

CELL PHONE POLICY

Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices in School

The Bath County School Board recognizes that student access to cell phones and other personal electronic devices is common in current society. It is imperative, however, that students, families, and staff understand there are appropriate and inappropriate times for the use of such devices. Schools must provide a learning environment free from unnecessary distraction and disruption. The Bath County School Board establishes expectations for student and staff conduct so that public education is conducted in a respectful atmosphere free from disruption and threat to persons or property, and supportive of individual rights.

Rationale for the Policy

This policy was developed to align with Executive Order 33 which was issued by Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin on July 9, 2024. The executive order aims to promote health and safety of Virginia's K-12 students. In addition, the order recognizes that a focused educational environment with minimal distractions is most conducive to learning. Parents, public health professionals, educators, and other stakeholder groups have expressed concern over depression and anxiety that can partially be attributed to high social media usage and consistent access to cell phones.

Policy Definitions

1. **Bell-to-Bell:** The time period between the first bell of the day until the last bell of the day including transition time and lunch.
2. **Personal Electronic Communication Device:** A cell phone or any other personal device capable of connecting to a smart phone, the internet, or a cellular or Wi-Fi network. These devices include smart watches, personal headphones, and personal tablets.
3. **Stored:** When a cell phone and/or other personal electronic communication devices are not carried on a student's person, including not in the student's pocket. Stored options include the student's backpack, locker, pouch, or in a designated space in the classroom.

Expectations for Elementary Students (K-7)

The use of cell phones (and all other personal electronic devices including, but not limited to, headphones, earbuds, smart watches, and other Bluetooth enabled devices) is prohibited during the regular school day. Upon students' arrival at school, and continuing through dismissal from school, cell phones and other personal electronic devices are required to be out of visible sight and powered off.

Elementary Schools: cell phones and other personal electronic devices are to be off and stored in the student's backpack, a pouch, classroom storage unit, or locker. The stored location will be up to the individual school and addressed in the student handbook.

Failure to comply with this expectation will result in the following actions:

Elementary K-7 Schools:

First Offense	Parent/Guardian contacted, verbal warning, and the device will be confiscated until the end of the school day. Documentation will be kept solely to note there has been a first offense.
Second Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated, and the parent/guardian must retrieve the device from school.
Third Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated, and the parent/guardian must retrieve the device from school. In addition, for a period of 15 calendar days, the student shall be restricted from possessing a cell phone or other personal electronic device at school during instructional hours. The student may either leave their device at home or will be required to check their device into the office at arrival and retrieve it following dismissal. Students who violate this restriction will be subject to further discipline.

***Not complying with this policy can result in discipline consistent with defiance.**

Expectations for High School Students (8-12)

The use of cell phones (and all other personal electronic devices including, but not limited to, headphones, earbuds, smart watches, and other Bluetooth enabled devices) is prohibited during all instructional time.

High Schools: cell phones and other personal electronic devices are to be off and stored in the student's backpack, a pouch, classroom storage unit, or locker. The stored location will be up to the individual school and addressed in the student handbook. High school students may use cell phones and personal electronic communication devices on the school campus before or after school.

Failure to comply with this expectation will result in the following actions:

First Offense	Parent/Guardian contacted, written warning, and the device will be confiscated until the end of the school day.
Second Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated until the end of the day, and the student will receive one day of after school detention.
Third Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated, and the student will receive two days of after school detention. In addition, for a period of 15 calendar days, the student shall be restricted from possessing a cell phone or other personal electronic device at school during instructional hours. The student may either leave their device at home or will be required to check their device into the office at arrival and retrieve it following dismissal. Students who violate this restriction will be subject to further discipline.

***Not complying with this policy can result in discipline consistent with defiance.**

Cell Phones and other personal electronic devices may be used by all Students K-12:

- when students are attending non-instructional after school events/activities;
- when students are riding the school bus, as long as such use is not disruptive or distracting; students must use earbuds or headphones when listening to music or watching videos with sound while on the school bus.
- when a student is at another school level, they are responsible for the policy applying to their physical location

Parental Involvement and Responsibility

Each parent/guardian of a student enrolled in Bath County Public Schools (BCPS) has a duty to assist in enforcing this policy, along with the Standards of Student Conduct.

Expectations for Teachers and Other School Personnel

Teachers and other school personnel are expected to strictly enforce this policy so that students experience consistent expectations and consequences in all school settings. Teachers and other school personnel who confiscate devices must store the device in a safe location until the first available opportunity to turn it over to school administration. Confiscated devices may be retrieved during normal office school hours or at times designated by the school administration. Teachers and other school personnel are expected to model expectations and are prohibited from using cell phones and other personal electronic devices during scheduled class time or other times when personnel are responsible for the instruction and/or direct supervision of students. Teachers and other school personnel may use cell phones when on break, during planning time, and to communicate with staff on school related emergencies. Educators and all co-curricular and extra-curricular sponsors/coaches should primarily use non-social media-based apps to communicate activity and athletic scheduling information with students during school hours. Employees will be able to carry their phone on their person at all times in the event of an emergency situation.

BCPS Staff are prohibited from posting on social media during their work hours unless the account posted to is a BCPS social media account that is recognized by the district. Consequences can include a warning, a letter of reprimand, and inclusion in personnel evaluations.

Prohibited Conduct

1. Using cell phones or other personal electronic devices to:
 - a. tease, bully, intimidate, threaten or harass another individual;

- b. collaborate with, encourage, or incite others to participate in violent or unlawful acts on school property or at school sponsored activities. This includes creating and sharing video of an act in a manner that causes disruption and disturbance;
- c. create, possess, exchange, distribute, post, or transmit and photograph, digitized image, or video of a person in any condition of nudity, or a person engaged in any sexual act;
- d. engage in academic dishonesty and cheating.

Exemptions to "Cell Phone-Free Education" Policy

This policy allows for exemptions when such exemptions are necessary to comply an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act). Viable alternatives to using a cell phone or personal electronic communication device should be explored and implemented in collaboration with the student's family.

Allowable exemptions for cell phones and personal electronic communication devices must be written into 504, IEP, and/or individualized health care plans. The Director of Special Education and Student Services must approve all exemptions.

If a student with a disability or an EL student with a documented language barrier is determined to require access to technology to ensure the provision of a free and appropriate public education, IEP, Limited English Proficiency plan, or 504 teams will collaborate to consider appropriate identification and use of assistive technology to support a student's unique needs.

District Liability

Students bring personal electronic communication devices on school property at students' own risk. Bath County Public Schools is not responsible for any damaged, missing, or stolen electronic devices. If a student's electronic device becomes damaged or stolen, the school division will investigate the incident; however, the school division will not take any financial responsibility for the loss or damage of the student's electronic device or his/her electronic device charges.

Adopted: November 5, 2024