

PROHIBITION OF PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to create a phone-free school environment that fosters a positive learning experience free from electronic distractions. By prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day, this policy aims to provide an environment that enhances focus and engagement, allowing students to develop the college and career-ready skills outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Students will have more opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions, collaborate with peers, and cultivate the essential skills necessary for success in college, careers, and life.

This policy has been developed in compliance with the General Appropriations Bill, H. 5100 of 2024, Proviso 1.103 and is applicable to grades kindergarten through twelve.

Proviso 1.103 (SDE: Anti-Bullying/School Safety) To receive state funds allocated for State Aid to Classrooms, a school district shall implement a policy adopted by the State Board of Education that prohibits access to personal electronic communication devices by students during the school day. For purposes of this provision, a personal electronic communication device is considered to be a device not authorized for classroom use by a student, utilized to access the Internet, wi-fi, or cellular telephone signals.

I. Definitions:

A. "Personal electronic device," hereinafter referred to as "device," means any device utilized to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture images or video. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, smart watches, tablets, and gaming devices.

B. "Personal Electronic Device accessories," hereinafter referred to as "device accessories," include any wired or wireless accessory or wearable technology that connects to a device and any other accessory commonly used in conjunction with a personal electronic device.

C. "School day" is the period of time defined as bell to bell. From the morning tardy bell until afternoon dismissal which is the conclusion of the instructional day, electronic communication devices will be prohibited. This policy does not apply to school buses, field trips, and athletic events.

D. "Access" is defined as viewing, holding, wearing, or otherwise using a device for the purpose of communication, internet access, gaming, recording, or

any other function commonly associated with devices. During the school day, devices should be silenced and stored away as directed by the school. Exceptions granted for medical necessity, authorized for classroom use, or other authorized reasons should be in writing and are not considered violations of this definition.

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II. Policy Implementation and Enforcement:

- A. During the school day, students are prohibited from accessing their personal electronic devices. Students may not utilize the function of electronic communication on device accessories during the school day. Students must store away and silence their devices and/or device accessories in backpacks, or otherwise as directed by the school during the school day. Exceptions granted for other authorized reasons (i.e. emergency situations) will be determined by the school's principal or his/her designee.
- B. If explicitly required by a student's IEP, Medical Plan, or 504 plan, the student shall be allowed to access their personal electronic device for medically or educationally necessary purposes described and required for administration of the IEP, Medical Plan or 504 plan.
- C. A student who is a member of a volunteer firefighting organization or emergency organization may be authorized to carry a device with written permission from the school's principal or his/her designee.
- D. If a student violates the preceding rules during the school day, the student will be subject to progressive consequences in the Student Handbook.

Legal References:

- A. S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, as amended:
 - 1. Section 59-63-280 - Requires board to adopt a policy on student use of electronic devices.
- B. General Appropriations Bill, I-I. 5 I 00 of 2024
 - I. Proviso 1.103(SDE: Anti-Bullying/School Safety)

Cell Phones/Communication Devices and Network Access

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for student possession/use of cell phones/ communication devices and network access in the school.

Cell Phones/Communication Devices

Possession of a wireless communication device (WCD) by a student is a privilege that may be forfeited by any student who fails to abide by the terms and provisions of this policy, or otherwise engages in misuse of this privilege.

A "wireless communication device" is a device that emits an audible signal, vibrates, displays a message, or otherwise summons or delivers a communication to the possessor. The following devices are examples of WCDs: cellular and wireless telephones, pagers/beepers, personal digital assistants (PDAs), BlackBerries/Smartphones, WiFi-enabled or broadband access devices, two-way radios or video broadcasting devices, and other devices that allow a person to record and/or transmit, on either a real time or delayed basis, sound, video or still images, text, or other information. Students may not use WCDs on school property or at a school-sponsored activity to access and/or view Internet web sites that are otherwise blocked to students at school. Students may use WCDs while riding to and from school on a school bus or other vehicle provided by the board or on a school bus or board-provided vehicle during school-sponsored activities, at the discretion of the bus driver, classroom teacher, and/or sponsor/advisor/coach. Distracting behavior that creates an unsafe environment will not be tolerated.

Students are prohibited from using WCDs to capture, record, or transmit the words (i.e. audio) and/or images (i.e. pictures, video) of any student, staff member, or other person in the school or while attending a school related activity without express prior notice and explicit consent for the capture, recording, or transmission of such words or images. Using a WCD to take or transmit audio and/or pictures/video of an individual without his/her consent is considered an invasion of privacy and is not permitted unless authorized by the building principal.

Students are prohibited from using WCDs to take pictures or record video/audio in locker rooms, bathrooms, or on school buses or other school vehicles. The use of WCDs to take pictures or record video/audio is also prohibited in classrooms unless deemed appropriate by the teacher and used for educational/instructional purposes only.

Students are prohibited from using WCDs in any way that might reasonably create in the mind of another person an impression of being threatened, humiliated, harassed, embarrassed, or intimidated.

Students are also prohibited from using a WCD to capture and/or transmit test information or any other information in a manner constituting fraud, theft, cheating, or academic dishonesty. Likewise, students are prohibited from using WCDs to receive such information.

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action and/or confiscation of the WCD. The building principal may also refer the matter to law enforcement if the violation involves an illegal activity (e.g. child pornography). Discipline will be imposed in a progressive manner based on the number of previous violations and/or the nature of or circumstances surrounding a particular violation. If the WCD is confiscated, it will be released/returned to the student's parent/legal guardian only after the student complies with any other disciplinary consequences that are imposed. Any WCD confiscated by school staff will be marked in a removable manner with the student's name and held in a secure location in the school building until it is retrieved by the parent/legal guardian. WCDs in the school's custody will not be searched or otherwise tampered with unless school officials reasonably suspect that the search is required to discover evidence of a violation of the law or other school rules.

If multiple offenses occur, a student may lose his/her privilege to bring a WCD to school for the remainder of the semester.

Students are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their WCDs. The board assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, damages, or vandalism to WCDs brought onto its property or the unauthorized use of such devices.

Parents/Legal guardians are advised that the best way to get in touch with their child during the school day is by calling the school office.

Students may use school phones to contact parents/legal guardians during the school day with permission of the administration.

Middle School and High School

Students may use WCDs such as cellular phones, electronic pagers, or any other communications devices before and after school, during after-school activities (e.g. extracurricular activities), and at school-related functions outside of class time. The start and end of school will be denoted by the student's schedule. Any other use of wireless communications is considered misuse and violations may result in disciplinary action.

Consequences

- *first offense* - warning/return WCD to parent/legal guardian
- *second offense* - school consequence/return WCD to parent/legal guardian
- *third offense* - school consequence/return WCD to parent/legal guardian
- *fourth offense* - confiscate WCD through end of the semester

Network Access

The school provides filtered networks for employee and student use. These networks provide the most secure and safe access to the internet possible. Students may only use school provided networks while on school property. Students are prohibited from bringing mobile "hot spots" on school property and prohibited from accessing any outside networks.

Students who use any non-school network while on school property are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Handbook.

Legal references:

S.C. Code, 1976, as amended:

Section 59-63-280 - Possession of paging devices by public school students; mobile telephones included; adoption of policies.

Adopted by the GCA School Board on October 28, 2024.