

# New school year brings new policy changes for OHS

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The start of the 2023-2024 school year brought new policies and changes to OHS. Some of the biggest changes OHS students will notice this year are the switch back to using Macbooks, Standards Based Grading, a new attendance policy, and a new cell phone policy.

This past June, Principal Dana Bullard indicated in an email to all OHS students, parents, faculty, and staff that students would start using Macbooks in the fall in hopes of making a positive impact in classroom participation.

The use of laptops rather than iPads is something that most students seem to be in favor of.

"I definitely prefer laptops just because I have to write a lot, especially being in AP classes," senior Payton Tulchinsky said. "It is way easier using a laptop when I'm writing. I like to write notes by hand, but if I am jotting stuff down afterwards, I like typing it on the laptop with a bigger screen and a better keyboard."

Younger students at OHS are excited to be able to use Macbooks throughout the rest of their high school careers. Junior Ruth Beyene is supportive of the change and believes it will make it easier to do schoolwork efficiently.

"iPad keyboards disconnect, so you then have to reconnect it," Beyene said. "I prefer the laptops just because we write a lot in AP classes."

As well as transitioning from iPads to Macbooks, OHS is now implementing Standards Based Grading.

As explained by Dr. Bullard, Standards Based Grading will begin with the current freshman class. After a standard has been taught if anyone did not meet competency (scored below a 65), or did not meet mastery (scored below an 80), teachers will reteach the standard so that students

have a chance to meet competency or mastery.

Along with reteaching, PowerSchool will look different for teachers.

"The way we set up grades is different," English teacher Neal Beene said. "Whatever standard I'm teaching, if there are multiple standards in the test, the grades go in and get averaged together. If you have two different grades for the same standard, they no longer have separate weights. They weigh the same and the average is taken of all the assignments within the standard, and that is your final grade for that particular standard."

Tulchinsky first found out about OHS implementing standards based grading on the first day of school this year and is interested to see how the new grading system will pan out.

"I haven't seen how Standards Based Grading is going to impact grades yet," Tulchinsky said. "I feel like there will be a difference just because from what I know about Standards Based Grading, it takes into account the different standards instead of just your flat out grade. I think that can definitely impact grades depending on how heavily things are weighted."

The district hopes to accomplish many of their goals through the use of this new Standards Based Grading system.

"It's trying to close the gap in achievement that we have here at OHS," Dr. Bullard said. "OHS has one of the largest achievement gaps in the state, meaning we have students who are earning National Merit Scholarships and their place in the 30+ Club, but there are also students who are not learning as much as they need to."

Standards Based Grading at OHS is going to be an adjustment for everyone but will hopefully be a step in the right direction.

Another new policy that has gone into effect this school year is the cell phone policy. This has affected students differently because some teachers have been enforcing

a cell phone rule previous to this year.

Despite this change, some teachers are still not enforcing this new policy. It was first announced in an email sent to the students, parents, faculty, and staff of OHS.

The announcement of the new changes brought about different opinions from many students. With the new policy, the faculty and staff at OHS will enforce a few new ways to try and limit students' use of their cell phones.

At the beginning of each class the teacher has the discretion of whether the phones will be placed in a holder or in each student's backpack.

"I could tell my teachers, if I were that way, I want you to get every person's cell phone, stick it in a caddy," Dr. Bullard said. "And if you do not do that, I am writing you up. However, I do not have enough energy to go around this whole campus to look in the door to see if somebody is doing what they need to do. But I can tell them, and they know the importance of the policy, because they are educators, great educators."

Changes to this policy have also brought new consequences. In the OHS discipline matrix, the first offense will result in the teacher confiscating the phone until the end of the day.

The second offense will result in parent contact. Should a student refuse to follow the current rules, they will be written up for insubordination to follow the school's rules. Tulchinsky has not felt the effects of the new cell phone policy so far.

"My teachers typically have always had cell phone caddies in their classes, so I am pretty much already used to that," Tulchinsky said. "I can definitely tell a difference in classes of teachers being stricter than normal with monitoring cell phone usage."

Many people still remain unsure of how long this new cell phone policy will last, however, the administration plans for it to soon become part of the daily classroom routine.

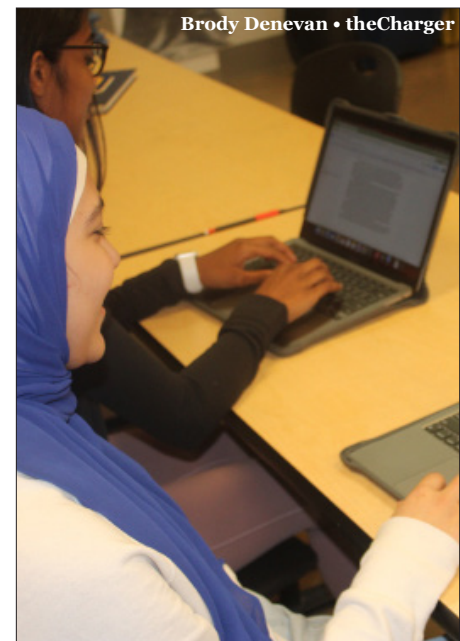
Similar to many other school districts across the United States, OHS

has also revised their attendance policies this year.

The most significant change within this policy is the elimination of unlimited parental excuses. Students now may only have six parental excuses and those must be submitted to the office within three days of the absence.

Despite this, no changes were made to the medical or field trip policy. Dr. Bullard has made everyone in the OHS community aware of these new changes to the district.

"Chronic absenteeism is a problem," Dr. Bullard said. "So, instead of GPA or test scores, a lot of times colleges can tell whether somebody is gonna finish in four years by their attendance. Because in college, if you miss four classes, you get an F automatically, it does not matter. And so what we are finding is young adults that are really bright and really smart are getting to college and not having that habit of getting up and going to school, your mom is not there making you go. If you did not go when you were in high school, the likelihood that you are not going to go to college is pretty high."



Junior **Hannah Oommen** and sophomore **Farida Marzouk** work together on a project using their school issued MacBooks.

1)	Replacement of iPads with Macbooks
2)	Standards Based Grading
3)	Cell Phone Policy
4)	Attendance Policy