



THORNDALE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Adam Ivy, Superintendent

Thorndale Bulldogs

Our Vision: We will develop students who reflect a spirit of excellence in the pursuit of college, career readiness and effective citizenship.

Relationships ★ Work Ethic ★ Community ★ Excellence

Dear Parents,

Thorndale High School and Middle School will be making our school a phone and personal electronic device free space to improve teaching and learning using a system called [Yondr](#). Yondr has already been implemented in over 1,200 schools across 21 countries to facilitate an engaged learning environment.

The YONDR system involves requiring students to lock their phones in a magnetically sealed pouch while they are at school. The students will keep the phone/pouch with them during the day.. Several staff members traveled to Corrigan-Camden ISD this past spring to see how they are using this program and how it is working. We had the opportunity to talk to administrators, teachers and students. This district is very similar in size and demographic makeup to Thorndale. They said that it has been transformative. They said that classroom engagement is much better, student distraction is far lower and the time spent chasing down cyberbullying and cyber safety issues has almost been non-existent. The teachers we talked to said that this system made a huge difference in how their classrooms function. It is a tool that helps them enforce the rules while at the same time greatly reducing distractions. They said that they do not believe they could have gotten the results they were looking for with a policy on its own. We also talked to students and they basically said they got used to the YONDR program quickly and that it is just part of their daily routine now. We asked about many different things including consequences, what to do in a lockdown, how parents can communicate with students, if there were any times that phones needed to be used, how to handle smart watches and airpods, etc... and they were able to say that they had found no credible reason not to implement the program and that the benefits have completely outweighed any growing pains. We have also been in contact with several other schools that are using this program and have gotten very similar feedback. We have spent a lot of time discussing this and trying to play devil's advocate to look for holes in the system. After much thought, prayer and discussion we believe that this will absolutely be in the best interest of our students' education, health and safety, which is the litmus test we use for all such decisions. This is something that will be included in our student handbook but we wanted to make sure you are aware early.

The Yondr Program utilizes a simple, secure pouch that stores a phone. Every student will secure their phone in a personally assigned Yondr pouch when they arrive at school. Students will maintain possession of their phones but will not use them until their pouches are opened at the end

of the school day. Students are required to bring their Yondr pouch to and from school each day and are responsible for their pouch at all times.

Yondr recently surveyed over 900 school partners to measure the effects of creating phone-free educational environments. These schools achieved notable progress in multiple areas:

- **65% of schools saw an improvement in academic performance**
- **74% of schools saw an improvement in student behavior**
- **83% of schools saw an improvement in student engagement in the classroom**

In an effort to best serve your child, we appreciate your full support in adoption of the Yondr Program at our school. If you have any questions that are not answered by the FAQ below please feel free to call your campus principal.

Thank you,

Adam Ivy- Superintendent

Jennifer Parnham- HS Principal

Scott Frei- MS Principal

YONDR parent video link

<https://vimeo.com/703843747>

How Yondr Works



POUCH

As a student enters school, they place their phone in their assigned Yondr pouch.



SECURE

The pouch is closed and secured. Each student keeps their pouch throughout the day.



EXIT

When leaving school, the student taps their pouch to an unlocking base to release their phone.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why are we doing this?**- We have seen through observation, data and discussion with other schools and through multiple reliable sources related to school safety that the use of personal mobile devices at school by students has become a huge educational distraction, a source of cyber bullying, a source of time lost on instruction, and a creator of many problems that administrators must investigate. We believe that the removal of these devices and especially social media from our school buildings will result in a much more productive and safe educational environment.
- **Are smart watches and wireless earbuds allowed?**- All smart watches and wireless earbuds must be placed in the YONDR pouch if they are brought to school. These devices will not be allowed to be used on campus.
- **What happens if my child has a phone smart watch or wireless earbuds out at school?**-
 - a. 1st offense- \$15 and 1 day in ISS -Parents must pick up the device.
 - b. 2nd offense- \$15 and 2 days in ISS-Parents must pick up the device.
 - c. 3rd offense- \$15 and 3 days in ISS-Parents must pick up the device.
 - d. 4th offense- \$15 and 4 days in ISS-Parents must pick up the device.
 - e. 5th offense and beyond- 15 days at DAEP-Parents must pick up the device.
- **What if my student doesn't have a phone smart watch or wireless earbuds or does not bring one to school?**- Every student in 6th-12th grade will be issued a YONDR pouch. They will be required to unlock the pouch at the door every morning and put their phone, smartwatch and wireless earbuds inside. If they did not bring those items to school they will still need to show their empty pouch.
- **How will my child unlock their pouch at the end of the day?**- There will be a key placed on the wall at the exit doors so that the students will be able to unlock their own device at the end of the day.
- **What if my child arrives late or leaves early?** There will be a key available in the office for these circumstances.
- **What if my child has a class in a different building at the beginning or end of the day?** There will be either a mounted key or a portable key to cover all entry and exit situations.
- **Will my Elementary student have to use a YONDR pouch?**- To begin with, Elementary will not use this system but that could change over time. The Elementary will start by using a different system.
- **In the event of an emergency how will students get access to their phones or other devices?**- Based on information from law enforcement it is actually safer for students to refrain from using their devices in an emergency situation. However, we are working on a plan in the event that those devices are deemed necessary in a lockdown situation. Additionally, we now have a phone in every classroom and office that can be used in an emergency.



THE IMPACT OF CELLPHONES IN SCHOOL EMERGENCIES

In a recent [NPR story](#) a security expert, Ken Trump, explains why each student having a phone in a lockdown can actually make us less safe in a crisis:

- 1 **Using phones can distract people from the actions they need to be taking in the moment**, such as running, hiding and listening to directions from first responders.
- 2 **Students using their phones to record during a crisis can look like they are holding up a weapon.**
- 3 **The sound of the phone, whether ringing or on vibrate, could alert an assailant to a hiding place.**
- 4 **The shooter could be monitoring the event themselves on social media** and find more victims or elude capture that way.
- 5 **Victims and worried family members trying to get through can jam communications**, interfering with first responders.

"Social media use might give away your location or help the attacker know where the police are."

Dr. Pete Blair

Executive Director of the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center, Texas State University

Source: [New York Times](#)

Social Media and Active Shooter Events: A School Crisis Communication Challenge

Blair Thompson

Joseph P. Mazer, Holly J. Payne, Angela M. Jerome, E. Gail Kirby, & William Pfohl

Source: [Routledge](#)

- **What if my child needs to use their device for a legitimate educational purpose?**
We provide chrome books to every student that has the capability to do nearly anything that a student would need at school. Additionally, Chromebooks are run through multiple filtering systems that work to prevent access to social media and inappropriate content and alert school officials to any misuse. If a teacher or staff member has a specific need for their students to use a personal device they will discuss with the campus principal and may be issued a handheld key to use if approved.
- **Can my child use their personal devices at lunch?**- No, personal electronic devices will not be allowed to be used at any time during a school day.

- **What about field trips?** On certain field trips principals may allow the use of personal electronic devices.
- **What about extra curricular activities and travel?** For sports travel each athletic director and coach will decide when students can access their personal devices. For other extra curricular travel the principals will work with sponsors to decide when personal electronic devices can be used.
- **How can I communicate with my child during the school day?**- There are several different methods. First, you are welcome to call the school office at any time to check on your child and your child can ask to use a school phone at appropriate times to contact you. Additionally, any student in 8th grade and up can send and receive emails through their school account.
- **What if my child has a medical necessity to use their mobile phone?**- There are accommodations available that would allow students with legitimate medical necessity to utilize their device during the school day. This would involve letting their teacher or other adult know that they need to check their status on the device.
- **What if my child needs to use headphones?**- wired headphones or earbuds will be allowed for use with chromebooks when given permission by a teacher. They will not be allowed to be used with a mobile phone.
- **What if my child forgets to unlock their pouch before they leave for the day?** There will be an unlocking device permanently mounted at the administration building that will be accessible after school hours.
- **What if students say they left their phone in the car but have it in their backpack?** This is certainly possible but they will be subject to the consequences if their phone is seen. The point is to make sure the phones are not being used.
- **What happens if a student's phone is secured in a YONDR pouch but still makes a sound.** Phones should be placed on airplane mode or be turned off during the school day. If this occurs then the student would be sent to the office to unlock the pouch and turn the phone off. This would be documented.
- **What if my child loses or damages a YONDR pouch?** The first time that a student loses or damages a YONDR pouch unintentionally there will be a complimentary replacement. Every time after that will be \$15. If a pouch is lost the student should report this first thing in the morning to get a replacement. Intentional damage (viewed as an attempt to pry open the pouch) will result in confiscation and subject to the same rules as use of a phone during the school day.
- **What if my child just forgets their YONDR pouch at home-** The student should report to the office first thing in the morning and leave their electronic devices in the office for the day.

This is still a work in progress and we will continue to update this document as we get more questions to answer.