

New law restricts cell phone use in class

By Royce Richman

Durant's current cell phone policy seems to line up with a new law passed by the Iowa Legislature. But enforcement of the school policy likely will have to get tougher at the high school level.

According to the new law, House File 782, Iowa school boards must adopt policies "regarding student use of personal electronic devices during school hours that restrict student use of such devices during classroom instructional time."

Other provisions of the state law require school districts to create a way for parents or guardians to communicate with students during school hours, emergency situations, or a "school-sponsored activity."

Schools are allowed to create policies more strict than what the law requires, but not less.

Under Durant's current policy, the consequences for unauthorized use include the teacher taking the phone under the first offense.

On the second offense, the teacher will bring the phone to the high school office, and it will stay there until the end of the school day.

On the third offense, the parent/guardian of the student must come retrieve the phone from the office.

If students refuse to give up their phones, they will be reported to the administration for "insubordination."

Currently, enforcement of the school policy is left up to the teacher at the high school level.

In seventh and eighth grades, students are required to put their phones up before class starts.

High school Spanish teacher Mr. Jeff Trask is already making plans for his classroom when the law takes effect.

Currently, he requires his middle school students to put their phones in a holder in the front of the room for the whole class, but the high school students don't have to follow that rule.

His plan for next year is for all students to put their phones in the holder, so they aren't tempted to use them.

"I'll be honest with you, in middle school, I really do like the fact that they put their phones in the holders, so I'm going to implement that in the high school as well," he said.

"Especially since it's the law, and it's not supposed to be out during instructional time, I think that will help out quite a bit."

Mr. Trask agrees with the law being passed and appreciates what it is trying to accomplish.

"I feel like they [phones] are a distraction in general," he said. "And I feel like just even having it away again, just during instructional time, I think that will benefit the classroom in general."

The new law will go into effect in the 2025-2026 school year.

"As the new law goes into place, it will define the rule, and the consequences will follow," said Durant High School Principal Mr. Joel Diederichs."

"During instruction time, the students will have to put the phone up per the new law."

In a recent press release, Governor Kim Reynolds explained that the reasoning behind passing the law was that phones are becoming a huge distraction for students in school.

"Digital distractions are at an all-time high, disrupting focus, learning, and productivity in our classrooms," she said. "Iowa students deserve to learn free from the disruption of personal electronic devices to fully focus on their education."

The new law could be important for teaching students how to deal with distractions, so they can succeed later in life.

Superintendent Joe Burnett said that when he talks with employers, they are looking for three things.

"They want people that A, show up on time, B, work hard, and C, stay off their cell phone," he said.

Senior survey shows Kirkwood as top choice for college



Emma Meincke, Grace Paustian, Addison Zindel, Josh Peel, Gus Thoma, Mariah Alpen, and Cohen Jepsen are part of a group of Durant seniors who are attending Kirkwood Community College after graduation.

By Katelynn Toft

A recent poll sent out to all Durant High School seniors shows that Kirkwood Community College is a popular destination for the 2025 graduates.

Twenty-six of the 35 seniors who took the survey plan to go to college. Ten college-bound students chose Kirkwood. Muscatine Community College and the University of Iowa were chosen by three seniors each.

Grace Paustian is among those students going to Kirkwood.

"Kirkwood is the ideal choice for

me because it offers the perfect balance of independence and familiarity," said Paustian.

"It's far enough from home to give me that experience of living on my own yet close enough that I can feel comfortable during this new transition."

Paustian is excited that so many of her fellow graduates will be joining her at Kirkwood.

"Many of my current classmates will also be attending Kirkwood, which allows me to meet new people and still have a familiar support system," said Paustian.

Kirkwood offers apartment-style housing instead of traditional dormitories, according to Paustian, another reason she is excited about the campus.

Paustian wants to be an orthodontist and plans on studying biology while at Kirkwood.

"My college journey will be a long one," said Paustian. "I intend to spend the next two years at Kirkwood, then transfer to the University of Iowa. After completing my degree in biology, I plan to attend dental school, which will likely take an additional four to six years."

Paustian is not the only graduating senior who is interested in joining the medical field. When asked about career paths, eight seniors chose the medical field, the highest number of responses from the senior poll.

Matthew Jenkinson plans to pursue a career as a radiology technician.

"I hope to specialize in radiology tech and possibly go back to college to do ultrasounds and MRI later on," said Jenkinson.

He plans to attend Scott Community College this coming fall.

"For me to be just a radiology tech-

nician and taking x-rays, it's only two years [of schooling]," said Jenkinson.

Jenkinson was inspired to go into the medical field by his mom and her friends, who work in a local hospital.

"I just thought it was fascinating," said Jenkinson.

"It was always my plan to do something in the medical field at the beginning of the school year. I really wanted to be a physical therapist, but that changed halfway through the school year."

The next most popular career path for seniors was a tie between business and construction with four selections each.

Ten of Durant's graduating students don't plan on continuing their education after high school. Instead they plan to head straight for the workforce, an apprenticeship, or in Wyatt Cole's case, becoming a combat engineer in the U.S. Marines.

"College didn't really seem for me," said Cole, who had always known he wanted to serve his country.

He chose the Marines because he feels they are trained the best. Cole was inspired to join the military because of his dad.

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Junior couple reunited at prom after three months apart

By Allison Toft

Durant juniors Nolan Williams and Grace Euson never spent a day apart until a family emergency forced Grace to move 850 miles away at the beginning of the second semester.

The two were finally able to reunite when Grace made the trip back to prom last month.

"It was really nice to see everyone again," Grace said. "And hanging out with everybody was really fun, and it felt like nothing changed even with the distance."

Grace and her family moved to Syracuse, New York, in January due to her grandfather struggling with cancer. He died in April.

"He's been battling it for a while; he had many wins and was cancer free for a while, but he had multiple types come back at once," Grace said.

"One took over, and he wasn't go-

ing to have long left."

The move has been difficult for Nolan and Grace, who started dating last year, but for Grace the most difficult part has been how quickly things changed.

"The hardest part about the move was probably having everything happen all at once," Grace said.

"And then my grandpa passing away, that hit really hard."

When most juniors are planning for their future, deciding where to go to college or finding a job after high school, Grace had to face a new house, a new school, and lots of new people in Syracuse.

"It all kind of piled on top of each other, and it's been really draining and hard to have all of it at once because I have to deal with all the emotions from each one at the same time," Grace said.

Grace and Nolan met four years ago. After a few dates last year, Nolan finally

asked her to be his girlfriend when they went to the TBK Banks Sports Complex in Bettendorf.

"We went to the arcade and then went bowling," Nolan said. "I got a strike and then asked her to be my girlfriend."

Of course, Grace said yes!

"I was really excited and happy when he asked me to be his girlfriend, but I was also really embarrassed because I dropped the bowling ball right before he asked me," Grace said.

They used to do everything together: play soccer, run cross country, and have classes together.

Now, they bridge the distance through text messages and phone calls.

"It's been really hard," Grace said. "It was a really big adjustment with not being able to see him throughout the day like I normally would have been or being able to support him at his things."

Nolan has also been struggling with the distance from Grace.

"I haven't been able to hug her in three months or even hold her hand," Nolan said in an interview with the *Chronicles* a couple of weeks before prom.

"But we talk a lot, at least an hour everyday."

Grace doesn't have a singular thing she misses most, but one of her least favorite things is not seeing Nolan.

"I miss being able to be there for his events and looking up to see him at mine, and I miss seeing him at school, or the dates that we went on, or the hugs after a long day," Grace said.

The two were finally able to reunite at prom on April 12 for the first time in three months.

"It was really relieving to see him again for the first time, and for a while it felt
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