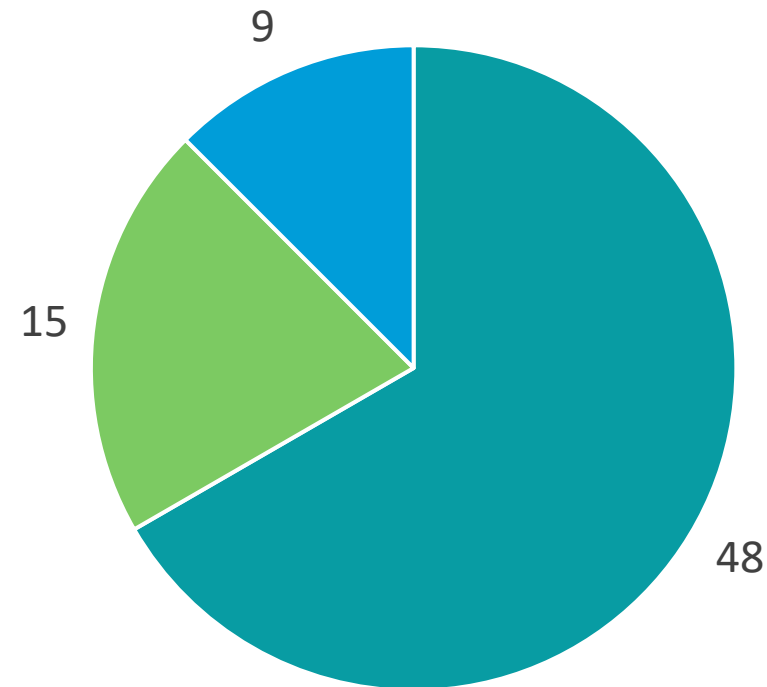
- Access to inappropriate websites and content.
- Addiction.
- Class disruption.
- Communication and facilitation of illicit or illegal activities.
- Creates disconnection between the family and the school.
- Cyberbullying and harassment.
- Defiance.
- Disengagement.
- Distracting.
- Inability to focus.
- Increase in social anxiety.
- Increased cognitive load.
- Influence of social media.
- Lack of equity of access to phones.
- Listening to music prevents students from hearing directions.
- Opportunity for cheating.
- A platform for arranging and instigating fights.
- Provides the ability to contact others during a lesson.
- Reduces interaction with the “real world.”
- Screentime negative impact.
- Stolen, lost, broken property.
- Students reach out to parents prior to reporting the issue to the teacher or administrator.
- Tool and platform for predators.
- Unwanted pictures and videos taken during school.
- Unwanted sharing of media through airdrop, texting, and social media.

## HCPS Role

Does HCPS have a role in navigating the advantages and disadvantages of cell phones with students?

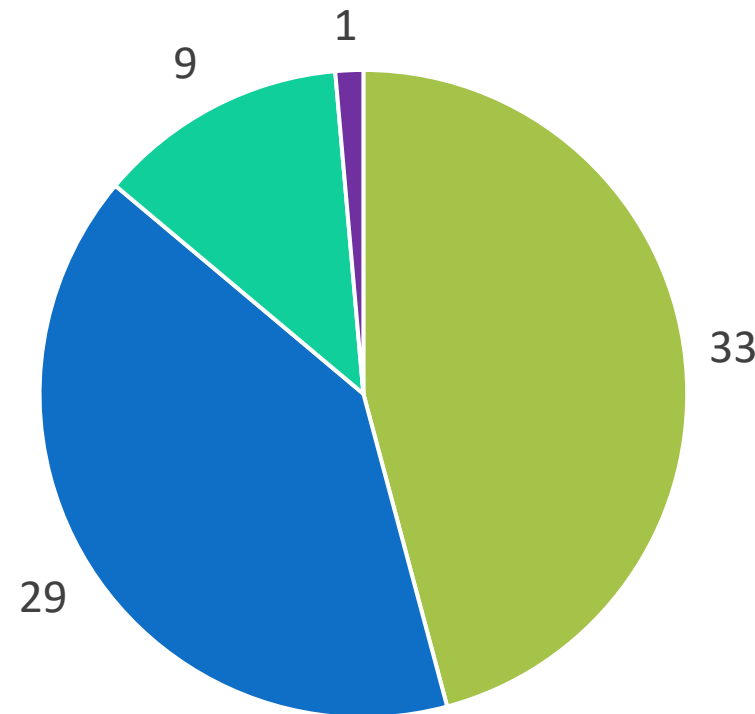


Cell Phones Allowed vs. Restricted



- I believe an effective cell phone policy is possible where students ARE allowed cell phones with rules in place during the school day.
- I believe an effective cell phone policy is only possible if students ARE NOT allowed to have phones during the school day.
- Neither of the above statements fit my opinions.

Classroom vs. District Control of Cell Phones



- I believe each classroom teacher can set general cell phone use standards, but there can be some consistent standards in place too.
- I believe all teachers should have the same set of cell phone standards for their class.
- I believe each classroom teacher can set cell phone use standards in their class.
- None of the above statements fit my opinions.



## Response Themes

**Acceptance or restriction of cell phones**

**Accommodations**

**Clarity & consistency**

**Classroom management**

**Discipline & consequences**

**Enforcement barriers**

**Instruction**

**Mental health**

**Non-negotiables  
(bullying, recording,  
locker room, cheating)**

**Partnership with guardians**

**Responsible use**

**Safety**

**Student engagement**

**Tiered approaches for elementary, middle, and high school, or elementary and secondary**

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# August 2023

## Development Process

Feedback analyzed by stakeholder groups

Policies reviewed from school districts nationally

A policy writing team was developed (school-based admin)

Exemplar was analyzed from C. Milton Wright High School

Policy was written by policy writing team

Feedback sought from:

- All secondary schools
- Members of Senior Staff
- Members of ILT

Fall 2023

## Exemplar

### C. Milton Wright High School

# CLASSROOM READY

- 1 Be on time to class and seated.
- 2 Remove Earbuds/Airpods and put your phone away.
- 3 Remove any Hats/Hoods.
- 4 Place your class materials on your desk.
- 5 Be ready to learn.

