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Minutes

Blue Ribbon Task Force on Student Screen Time October 10, 2024

The eighth meeting of the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Student Screen Time began at 4:00 p.m. on October 10, 2024. The meeting was virtual.

Co-Chairs: Principal Brian Houghton and Student Ava Gustin.

Statement of Purpose

Develop guidance/recommendations, based in research, on:

- students' personal device use in school,
- screen time and mental health, and
- parental oversight of district-owned devices.

Calendar for meetings

October 10: Personal Devices recommendations

October 17: Mental Health recommendations

October 24: Parental Oversight recommendations

October 31: No Meeting, read draft report

November 7: Present final report and voting

November 12 or 13: Report presented to State Board of Education

Welcome from Commissioner Watson

Dr. Watson welcomed the members of the task force. He stated again the purpose of the task force and noted that some of the recommendations from members are important, but the State Board narrowed the topics to the three. The only recommendations to be voted on today are *Students' Personal Device Use in School*. He spoke about the procedure of voting, including the choice of abstaining. An abstention will not be counted as a yes or a no vote. It is simply a choice not to vote. A majority of the quorum that is present today will decide the outcome of each recommendation.

Co-Chair Student Ava Gustin stated that the members should have received an email earlier today from Payton Lynn with the results of the recommendation survey, as well as a link to take a second survey. She paused for a few moments so that any members that had not filled out the survey could complete the process.

START
03:35

Procedure
08:25

There was a discussion about the process of creating policy together. Co-Chair Principal Houghton explained that the procedure of motions, discussion, and voting are here to guide the process, but they can be adjusted. The survey results are meant to help inform decision-making as the Task Force moves on to discussion and voting. For example, if almost everyone voted that they are not interested in a recommendation, the Task Force may not need to spend time discussing it. The KSDE staff will go through the results of the survey on personal devices and then there will be a chance to discuss these results in the breakout groups.

Survey results

KSDE staff Dr. Jake Steel went through the survey results for the personal devices. He went through survey #1, which had thirty respondents and took approximately one hour to complete.

Survey
Results
19:16

Survey #1 (filled out by task members with a deadline of Wednesday, October 9) asked the following questions:

1. What is your name?
 2. Recommend students be allowed to have personal devices at designated times during the school day (4 choices – yes for elementary, middle, high school, or none)
 3. Recommend students store personal devices with them during the school day. (4 choices – yes for elementary, middle, high school, or none)
 4. Recommend personal devices be stored in designated locations (separately from students). (same choices)
 5. Recommend teacher's discretion for personal device policies. (same choices)
 6. Recommend a bell-to-bell phone-free school. (same choices)
 7. Recommend the State Board of Education does not issue guidance or recommendations on personal device policies.
 8. Recommend guidance include recommendations for how to handle personal devices during an emergency.
 9. Recommend exemptions be developed for students with IEPs, 504 plans, or related health and educational plans.
 10. If your recommendation has not been captured in the above options, please enter it below.
- The remaining survey questions were focused on *Screen Time and Mental Health/District Owned Devices*.

Dr. Steel then shared questions from **Survey #2**, the current survey on that is, as of October 10, still open for the task force members to fill out and submit. The survey questions related to personal devices in school are:

1. Provide your name.
2. Do not believe there should be a blanket exception for all students with an IEP, 504, or related health and education plans or that these students should automatically receive exceptions from phone policies or guidance. I am in favor of an exception where the student and the student's IEP/504 team include this as an accommodation in their plan and that there is clear guidance to the student, parent/guardian, and the rest of the IEP/504 team about when the exception should and should not be used.

3. The Phone-Free School Movement recommends the following policy for all K-12 schools: The best practice definition of a phone-free school is a “first bell to last bell” policy that requires all personal electronic devices (cell phones, smart watches, ear buds, AirPods, fitness trackers and Bluetooth connected headphones, etc.) are securely locked away and inaccessible for the entire school day. Phones are stored in a designated, secure location such as a locked phone locker, locked pouch, pencil pouch or manilla envelope stored in a secured location. This policy allows students 7 hours a day free from the distractions, pressures, and harms of constant access to phones.
 4. Recommend that districts create a personal device policy for staff members.
 5. Recommend that districts adopt personal device policies co-created with students, parents, teachers, school board members, and administrators but do not provide recommendations on what that policy should say.
 6. Recommendations on what we want students TO DO vs. what not to do and infringing upon personal property. For example: provide appropriate incentives for students to pay attention during class, complete work that should be done during class, behave appropriately during class. The problem to solve has been proposed as “distraction,” but why do we want to solve that? Students can not be distracted (by phones or anything), and not pay attention, not do class work and be disruptive, so have we really done anything meaningful to improve the actual desired results? No. There is a disturbing trend of controlling or banning student personal devices, mandating clear backpacks, not allowing parents into areas of the buildings their students have access to...this is becoming like checking kids into prison for the day. Making recommendation expectations for schools (and then schools enforcing) for classroom participation and behavior (regardless of the source of distraction) is truly the goal, so let us spend our efforts majoring in the majors to get the results we say we want (vs addressing every potential distraction and hoping that works). Recommendations on incentives for desired behavior and then individual consequences for students who are outside of those expectations will yield better engagement with the teacher, the material, and their classmates.
 7. Recommend that districts and local schools/admin develop a process for teachers effectively reporting gaps in district-provided technology. And recommend teachers do not supplement lack or insufficient district-issued technology with use of personal devices which creates inequitable access, potentially hinders and or stigmatizes students without personal devices, and incentives having devices out.
 8. Amend the question about phone-free school option to include personal devices such as EarPods, headphones, smart watches, etc.
 9. Advise district and local schools to develop robust safety and emergency procedures that are not dependent on students contracting authorities or family via personal devices.
 10. The importance of phones to still be off and locked away during emergencies.
- (Questions 11 – 29 are focused on screen time and mental health and district issued devices.)

There was a discussion about how the motions will be developed.
The task force had time to look through the survey results and then moved into three breakout rooms.

The KSDE staff offered the following discussion questions for the breakout rooms:

1. Does the research support this recommendation?
2. Does this recommendation empower local control?
3. Where is the burden to enforce this recommendation?
4. Is there an excessive or unrealistic burden on any group of people?
5. Are there financial implications for this recommendation?
6. Is this recommendation realistic both in theory and in practice?
7. Does this recommendation fall within the authority of the Kansas State Board of Education?

After the breakout room Co-Chair Houghton went through the voting process. First, the motions will be put onto the screen, based on which had the largest amount of support among those who took the survey. The co-chairs will go through the recommendations, one by one, and ask for a motion. If a task force member wants to make a motion, they should raise their hand on the zoom app, and when called on, speak the motion. To second the motion, unmute and say, "I would like to second the motion." Then there will be a ten minute discussion, starting with the person who made the motion. After the discussion is ended, there will be a poll to vote yes, no, or abstain. A majority of those voting will decide the outcome.

There was a discussion about the complexity of this process, and the possibility of slowing down. Dr. Watson shared that the State Board wanted some recommendations by November, as the election in November will change the makeup of the Board. The present Board would like to consider offering guidance to the schools in December.

The motions were put on the screen.

There are #14 potential motions on the topic of personal devices in schools.

#1 Elementary schools implement a bell-to-bell (beginning of the school day to the end of the school day) personal device ban, including electronic devices such as smart watches, wireless headphones etc., for students.

#2 Elementary students store personal devices in a secure location not accessible to them during the school day.

#3 Middle schools implement a bell-to-bell policy for a phone free school.

#4 Middle school students store their personal electronic devices in a secure location not accessible to them during the school day.

#5 High schools implement a bell-to-bell policy for a phone free school.

Breakout
Room
Discussion
34:07

Voting
Procedure
55:30

Motions
01:03:00

#6 High school students store personal devices in designated locations not accessible to them during the school day.

#7 High school students be allowed to have personal devices at designated times in the day.

#8 Districts adopt a personal device policy that is co-created with students, parents, teachers, school board members, and administrators, but [possible edit: the State Board should not] do not provide recommendations on what that policy should say.

#9 Guidance includes recommendations for how to handle personal devices during an emergency by:

Option A:

Advising districts to develop robust safety and emergency procedures that are not dependent on students contacting authorities or family via personal devices.

Option B:

Advising districts that personal devices should be off and locked away during an emergency.

#10 Recommend exceptions be developed for students with IEPs, 504 plans, or related health and educational plans (if specified/required in plan).

#11 Amend the question about phone-free option to include personal devices such as ear pods, headphones, smart watches, etc.

#12 Recommend that districts develop a process for teachers to report gaps in district-provided technology, so teachers do not supplement lack of or insufficient district-issued technology with use of personal devices.

#13 Recommend that districts create a personal device policy for staff.

#14 Recommend that guidance describe what we want students to do vs. what not to do, and do not infringe upon personal property.

Motion #1

Lane Lamping moved that elementary schools implement a bell-to-bell policy for a phone free school. Kim Whitman seconded the motion.

Student Lane Lamping stated the data shows that for elementary students this policy is beneficial. For instance, elementary students should not need to have their phones on them if there is an emergency.

There was some discussion about the frustration of how the motions are being

Motion #1
Elementary
Bell to Bell

constructed. Co-Chair Houghton explained this is a complicated process, and it is important to listen to everyone and take time to make these decisions. He noted that whatever is presented to the State Board is simply recommendations for guidance. Schools will make local decisions. Senator Blasi stated that the spirit of this motion would be to ban personal devices, earbuds, smart watches, cell phones. He asked for the original motion maker to clarify and amend his motion.

(maker of the motion restates his motion) Lane Lamping moved that elementary schools implement a bell-to-bell (beginning of the school day to the end of the school day) phone ban of personal devices including phones, smart watches, earbuds, etc. Sue Bolley seconded the motion.

There was a question about *students only* in the motion.

(maker of the motion restates his motion for the second time) Lane Lamping moved that elementary schools implement a bell-to-bell (beginning of the school day to the end of the school day) policy ban for a phone free school, for students not teachers, of personal devices including phones, smart watches, earbuds, etc. Sue Bolley seconded the motion.

There was a brief discussion about how many people are voting on the survey. Several members, a student, an elementary school principal, elementary school teacher, spoke about their support of the motion.

A poll appeared on the screen and the members voted.

BACK ON THE MOTION Lane Lamping moved that elementary schools implement a bell-to-bell (beginning of the school day to the end of the school day) policy ban for a phone free school, for students not teachers, of personal devices including phones, smart watches, earbuds, etc. Sue Bolley seconded the motion. Motion carried 25 yes, 3 no, 1 abstained.

Principal Houghton thanked everyone, went over the procedure for the survey, and adjourned the meeting. Student Ava stated that any recommendation that is given is better than what Kansas has now, because at present there is no clear direction. She thanked everyone. There was a request for the pre-written motions to be sent by KSDE to the members of the Task Force, so that members can be prepared in advance.

Commissioner Watson noted that this meeting gave a good idea of the complexity of this process and how it will need to be organized going forward.

Senator Blasi shared his gratitude for the co-chairs. This process, with thirty people who all have strong opinions on an emotional subject, is not easy. This is how our government does business, he explained. At the legislature, at the state school board, at local school

boards, city councils, and county commissions, creating policy is a complicated process. The Senator stressed the Task Force is doing the best they can in working towards clarity; and he expressed his gratitude to all for working through this process.

Co-Chair Principal Houghton adjourned the meeting.