



Belpre City School District

2014 Rockland Avenue, Belpre, OH 45714

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Jeffrey Greenley - Superintendent

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**Senate Bill 158
Proponent Testimony
Belpre City Schools
Jeff Greenley, Superintendent**

Chairman Brenner, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 158. My name is Jeff Greenley and I serve as the superintendent of Belpre City School District in Washington County. Belpre City Schools serves approximately 900 students is nestled along a particularly beautiful bend of the Ohio River just across from Parkersburg, WV. Our district is comprised of two buildings: a PreK-6 primary and a 7-12 secondary. I am here today on behalf of our district, students, and our school community to advocate in support of Senate Bill 158, which requires school districts to adopt a policy prohibiting student cellphone use during the instructional day.

After last year's recommendations from Governor DeWine to limit cell phone use in schools, we began a community conversation about the topic. We held hearings during the summer last year where we heard feedback from parents and community members about their thoughts on the proposal. What our board of education ultimately decided on was a policy – available at the end of my testimony – that allows students to have cell phones in their backpack or on their person, but the device must be turned off during school hours. This school year was the first school year under this policy, and our students, staff, and parents are all adjusting generally well to the new landscape. Students report that no cellphones force them to find different activities to engage them. Just three weeks into the school year, our high school assistant principal set in motion a plan to arrange for physical education equipment to be available during lunch hours so students have something constructive to do after their meals. We have seen them interacting more often with one another during the school day and not distracted by the next alert or text message.

We have seen some growing pains with the new policy. Students also have been spending more times in bathrooms, mostly to use phones in secret, which has forced our staff to focus our enforcement attention to that area. We also have noticed increased misuse of school-issued Chromebooks, a likely replacement for the now-banned cellphone. Some students also seem to be using smartwatches in lieu of their phones – still a prohibited practice under our policy – and others are using wireless headphones – likely a policy update in the near future. Notwithstanding these growing pains, I believe there has been a positive improvement in student behavior and engagement as a result of our policy choice.

Since implementing our phone policy, we have documented the following instances of phone confiscation by grade:

Belpre High School
612 Third Street
Belpre, OH 45714
740-423-3000

Board of Education
Mike Miller, President
Larry Lorentz, Vice-President
Mollie Haught
Fred Meredith
Cathy O'Donnell

Belpre Elementary
2000 Rockland Avenue
Belpre, Ohio 45714
740-423-3010

- **7th grade:** 11 confiscations (no instances of noncompliance or refusal; highest number of repeated offenses by a single student: 3)
- **8th grade:** 7 confiscations (no noncompliance; highest repeat offender: 2)
- **9th grade:** 53 confiscations (4 instances of noncompliance; highest repeat offender: 8)
- **10th grade:** 35 confiscations (2 instances of noncompliance; highest repeat offender: 4)
- **11th grade:** 18 confiscations (2 instances of noncompliance; highest repeat offender: 3)
- **12th grade:** 8 confiscations (no noncompliance; highest repeat offender: 4).

Parents have expressed initial concern about access to their children during emergency situations, but the majority of our parent interactions has been positive. The reception among our teachers has been overwhelmingly positive. We have had great buy-in from the majority of our staff, with some requesting additional support regarding classroom management practices to eliminate cellphone use and how to strictly enforce confiscation of phones. They also have reported increased student engagement and increased student conversations during down time, which normally would be spent on phones.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I urge you to support Senate Bill 158, which will empower school officials to create an environment in which students are more focused on learning rather than what is going on outside of the school. After some initial growing pains, we are thrilled with the results in our classrooms. Students are more engaged; teachers are relieved from the battle of enforcement and we have all settled into an environment that is much more conducive to learning.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for your time today. I am happy to address any questions you may have about our district or my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jeffrey S. Greenley', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jeffrey S. Greenley EdD, JD
Superintendent, Belpre City Schools

Book	Policy manual
Section	Section J: Student
Title	Use of Electronic Communications Equipment by Students
Code	JFCK
Status	Active
Adopted	August 16, 2021
Last Revised	July 18, 2024

Use of Electronic Communications Equipment by Students

For the purposes of this policy, "electronic communications devices" includes personal computers, tablets (e.g. iPad-like devices), electronic readers, cell phones, smartphones, telephone paging devices and/or other web-enabled devices of any type. The purpose of this policy is to emphasize that student use of electronic communication equipment should be as limited as possible during the school hour in order to reduce cellular telephone-related distractions in our classrooms.

Students are permitted to use electronic communication devices before and after school as long as they do not create a distraction, disruption or otherwise interfere with the educational environment, during after school activities or at school-related functions. Electronic communication equipment shall not be used in the hallway or during lunch.

Students may use electronic communications devices while riding to and from school on a school bus or other Board-provided vehicle or on a school bus or Board-provided vehicle during school-sponsored activities, at the discretion of the bus driver, classroom teacher sponsor/advisor/coach. Distracted behavior that creates an unsafe environment will not be tolerated.

Electronic communications equipment may not be used whether on the Belpre City School campus or at another school district or location where a school activity or athletic event is occurring, when a reasonable expectation of privacy exists (i.e. classrooms, gymnasiums, locker rooms, shower facilities, rest/bathrooms, swimming pools and any other area where students or others may change clothes or be in any stage of degree of disrobing or changing clothes).

Students may, however, carry electronic communication devices in a backpack, purse or inside a pocket of slacks, jeans, jacket etc. Such devices should be powered off (i.e., not just placed into vibrate or silent mode) and stored out of sight in the student's locker.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, a student may keep his or her electronic communication devices "on" under the following circumstances, with prior approval of the building principal:

- A. The student has a special health/medical circumstance that is medically documented by his or her physician or
- B. If such use is documented in the student's individualized education program developed under Chapter 3323 of the Ohio Revised Code or a plan developed under section 504 of the "Rehabilitation Act of 1973," 29 U.S.C. 794.

Students violating District procedures for use of electronic devices may have their device confiscated and may be subject to discipline.

The District assumes no liability if these devices are broken, lost or stolen. Notices of this policy are posted in a central location in every school building and in the student handbooks.

CROSS REFS.: Student Handbooks

Legal [ORC 3313.20](#)

[ORC 3313.753](#)

Cross References

[AC - Nondiscrimination](#)

[EDE - Computer/Online Services \(Acceptable Use and Internet Safety\)](#)

[JFC - Student Conduct \(Zero Tolerance\)](#)

[JFCEA - Gangs](#)

[JFCF - Hazing and Bullying \(Harassment, Intimidation and Dating Violence\)](#)