

# OEQA Reports



## *Cell-Phone Free Grant Program Report*

*2026*



**OKLAHOMA**  
Educational Quality  
and Accountability

## ABOUT THE GRANT

Senate Bill 139 requires all Oklahoma public school districts to prohibit student use of personal electronic devices during the school day. To support districts in meeting this requirement, Senate Bill 1129 directed OEQA to offer a one-time Cell Phone-Free Grant Program to provide funding for the purchase of secure phone storage solutions. These funds helped reduce implementation barriers and supported consistent application of the policy across school campuses.

**87**

Grant Recipients

A total of 87 districts received one-time funding through the Cell Phone-Free Grant Program to support implementation of bell-to-bell cell phone policies.

**\$511,854**

Awarded

Award amounts ranged from \$277 to \$50,000, based on district-submitted requests subject to a maximum allowable amount per student.

**\$405,919**

Used

In total, \$511,854 was distributed statewide. As of the survey window, \$405,919 of those funds had been used, representing 79% of awarded funds expended.

**79%**

of fundings used

Districts reported using grant funds to purchase a range of implementation supports, including locking pouches (e.g., Yondr), secure phone lockers or cabinets, classroom storage systems, and related storage tools.

These investments provided students with a consistent and secure place to store their devices during the school day, helping districts operationalize the policy while addressing concerns about device safety.

## EARLY IMPACTS

Districts were asked to describe early impacts observed following implementation of the cell phone-free policy. Responses were qualitatively coded into thematic categories reflecting student behavior, classroom dynamics, and school operations.



District responses indicate that early implementation of the Cell Phone-Free Grant Program is most commonly associated with changes in classroom engagement, student interaction, and instructional focus.

### 1. Classroom engagement and instructional focus

Across districts, the most frequently reported impact was increased classroom engagement. 57% of districts (49 of 87) described improvements in student engagement, with teachers reporting that students were “more engaged in not only the lesson but with their peers” and “actively participating in discussions.”

Districts also frequently referenced improved instructional focus. 33% percent of districts (28 of 87) noted fewer distractions during class, often describing practical indicators such as less distractions, fewer interruptions, and fewer bathroom breaks, contributing to more sustained instructional time. Teachers emphasized that students were “more attentive and focused within the classroom environment.”

## **“Students are more attentive and focused within the classroom environment.”**

### **2. Peer interaction and school climate**

Changes in peer interaction and school climate were also commonly reported. Nearly half of districts (48%; 42 of 87) noted increased face-to-face communication among students, particularly during lunch, passing periods, and other unstructured times.

Districts described students “visibly communicating with each other at lunch and passing times,” spending more time playing board or card games, and engaging socially without phones. Several districts remarked that lunchrooms and hallways had become noticeably louder, an observation administrators interpreted as a positive shift toward in-person interaction.

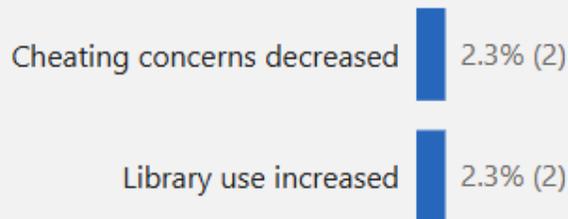
### **2. Behavior incidents and social media-related issues**

Districts also reported reductions in behavior incidents following implementation. 29% of districts (25 of 87) explicitly referenced fewer discipline issues, particularly those connected to cell phone use and social media.

Respondents described “way less fighting over social media discipline issues” and emphasized that “discipline referrals related to phones, such as arguments over inappropriate messages or recording incidents, have dropped dramatically.” Several districts linked improvements in school climate directly to reduced access to social media during the school day.

## EMERGING OUTCOMES

A smaller number of districts reported secondary outcomes that may emerge over a longer implementation period. 2.3% of districts (2 of 87) mentioned reduced concerns about cheating, while another 2.3% (2 of 87) reported increased library use.



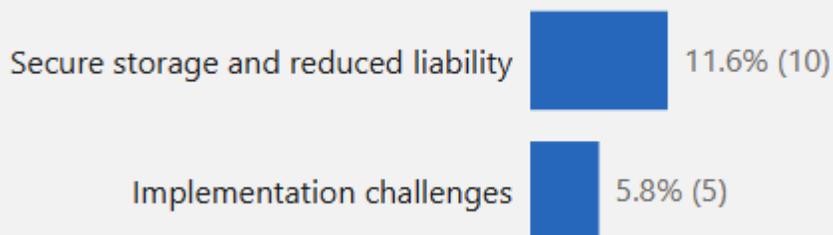
One district noted that teachers “feel there is less cheating,” while another reported that “students are checking out more books from our library—usage is up 50%.” Although these outcomes were less frequently cited, they suggest potential downstream effects that warrant continued monitoring.

**“...primary concern was whether phones would be stored securely and these cabinets provide that.”**

## IMPLEMENTATION

Secure storage emerged as a key implementation consideration. 12% of districts (10 of 87) emphasized the importance of providing a safe place for devices, particularly in relation to parent trust and district liability.

Districts noted that parents’ primary concern was whether phones would be stored securely and emphasized that “these cabinets provide that.” Others highlighted that secure storage “ensures we are not accused of breakage or theft” and “takes liability off the district.”



A smaller subset of districts (6%; 5 of 87) also described implementation challenges, including initial pushback from students or parents, attempts to bypass storage systems, or minor damage to equipment. These comments suggest that while implementation was largely smooth, some districts experienced early adjustment challenges common to new policy rollouts.

## SUSTAINABILITY

In addition to describing outcomes, many districts discussed how the policy was implemented and whether it is likely to continue.

Overall, the responses to the program were positive 86% (74 of 87) of the respondent districts mention positive outcomes and their appreciation to the program.

Some districts noted that they had cell phone-free practices in place prior to the grant and viewed the funding as a way to strengthen enforcement. Others emphasized that the grant was essential for adoption, explaining that it “enabled us to purchase the equipment needed to successfully carry out enforcement within our schools.”

Across both groups, 22% (19 of 87) districts expressed intent to sustain the policy long-term. Statements such as “we plan to maintain this policy for many years” and “we will keep it going forward” were common, with several respondents urging policymakers to extend the legislation to ensure continued consistency and support.