

## Cell Phones in School/Personally Owned Devices (PODs) Initiative

### Transcript

If a classroom is truly world class, perhaps it should look like the rest of the world, with the tools you might be used to seeing everywhere outside of the classroom. So it really should be no surprise that in John McKinney's science classroom in Mountain Ridge, where the focus is on the way our world works, the way learning works and the way research works happens with the students taking charge, oftentimes with their cell phones. It almost doesn't make sense, does it?

They're figuring out this mystery item at the front of the room—what it does, how it works. They're Googling, collaborating, challenging one another with their findings, just a small part of a vision the Douglas County School District presented last December with the Personally Owned Devices, or PODs, initiative.

“Ultimately, we're working on trying to create those 21st century learners and technology is just one avenue to achieve that.”  
[Debbie Blair; Tech Teacher, Prairie Crossing Elementary School]

The idea behind PODs is to empower students to use their own devices as learning tools in the classroom, and if you can't think of how those devices will actually help with the learning, we are happy to give you a tour of everything happening on just one late summer day in our district.

Over at Mountain Ridge, there's market research in the classroom of science teacher Elli Faust. Cell phones on the table act as timers, while cell phones in the field record evidence of an experiment for more accurate documentation. Outside, Allen Savages' field research students; you can just barely see them while they're using PODs to capture images and video of wildlife. While back at the lab, “woah” happens back in Mr. McKinney's classroom when they finally figure out that mystery item is a vacuum pump, and then they see it in action. And it's not only in Mountain Ridge either.

“Up until now the school's policy has actually been no cell phones no devices in the classroom. It's a real shift of thinking that we're now moving to.” [Shawndra Fordham, Science Teacher, Rock Canyon High School]

Shawny Fordham's Rock Canyon juniors and seniors aren't playing hooky from class, they're taking a practice quiz. Yep, with their own devices. There's also a set of classroom laptops for those without their own. It's a computer lab without leaving the science lab. A classroom they can take home with them on their PODs.

"We're extending the four walls of our classroom." [Manny Gonzalez, ITS Technician]

None of it would happen without that DCSD [Douglas County School District] vision, the district's IT team, and school technicians like Manny Gonzalez. He helped rebuild Rock Canyon's Wi-Fi infrastructure to support all those cell phones, and two new mobile learning apps.

"You'll see the collaboration, especially in this classroom where the kids are just hovering over the devices. They get it, and it's great that our staff is getting it." [Gonzalez]

"Students have grown up on technology that's what they know that's what they understand, and so allowing them to learn in a way that works for them, and allowing them to access all sorts of technology that you would use in the real world." [Fordham]

It's empowering students...

"It helps me learn, because it's right at your fingertips." [Chris Schneider, Junior, Rock Canyon High School]

...to work together to push the curriculum further than the textbooks would ever take them.

"One person can look up something while the other person looks up a different thing, or you can both search the same thing. You'll get different results, so you can exchange information faster and quicker. It's really nice. [Ashton Harrison, Senior, Rock Canyon High School]

Cell phones, iPads, and laptops in the classroom. And guess what? They're not taboo anymore. They're all world class, and it's happening in Douglas County.

We need to be ready globally and compete globally, and I think that's what Douglas County is saying by going with the PODs initiative. That we're ready to compete globally. That we want our kids to be globally competitive in the marketplace. [Gonzalez]