



Anchorage School District

Begich Middle School

7440 Creekside Center Dr. • Anchorage, AK 99504 • 907-742-0500 • www.asdk12.org/begich
Principal Matthew Witthoeft • Assistant Principal Laura Carter • Assistant Principal Adrienne Grenier

Dear Begich Families,

Begich administration and staff spent the end of the school year and summer reviewing our cell phone policy. In our May newsletter we shared some of the safety concerns that relate to cell phone use at Begich. We also reported an increase in positive interactions and a reduction in discipline incidents at Wendler Middle School after the adoption of an enhanced cell phone policy during the 2023/24 school year. To solicit input from stakeholders on a possible shift in policy, all groups were invited to an information and listening session held in the Begich Library in May. Surveys were sent to both our staff at the end of school and our parents this summer.

After soliciting this feedback and a careful review of literature and research that reveals the negative emotional and academic impact of cell phone presence during academic instruction, Begich has decided to revise its cell phone policy for the 2024/2025 school year. Students will be required to turn off and lock cell phones away in their lockers from 9:25am-4:00pm. Begich is committed to providing a school environment that is conducive to learning and instruction, and it is clear that cell phones are a distraction and constraint on our mission to educate our students.

We understand that many of our returning students will not be thrilled by this change in cell phone policy. In reality, this is not a change. Begich has had an off and away policy in regards to cell phones for many years. However, research shows that even having a phone in a backpack, purse, or pocket limits potential learning and leads to distractions. In our survey to parents we received just under 150 responses with approximately 75% of respondents in support of a policy of cell phones off and away all day. Concerns over a change in policy revolve around two issues contacting students and active shooter emergencies. Attached to this letter, please find a list of frequently asked questions regarding our adjustment in cell phone policy

Matthew Witthoeft
Principal Begich Middle School

Educating All Students for Success in Life

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Begich Cell Phone Policy 2024/25 Frequently Asked Questions

1. “What if I need to get in contact with my child during the school day?”

While it is convenient and reassuring to text your student during the day, the cost of having immediate access is not worth the interruptions during the school day. If you need to contact your child during the instructional day, please call the front office and we will gladly send them a message.

2. “What if there is a safety issue such as an active shooter situation or a natural disaster? Isn’t my child safer with a cell phone?”

No. Safety experts across the country report that during such a situation, it is crucial for students to pay full attention to the present adult and not be distracted by texting friends or family. Here is an article from the Washington Post that explains how smartphones can be more of an impediment, even a danger, in these situations: [Even after shootings, experts warn against cellphones in schools](#). Notifications sounding and breaking the silence and concentration during such an event places a student at more risk, not less.

3. “What if my student needs to contact me?”

There are phones in classrooms for emergencies and phones available in the office.

4. “What if my student needs a phone for a school project?”

School-issued Chromebooks are capable of meeting the technology needs of students, and unlike phones, they are monitored by our ASD Gaggie system for inappropriate content, signs of harassment, or self-harm.

5. “Can my child have access to their cell phone in after-school activities?”

Students in afterschool sports and activities will have access to their cell phones. Phone use will be at the discretion of each coach and/or sponsor.