

Phone Free Schools



VSA / VSBA Joint Conference
October 2024

INTRODUCTION

Lamoille South has shifted to a phone and personal device free environment for the 2024-25 School Year. This presentation is to discuss the shift and answer any questions that may arise. .

Why Phone Free?

Data and Research

Perspectives and Lessons

Questions



Supervisory Union Overview

Two K-12 School Districts (Elmore-Morristown & Stowe)

7 Schools

1600 Students

150 Teachers

37% Free and Reduced Lunch



Timeline

Spring of 2024 - Parent Presentation / Union Discussions

Spring 2024 - Parent / Caregiver Survey

Summer 2024 - Implementation Planning / Information Sessions / Communication

Fall 2024 - Implementation

Why Phone Free?

97%

OF STUDENTS USE PHONES DURING SCHOOL

An average of 43 minutes per day, spent primarily on social media, YouTube, and gaming



Common Sense Media

SOCIAL MEDIA IS NEARLY UNIVERSAL

40% **95%**

of 8 – 12 year olds are on social media

of teenagers are on social media

Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health

TEENS SPEND NEARLY FIVE HOURS A DAY ON SOCIAL MEDIA APPS



American Psychological Association

3+ HOURS

PER DAY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

doubles the risk of poor mental health including experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety

Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health

NEA Poll

83% OF TEACHERS

support an all day phone-free policy

National Education Association



72%

OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS REPORT CELLPHONES ARE A MAJOR DISTRACTION IN THE CLASSROOM

The Mere Presence of a Cell Phone May be Distracting

50%+
of kids get
237 NOTIFICATIONS PER DAY

Some receive as many as

4,500 EVERY DAY!

23% occur during school

Common Sense Media

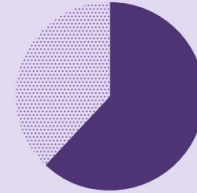


Phones prevent face to face communication

Research suggests that face to face communications are linked to better mental health.

Psychology Today

Students not using their phones during class wrote down 62% more information.



They also scored a full letter grade and a half higher on a multiple choice test

The Impact of Mobile Phone Usage on Student Learning

RATES OF SCHOOL

LONELINESS HAS DOUBLED

SINCE 2012

Worldwide Increases in Adolescent Loneliness



Why Phone Free?

SINCE 2010

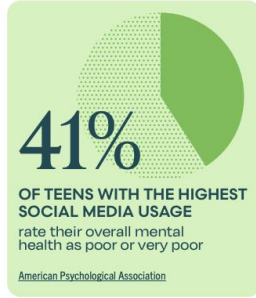
134% ↑

Increase in anxiety

106% ↑

Increase in depression

The Anxious Generation



35%

of teens admit to using their cellphone to

CHEAT

Common Sense Media

22%

of high school students have SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED SUICIDE IN THE PAST YEAR

10%

HAVE ATTEMPTED SUICIDE IN THE PAST YEAR

CDC, 2023

Adolescents who experienced cyberbullying were more than

FOUR TIMES

as likely to report thoughts of

SUICIDE AND ATTEMPTS

as those who didn't

National Institutes of Health



Each additional hour of total screen time increases the odds of suicidal behaviors

Science Direct

STEEP DROP IN BULLYING

46% & 43%
of girls of boys

experienced a reduction of bullying after smartphone bans were enacted.

Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and Mental Health

PORNOGRAPHY EXPOSURE

1/3 OF ALL TEENS

reported that they have been exposed to pornography during the school day



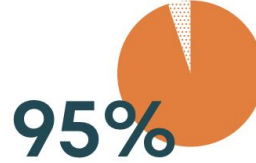
Common Sense Media

Youth reporting **LONELINESS**

are also more likely to

drop out of school at the age of 16

Loneliness During the School Years



95%
OF TEACHERS SAY ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IS A PROBLEM IN PUBLIC K-12 SCHOOLS

National Education Association

87%

of teachers said bullying is a problem in Public K-12 schools

34%

of middle school teachers call bullying a major problem

National Education Association



“BRAIN DRAIN”

The mere presence of one's own smartphone reduces available cognitive capacity

Brain Drain

Data / Research

97% of students used their phones during school hours for an average of 43 minutes per day

[Common Sense Media Constant Companion Report](#)

Nearly 60 percent of students said that they spend more than 10 percent of class time on their phones

[Journal of Media Education](#)

More than 50% of kids get 237 notifications per day — while some receive as many as 4,500 every day. About 23% of these notifications occurred during school hours

[Common Sense Media Constant Companion Report](#)

Social media is nearly universal. 40% of 8-12 year olds are on social media. 95% of teenagers are on social media

[Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#)

Teens spend nearly 5 hours a day on social media apps

[American Psychological Association](#)

Teens spend nearly 5 hours a day on social media apps

[American Psychological Association](#)

Each additional hour of screen time increases the odds of suicidal behavior

[Science Direct](#)

Data / Research

More than 3 hours a day on social media doubles the risk of poor mental health including experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety
[Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#)

Phones prevent face-to-face communication: Research suggests face-to face interactions are linked to better mental health
[Psychology Today](#)

Rates of school loneliness have doubled since 2012
[Worldwide Increases in Adolescent Loneliness](#)

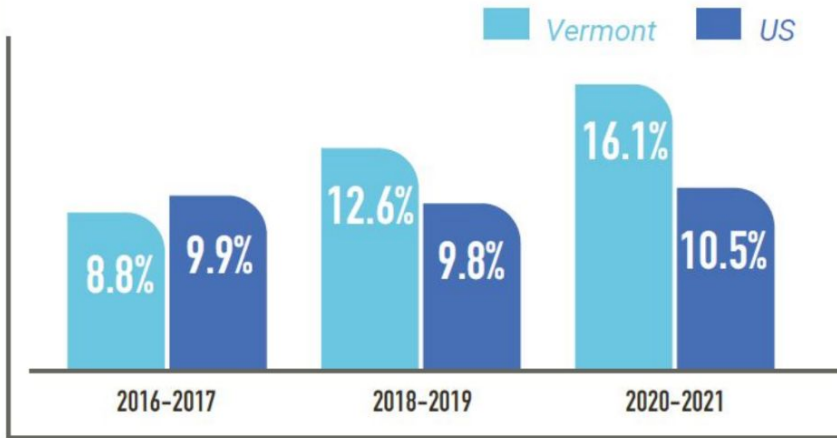
Since 2010 young people have experienced a 134% in anxiety and a 106% increase in depression
[The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt](#)

41% of teens with the highest social media usage rate their overall mental health as poor or very poor
[American Psychological Association](#)

22% of high school students have seriously considered suicide in the past year. 10% have attempted suicide in the past year
[CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2023](#)

95% of teachers say anxiety and depression is a problem in public K-12 schools
[National Education Association](#)

Children with ADHD, Anxiety, Depression, and/or Behavior or Conduct Condition, Vermont and U.S.¹

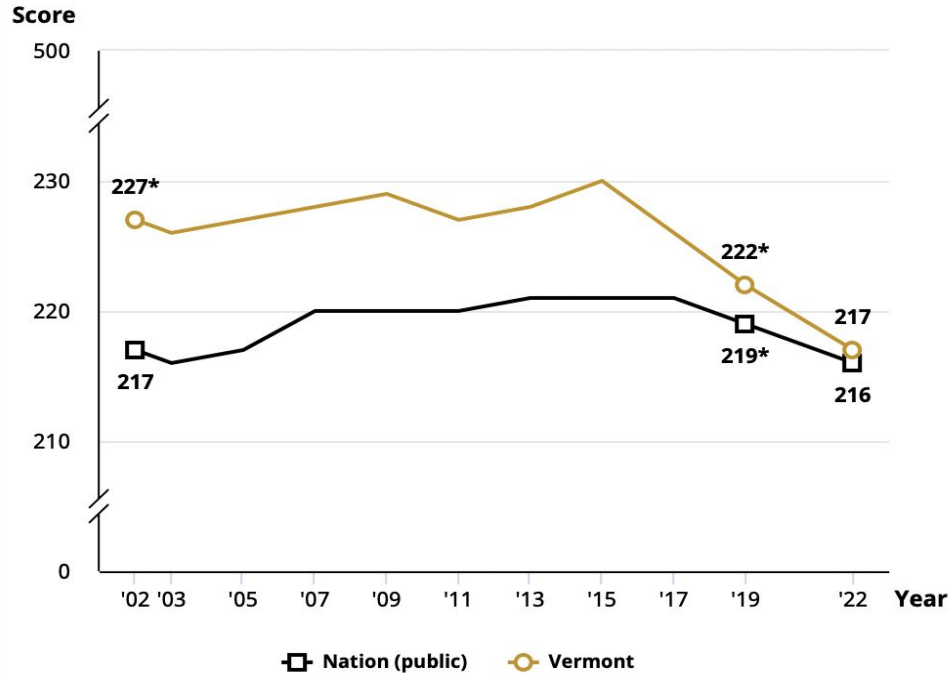


- Inadequate number of residential treatment beds
- Fewer children receiving routine mental health services
- 23% turnover rate for mental health professionals
- 83% increase in children ages 3-8 with a mental health condition



Source: Bright Futures Report 2023

AVERAGE SCORES FOR STATE/JURISDICTION AND THE NATION (PUBLIC)

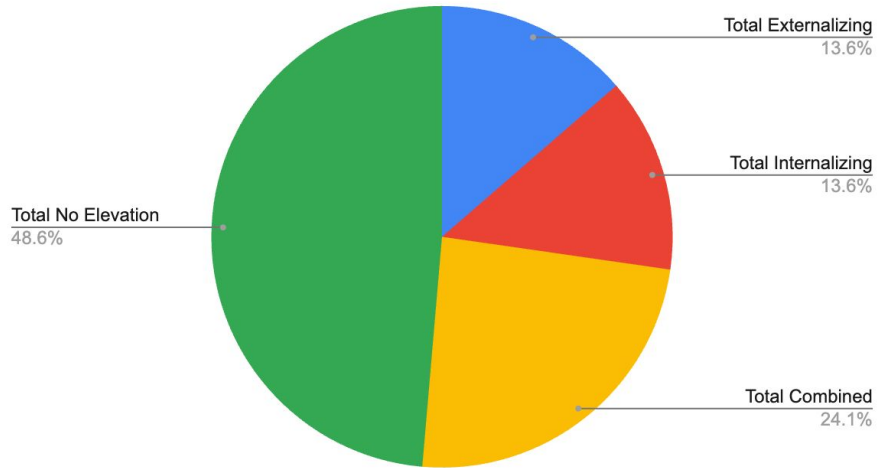


* Significantly different ($p < .05$) from 2022. Significance tests were performed using unrounded numbers.

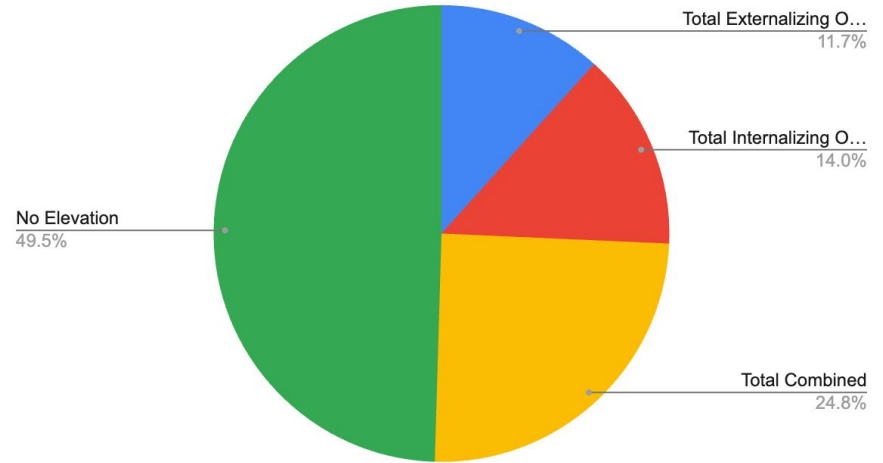
Vermont Reading Proficiency Grade 4 from NAEP

PAML Student Risk Screening Data

PAML SRSS Fall 2023

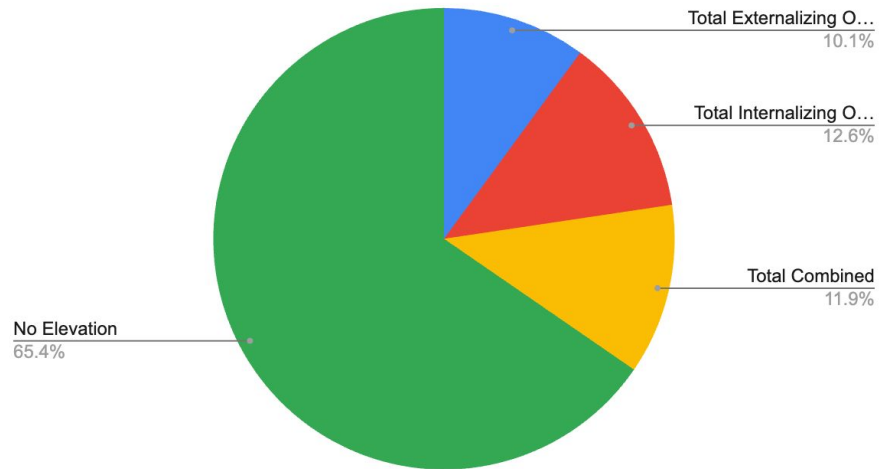


2023-2024 Spring SRSS PAML

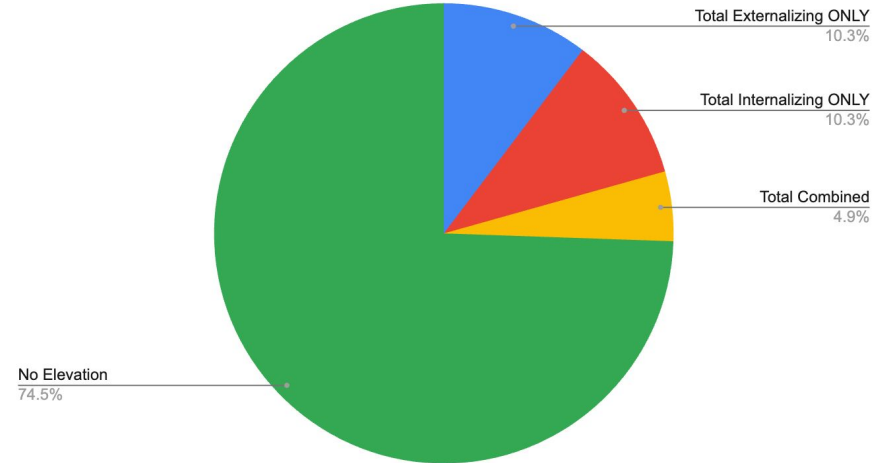


SMS Student Risk Screening Data

SMS SRSS Fall 2023



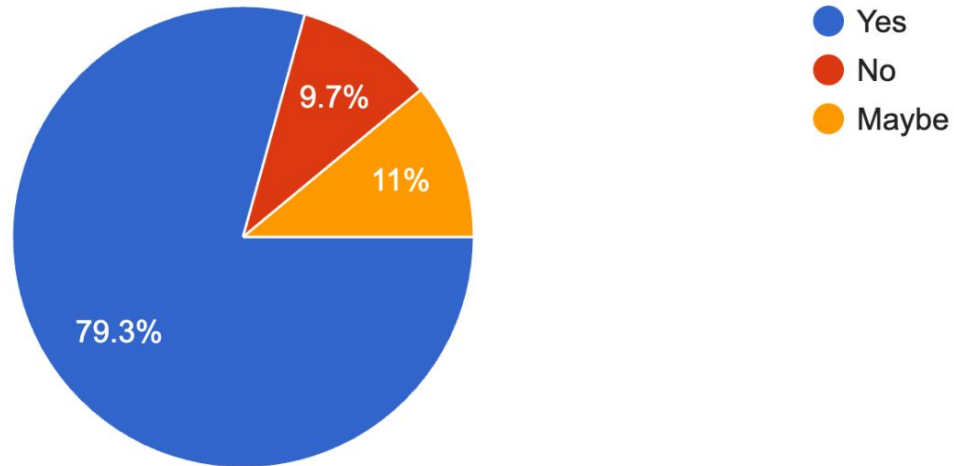
SMS SRSS Spring 2024



Family Survey Data

Would you support a cell phone free policy for all Lamoille South Schools?

382 responses



Policy and Procedures

- Schools will maintain a 100% phone and personal electronic device-free environment during school hours.
- Each school will develop procedures to address secure locations for phones and personal electronic devices.
- Exceptions will be made for medical needs.
- The policy will be monitored and adjustments will be made as needed.

Policy

Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Device Definition

- cell phones (both phones that connect to the internet and non-internet connected

phones that send and receive text messages, and make phone calls);

- personal electronic devices such as electronic tablets and video games;
- airpods, earbuds and Bluetooth connected headphones; and
- smartwatches that connect to the internet.

Policy

Exception

The school shall require documentation to support an exemption request. The exception is specific to the need only and still prohibits the use for any other purpose.

Storage Options

Students will be required to keep their phones and personal electronic devices at home or in a secure location provided by the school. Students cannot have their phones in their pockets, backpacks, or on their person.

Policy

Consequences:

1st Offense – device taken to the office for the student to pick up at the end of the school day.

2nd Offense – device taken to the office and the parent / guardian is required to pick it up at the end of the school day. A copy of the policy will be provided to the family upon the return of the device.

3rd Offense - device is taken and kept until a parent / guardian meeting can be scheduled and a plan is agreed upon on how to proceed for the rest of the school year.

FAQ

Question: What is included in the cell phone and personal electronic device definition?

Answer: The definition includes:

- cell phones (both phones that connect to the internet and non-internet connected phones that send and receive text messages, and make phone calls);
- personal electronic devices such as electronic tablets and video games;
- airpods, earbuds and Bluetooth connected headphones; and
- smartwatches that connect to the internet.
- It does not include personal computers for high school students that are being used for academic purposes.

FAQ

Question: How do I contact my student during the school day? (i.e. schedule change, after-school activity)

Answer: Parents and/or guardians who need to contact their student during the school day and or change the pick-up time of your child, may do so by calling the main office or using Pick-Up Patrol where available. Contacting your child via their cell phone during the school day distracts them from their studies and the needed in-person interaction with their teachers and peers. By having 24/7 access, we prevent growth opportunities that our children need educationally, socially, and developmentally. If students text their parents every time they have a question, they miss the opportunity to think for themselves and develop problem solving skills.

FAQ

Question: What if my child needs to contact me during the school day?

Answer: If the student needs to contact their parent or guardian during the school day, a phone will be available in the main office.

FAQ

Question: Why can't teachers be in charge of the class and collect the phones?

Answer: Children need consistency and one policy for the entire school benefits all students. Teachers benefit by regaining classroom instructional time instead of having to police phones, as monitoring phones takes time and energy away from teaching and supporting students. If there is a consistently enforced building-wide policy in place then students are less likely to push back on the policy.

FAQ

Question: What if my child has a medical condition that must be monitored by their cell phone?

Answer: The school shall require documentation from a licensed medical professional to support an exemption such as diabetes or seizure monitoring. This exception is specific to the need only and still prohibits cell phone use for any other purposes.

FAQ

Question: *What if my child has an IEP/504 plan?*

Answer: It is extremely rare for a cell phone to be required for an IEP/504 plan. But if the situation did arise, documentation is required and the exception is specific to the need only and still prohibits cell phone use for any other purposes.

FAQ

Question: Will it be harder for students to make connections and friends if they are offline all day?

Answer: Social media tends to foster asynchronous interactions leading to greater levels of anxiety, loneliness, and depression. In-person socializing forms far stronger connections and supports the development of healthier social and emotional skills.

FAQ

Question: Don't some students benefit from having social media?

Answer: Even for students who use social media for connection and activism, it is still a distraction during school hours. As a school community, we work hard to foster a culture of inclusion. Our goal is to limit use during the school day to minimize disruption and mitigate the potential harms of social media dependency.

FAQ

Question: Isn't it better to teach kids to use phones responsibly rather than take them away?

Answer: Brain science research and expert psychiatrists say the adolescent brain is not able to manage the addictive pull of cell phones and social media. The social media platforms and games that young people spend much time on were deliberately designed to be addictive. Additionally, part of teaching responsible use is creating phone-free zones that help students understand that phones are a tool to be used at specific times in specific ways, rather than being something that is on and used 24/7.

FAQ

Question: What if my child needs their phone in case of a crisis or lockdown at the school?

Answer: School security experts say phones can make children less safe in crisis situations for the following reasons:

- Student use of cell phones during an unfolding emergency can distract their attention from safety and emergency response directions being given by school staff.
- Cell phone use by students can hamper rumor control and, in doing so, disrupt and delay effective public safety personnel response.
- Cell phone use by students can impede public safety response by accelerating parental and community arrival at the scene of an emergency during times when officials may be attempting to evacuate students to another site.
- Victims and worried family members trying to get through can jam communications, interfering with first responders.

Building Supportive Communities

School Safety Research - What Works

The number one protective factor against school absenteeism, substance abuse, and violence is school connectedness.



School Safety Research - What Works

Structures that Support Positive Developmental Relationships

- **Advisory System**
- **Smaller Class Sizes**
- **School-Family Connections**
- **Positive and Stable Relationships between students and staff**
- **Block Scheduling**
- **Focus on Physical, Social, Academic and Emotional Well Being**
 - Cell Phone / Social Media Usage
- **Staff Training and Support**

School Violence Data

- Perpetrators consistently experienced early childhood trauma.
- More than 90% of shootings consisted of current or former students that have experienced negative home *and* school lives.
- Majority of school shooters have a history of suicide attempts or other symptoms of depression or desperation.
- 87% of school shooters were severely bullied within the school and many had behavior issues that were answered with punitive measures such as suspension, expulsion, and interactions with law enforcement.
- In 4 out of 5 school shootings, someone else had knowledge of the potential threat but did not report it.

Teacher Feedback

“This change has been overwhelmingly positive. The learning environment feels academically focused, and students are much more available, engaged, and connected.”

“I feel like the environment is less stressful. It is wonderful not to see kids walking down the hallways with cell phones which was very common last year. Kids seem less elevated overall.”

This weekend at a gathering I spoke to teachers from other districts that have not gone phone free are feeling just like we were last year, as in wanting to quit, not enjoying their jobs and fighting to get their students' attention.

“In the high school, I see students speaking to each other. Our students negatively impacted by anxiety have been the most positively impacted. The world feels more predictable now that they know nobody has their phones. Three students come to mind (across both buildings) in particular who are now attending classes and engaging in learning when before they couldn't do so.”

This policy has all but eliminated the issue that we face as educators trying to remove phone distractions for our students. By having them off their persons, the students are not as tempted to use them and are more engaged academically and socially.

Principal Perspective

What are the actions that have created success to this point in the school year?

- Clear expectations
- Consistent enforcement of the rules (by all staff and faculty)
- Advisory work linking mental health and technology use- ongoing
- Trackable data
- Reduced distractions during campus emergency, example:
 - Experience during recent evacuation for potential gas leak. Collaboration with the Superintendent and Central Office to quickly communicate with parents during emergencies. Outcome- No parents arriving at campus and no parent phone calls during or after the event.

The cafeteria is so loud! What are we going to do?- Why this matters

Principal Perspective

Consequences related to violating the cell phone/electronics policy:

1st violation= *Phone will be confiscated and held in the front office. Students may take their device home at the end of the day.*

2nd violation= *Phone will be confiscated and held in the front office. Parents will be required to pick-up the device.*

3rd violation= *Phone will be confiscated and held in the front office. A parent conference with the Principal will be required to receive the device.*

Principal Perspective

August 27th to October 23rd

1 Violation= 30

2 Violations= 5

3 Violations= 3

Beyond 3 Violations= 0

Data Points

- Total students enrolled at SHS= 224
- Student population with 1 violation= 13.5%
- Student population with 2 violations= 2.2%
- Student population with 3 violations= 1.3%

Parent Perspective

"I have to share with you the positive feedback ***** had for the no phones at SHS. He came home from school on day one and announced how awesome it was that no one was on their phone (mind you we often battle at home about following our phone rules/expectations, so this was a surprise for us!) specifically at lunch. He said it was the best lunch he's had in at least a year. Everyone was talking, laughing and paying attention to each other. So bravo on making this happen! I'm so excited for these teens to learn what it's like to pay 100% attention to each other and appreciate each other."

Board Perspective



Lessons Learned and Next Steps



Resources

[Lamoille South Policy](#)

[Initial Communication to Families](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Phone Free Toolkit](#)

[Phone Free Schools Movement Website \(many resources available\)](#)

[Faculty and Staff Survey Feedback after first month of implementation](#)