

MENAHGA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

216 Aspen Avenue SE, PO Box 160, Menahga, MN 56464

218-564-4141

"Home of the Braves"



Menahga Schools Exploring Phone-Free Learning Environment for 2026-27

At the direction of the Menahga School Board and Superintendent Jay Kjos, Menahga High School Principal Michelle Koch has begun a comprehensive review of the district's current student cell phone policy and is gathering information, research, and feedback as the district considers potential changes for the 2026-27 school year.

Currently, Menahga High School follows a tiered approach to cell phone use. Students in grades 7 and 8 are not permitted to use cell phones during the school day, while students in grades 9-12 may use their phones during passing periods and lunch but are expected to keep them out of sight and away during instructional time.

As educators across Minnesota and the nation continue to examine the impact of technology on learning, Menahga Schools is exploring the possibility of moving to a completely phone-free school day for all students in grades 7-12 beginning in the 2026-27 school year.

"Our goal is to create the best possible learning environment for students," said Koch. "This review is not about punishment or restricting students. It's about understanding what research tells us about attention, learning, mental health, and student engagement, while finding practical solutions that support both students and staff."

Recent research has highlighted growing concerns regarding student cell phone use during the school day. Studies have shown that even when phones are not actively being used, their presence can distract students and reduce attention to learning tasks. Educators have also reported challenges related to social media conflicts, cyberbullying, classroom disruptions, and increased anxiety connected to constant digital communication.

Schools that have adopted phone-free policies have reported a variety of positive outcomes, including increased student engagement, improved classroom participation, stronger peer-to-peer interactions, and fewer behavioral referrals related to technology use. Many educators have also observed students spending more time talking with one another during lunch and breaks rather than focusing on screens.

As part of the review process, Menahga Schools is exploring several options used successfully by districts across the country to securely store student phones during the school day. These solutions range from classroom/commons storage systems to lockable pouches and other secure methods. Any future recommendation would prioritize student safety, efficient procedures, and minimal disruption to the school day.



The Mission of Menahga School District #821 is to build strong partnerships with stakeholders to ensure all learners succeed.

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The review will include conversations with students, families, staff members, and school leaders, as well as an examination of state guidance and practices from neighboring districts. Feedback gathered will help inform any recommendation brought forward to the School Board.

"Technology is an important part of our lives, and we recognize that cell phones serve many purposes for students and families," Koch said. "At the same time, we have a responsibility to ensure that our classrooms are focused on learning and that students have opportunities to build relationships, engage with their peers, and fully participate in their education."

No changes have been approved at this time. The district will continue to study the issue before any decisions are made regarding implementation for the 2026-27 school year.

Menahga Schools encourages families and community members to stay informed and participate in future discussions as the district works to determine the best path forward for student learning and success.



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