



Meeting Notes

July 23, 2025

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Paso del Norte Health Foundation

221 N. Kansas, 19th Floor

El Paso, Texas 79901

Meeting Room C

Attendees:

Natalie Borrego
Sharon Butterworth
Dayanira Carrillo
Jocelyn Cepeda
Sandra Day
Cathy Gaytan
Josue Lachica
Katherine Longoria
Leah Lopez
Enrique Mata
Doris Ogribene
Dr. Monica Reyes
Tracy Yellen

Representing:

PdN Center at Meadows Institute – Intern
PdN Center at Meadows Institute
Canutillo Independent School District
Canutillo Independent School District
Paso del Norte Health Foundation
El Paso Child Guidance Center
PdN Center at Meadows Institute
Emergence Health Network
Canutillo Independent School District
Paso del Norte Center at Meadows Institute
Emergence Health Network
Canutillo Independent School District
Paso del Norte Health Foundation

Welcome and Introductions

Enrique Mata convened the meeting at 2:35 p.m. and called for introductions.

Hb 1481 Overview

Mr. Mata provided a brief overview of the sequence of events that led to developing this task force. He shared details on the recent passing of HB 1481 to ban smart phone use during the school day. The presentation included some sample news and social media releases related to El Paso schools addressing the required changes. The group focused the discussion on the known and potential emotional health impacts as school districts implement the changes by September

20th (as the law explains is required). The presentation slides include preliminary data from other communities showing that student behaviors and grades improved. Related PowerPoint slides are included with these notes.

Open Discussion

The group discussed HB1481, and other relevant legislation passed during the 89th legislative session and signed by the Governor. Dr. Monica Reyes and her team of counselors share some information about the practices the Canutillo ISD will be putting into place for the school year and beyond. She noted that there has been a huge pushback from parents based on social media posts. The team expressed concerns with 504 forms, these are the forms used for students with disabilities including anxiety. They anticipate an increase in 504 forms trying to justify that a child requires their cell phone during class. It is important to note that 504 forms require a physician's signature. Other highlights regarding Texas bills that must be implemented this school year (2025-2026):

- If there is a disruptive student in the classroom, the teacher has the authority to remove the child from the classroom. The student cannot return until there is written consent for the student to return alongside a disciplinary plan.
- TEA has made a specialty team for parent grievances. If there are 5 grievances made in favor of the parent, then the superintendent must attend a government hearing to address why.
- S.B. 13 establishes local library councils that monitor books. If a book is challenged, then the library has 90 days to remove it.

It was noted that TEA will impose restrictions on what can be done with youth who disobey. Examples include:

- Schools and teachers have the authority to dispose of phones
- Schools **cannot** charge for parents/students to get their phone back. Instead youth are likely to be sent to In-school suspension (ISS). ISS typically requires a student to report to a designated room on the school campus other than the student's assigned classroom. This is a form of discipline and will appear negatively on the students school record. Multiple episodes could lead to exclusionary school or even full suspension or justice involvement.
- More money is anticipated to need to be spent on extra technological devices for the classroom since phones can no longer be used as a teaching tool,
- **Deadline of September 18 for school districts to finalize their policy plan**

The group discussed the some of the cons to the new laws including

Communication with parents and students will be impacted during the school day (e.g., safety concerns, dr. appointments, extracurricular activities). Parent teacher relationships will be challenged. For example, some parents cannot disconnect from their cell phone causing the likelihood that their children will have developed the same habits. There could be a possible increase in JPD cases for disruptive behavior. Students will find a way to communicate/text/use social media or be distracted regardless of the ban. Canutillo mentioned a system already in place when certain words and activity are flagged for school issued devices and accounts. Monitoring

cases are likely to increase, requiring more staff time focused on monitoring as opposed to other duties.

The group discussed ways to emphasize the benefits of the changes through development of a positive reinforcement Plan. Some ideas brought up include:

- Host mixers at Region 19 for teachers, parents, and students
 - Open quorum
 - Discuss social opportunities for students
- Identify support and improve access. For example, recognize side effects from COVID lockdown (anxiety, anti-socialism, virtual dependence etc.)
- Make interventions age appropriate (e.g., separate activities for middle, high, and elementary school populations and their families).
- Develop an educational campaign to support teachers and other school staff (e.g., practice de-escalation and cooperation among teachers and students)

Who else needs to be invited and Next Meeting

The group recognized that with school starting it will be difficult to convene the next meeting in person. The next meeting will be planned in a virtual format. PdN Center staff will strive to have presence from each school district and Region 19 including Dr. Carmen Graham from SISD, Dr. Emily Steussy from EPISD, among others. The group also requested that someone from the Pediatric Association and UTEP Department of Education be invited.

The group emphasized that planning and implementing ways for the change yield positive results was needed. The group also discussed the importance of having the youth voice included as the task force develops. Some suggested to engage with existing community groups for focus groups. It was recognized that at the last FLC General Meeting Chief Medina expressed concern that a mix of youth voices are needed, not just high achievers who tend to be selected because they are seeking out volunteer opportunities. Enrique Mata and Josue Lachica will work to set up the next meeting for this Task Force within 3 weeks from this July 23rd meeting date,

Adjourn – Enrique Mata Adjourned the meeting at 3:35 pm

The following are some related links on this topic:

- recently released book called [“The Anxious generation: How the great rewiring of childhood is causing an epidemic of mental illness.”](#)
- [A Podcast with Jonathan Haidt -Summarizing the Anxious Generation Book](#)
- A June 2024 USA Today article [“States and School Districts Weigh in on Cell Phones”](#)
- A [Good Morning America release](#) talking about similar changes being explored in other communities.

Additional Articles:

- [An article on cell phone use restriction during the school day](#)
- [Why student cellphone restrictions may benefit your child | UCLA Health](#)

- [Banning Cell Phones at School: Safety Benefits and Drawbacks](#)
- [Mobile Phones in Schools: With or Without you? Comparison of Students' Anxiety Level and Class Engagement After Regular and Mobile-Free School Days - PMC](#)
- [\[2024-10-02\] K-12 smartphone bans do tremendous good for student...](#)
- [A No-Phone Zone? The Benefits of Limiting Cell Phones in Schools | University Hospitals](#)
- [School Cellphone Bans: Weighing the Benefits and Drawbacks - My Private Professor](#)
- [What's behind the ban on cell phones in K-12 schools? | Hub](#)
- [Effect of mobile phone addiction on hand disorder, eye health, fatigue and cognitive failures](#)
- [Investigate the relationship between cell-phone over-use scale with depression, anxiety and stress among university students](#)
- [Peer victimization and non-suicidal self-injury among high school students: the mediating role of social anxiety, mobile phone addiction, and sex differences](#)
- [The relationship between resilience and mental health: mobile phone dependence and its differences across levels of parent-child conflict among left-behind adolescents: a cross-sectional network analysis](#)
- [The Role of Social Media Use and Associated Risk and Protective Behaviors on Depression in Youth Adults: A Longitudinal and Network Perspective | International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction](#)
- [Why Schools Are Racing to Ban Student Phones - The New York Times](#)
- [Map shows US states with school phone bans](#)
- [If schools won't ban kids' cellphones, some lawmakers say, they will • Stateline](#)
- [Banning cellphones in schools gains popularity in red and blue states | AP News](#)
- [School cellphone bans are gaining popularity in both red and blue states | Fortune](#)
- [Obringer, Coffey 2007 Cell Phone Use in American High Schools a National Survey](#)
- [Evidence for and against banning mobile phones in schools: A scoping review](#)
- ["Phones off while school's on": Evaluating problematic phone use and the social, wellbeing, and academic effects of banning phones in schools in: Journal of Behavioral Addictions Volume 13 Issue 4 \(2024\)](#)
- [Smartphones at School: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Educators' and Students' Perspectives on Mobile Phone Use at School](#)
- [To Ban or Not to Ban? A Rapid Review on the Impact of Smartphone Bans in Schools on Social Well-Being and Academic Performance](#)
- [Publication – Increased mobile phone use in high school students as a social problem under the dimension of addiction – Poznan University of Economics and Business](#)
- [Mobile Phones in Schools: With or Without you? Comparison of Students' Anxiety Level and Class Engagement After Regular and Mobile-Free School Days | Technology, Knowledge and Learning](#)
- [School-Without-Mobile-Phones-Impact-on-Socialization Republic of Serbia](#)
- [The chain mediating effect of self-respect and self-control on peer relationship and early adolescent phone dependence | Scientific Reports](#)

- [US support for school cellphone bans up since last year | Pew Research Center](#)





FLC HB 1481 Task Force Meeting July 23rd Agenda:

 **Welcome and Introductions**

 **Overview of Hb 1481**

 **Open Discussion**

 **Next Steps**

 **Who else needs to be involved**

 **How often does the TF need to meet**

 **What other information needs to be gathered**



 **Next Meeting Date**

 **Adjourn**



Overview of Hb 1481

HB 1481 – Signed by the Governor June 20th

-  Requires the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a charter school to adopt, implement, and ensure the district or school complies with a written policy prohibiting a student from using a personal communication device while on school property during the school day.
-  The policy must establish disciplinary measures to be imposed for violation and may provide for confiscation of the device.

HB 1481 – Signed by the Governor June 20th

The policy may provide for the school district or open-enrollment charter school to comply by:




- 1) prohibiting a student from bringing a personal communication device on school property; or
- 2) designating a method for the storage of a student's personal communication device while the student is on school property during the school day; and
- 3) dispose of a confiscated personal communication device in any reasonable manner after having provided the student's parent 90 days' prior notice in writing of the district's or school's intent to dispose of that device.

HB 1481 – Signed by the Governor June 20th

In adopting the policy, the board of trustees or governing body must authorize the use of a personal communication device:

- 1) necessary to implement an individualized education program, a 504 plan, or similar;
- 2) by a student with a documented need based on a directive from a qualified physician; or
- 3) necessary to comply with a health or safety requirement imposed by law or as part of the district's or school's safety protocols.

HB 1481 – Signed by the Governor June 20th

-  The bill was signed by Governor Abbott on June 20th and went into effect immediately.
-  The board of trustees of each school district or the governing body of each charter school have to adopt the new policy in 90 days (September 20).
-  Local districts must do this. It is anticipated that there will be variance at the local level about how each district implements.



Recent Media: OF THE EL PASO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

[https://kvia.com/for/2025/07/15/
districts-still-searching-for-
guidance-on-cell-phone-ban/](https://kvia.com/for/2025/07/15/districts-still-searching-for-guidance-on-cell-phone-ban/)



www.facebook.com



Ysleta ISD

1d · 🌐



📢 Our campuses are going DISTRACTION-FREE this school year! 📖 A new state law restricts students from using electronic devices (cell phones, smartwatches, Meta AI glasses, etc.) during school hours. No distractions + more focus = another great year at [#THEDISTRICT!](#) 💪

**No phones.
Just focus.**

**Because your future
deserves your full attention.**



113



OF THE EL PASO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONSORTIUM

Social Media:

PASO del NORTE CENTER
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Johnathan Haidt, PhD



We can change childhood by the end of 2025 with four norms

Johnathan Haidt, PhD



1. No smartphone until high school.
2. No social media till 16. Especially not TikTok, Instagram, (the big ones designed to connect kids to inappropriate internet sites).
3. Phone free schools
4. More independence, free play and responsibility in the real world



What are other communities doing?

Sample Informational Web Landing Page:

<https://livemorescreenless.org/>



Open Discussion

Next Steps:

- 🌸 Who else needs to be involved
- 🌸 How often does the TF need to meet
- 🌸 What other information needs to be gathered



NEXT MEETING



ADJOURN