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U46 to ban cellphone use in class

District will install holders in nearly 1,000 middle, high school classrooms

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School District U46 middle schools and high schools will ban cellphone use in classrooms this fall, largely due to the use of Chromebooks by all students in grades five through 12.

Middle school and high school students in School District U46 will not have access to their cellphones during class time next school year, the district announced this week.

With the 2018-19 school year at an end, District U46 announced a cellphone ban from the classrooms for 2019-20 and will install \$15 cellphone holders in nearly 1,000 middle school and high school classrooms.

Each holder will have individual pouches in which students can leave their phones during class, said district spokeswoman Mary Fergus. When the period is over, students can pick up their phones and proceed to their next class.

An announcement from the district came out this week, providing some details on the plan. The cellphone holders will be set up at each secondary classroom this summer.

“In previous years, many U46 schools allowed the use of cellphones in classrooms because they were occasionally needed for technology-related educational purposes,” according to the announcement. “However, the Chromebooks being issued to each high school and middle school student can now fill any technological-related need during classroom instruction time.”

This fall marks the first time every student in grades five through 12 will have access to district-owned Chromebooks they can use in school and take home. In March, District U46 school board members approved a \$3.4 million purchase of 11,750 notebook computers for students in grades five through eight.

“Students don’t have to use the cellphone holders,” Fergus said. “Students can still put them in silent mode, in their backpacks, in their pockets. We just want students to focus on learning.”

Students may be able to use their phones in the case of an emergency or if an individualized educational program requires the use of an electronic device. Fergus said

families with students under program plans should contact their schools if this ban presents any conflicts.

Each middle school and high school will determine its guidelines regarding phone use outside instructional time, the announcement said.

Families were notified of this change recently via email and the district's announcement on its website.

The changes to cellphone use in the schools was also referenced by CEO Tony Sanders in his end-of-school-year message.