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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MEDIA RELEASE

Bullard High School's Cell Phone Free Policy

In an effort to improve the learning environment, reduce classroom distractions, and foster better relationships on campus, Bullard High School is creating a cell phone free environment this school year. Bullard intends to implement the use of [Yondr](#) cell phone pouches during school hours to enforce this cell phone free environment. The implementation timeline of Yondr cell phone pouches at Bullard is yet to be determined but is intended to happen during the 2022/2023 school year.

As a district, Fresno Unified is not implementing or requiring the use of Yondr cell phone pouches. However, the district supports the leadership and expertise of each of our principals to make the best decisions for their school communities. Fresno Unified expects all school leaders to make those decisions with consideration of the voices of their students, staff, and families which Bullard is committed to doing as the school year begins next week. Bullard Principal, Armen Torigian, has a family meeting scheduled for parents/guardians to get their questions answered during the first week of school. This meeting is for Bullard parents/guardians and will not be open to the media.

Existing Regulations

Fresno Unified School District's [board policy](#) and [administrative regulation 5139](#) regarding student cell phone usage regulates that, "high school students and middle school students may possess portable communication devices on district property and at district-sponsored activities. The students must ensure that the device is turned off and out of sight during times of unauthorized use. Students may not turn on/use the device during instructional periods except as required by Board Policy for medical reasons."

[Section 48901.7 to the Education Code](#), states that, "schools may adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones and/or smartwatches by students while at school." This Education Code also stipulates exemptions to this rule including during an emergency, as necessary to monitor a medical condition, or when required by a student's individualized education plan (IEP).

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Parents/Guardians Communicating with Students during School Hours

Parents/guardians will be able to contact their student during the school day by calling Bullard's front office. Bullard's office will be able to get messages to students. With Fresno Unified being a 1:1 device district, all students also have a district-issued laptop with email and Microsoft Teams installed that they are required to bring with them to school every day. Parents can email their students at any time. Students are also able to ask a staff member to call their parent/guardian when needed.

Students' Ability to Document Inappropriate and Racist Behavior

Bullard is aware of the concern from students that this cell phone free policy is being used in response to the racist photo from a Bullard student in May of 2022. While the racist photo circulated in May is another example of the harmful effects of social media, it is not why the cell phone free policy is being introduced at Bullard.

The intent of the new policy is to increase student engagement both in the classroom and in positive relationships with one another, not to silence or hide any unacceptable behavior. Of over 400 schools surveyed who have implemented the use of Yondr pouches, 80% saw a decrease in behavior referrals and 84% saw an increase in student engagement in the classroom.

Bullard continues to have security footage available in the event of inappropriate or racist behavior committed on campus, as well as Campus Safety Assistants and a School Resource Officer to prevent, manage, and respond to inappropriate and racist behavior. It is also important to note that our [board policy](#) and [administrative regulation](#) prohibit anyone from taking pictures or videos of others without their permission in classrooms or any area with a reasonable expectation of privacy.

In the Event of an Emergency

Should an emergency arise on campus, our staff and students are prepared to focus on safety first and foremost, not using their cell phones. Staff are trained in [Run, Hide, Fight](#) protocols and students are taken through four lockdown drills per year. High schools also participate in the "See Something, Say Something" campaign to prepare for emergencies.

If there were to be an emergency, Fresno Unified School District and Bullard High School will communicate with parents/guardians directly. In the event Yondr pouches are in use during an emergency, pouches are allowed to be damaged or destroyed to reach their cell phone at no cost to the student. In addition, a Bullard staff member will be able to unlock the students' phones when they have reached a place of safety.

Parents/Guardians and/or Student Refusing to Comply

Board policy and administrative regulations must be followed at all school sites. However, if a parent/guardian has a concern about their student using a Yondr pouch specifically, the parent/guardian will need to work with Bullard administration to discuss further. Students who violate the cell phone free policy will be subject to disciplinary action as allowed by education code.

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