

Yellow Springs Middle and High School implemented Yondr Pouches and updated our cell phone in January of 2024. This change came after deep consideration, communication with our students, families, and teachers, and an in depth review of our discipline data. We had long held on to the belief that we as a school should be teaching students to use phones properly rather than banning them altogether. However, our review showed clearly that we were fighting an uphill battle and one that was taking the attention away from our primary goals as a school. When we made the shift in January, it was significant for our school community. We took the approach that we were going to draw a clear line with harsh consequences for students who violated the policy, including in-school suspension on the first offense and out-of-school suspension on the second offense.

The shift in school culture could be felt overnight! Our lunchroom got louder and students began sitting with different students. They were eating and playing games together. Study hall transformed from individuals scrolling on their phones to students going to their teachers asking for missing work as they had nothing else to do. Our major discipline offenses nearly disappeared completely. We went from multiple lengthy investigations and lengthy suspensions to a few one-day suspensions for phone violations. The value in this shift is that the suspensions were now victimless compared to the pre-Yondr suspensions that were often rooted in negative behavior directed at another student. Our teachers immediately noted a different tone in the classrooms, one in which they could teach and the students were engaged. And our students, some who were the most reluctant to make the change, noted enjoying the break from their devices.

As a whole, the complete restriction of devices during the school day is likely the most impactful change we have made during my 11 years in administration. The impacts are noticed in student wellness, academic data, behavioral data, and overall community culture.