

Policy 3004: Use of Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Devices During the Instructional Day

Purpose

The Academy of Technology and Innovation is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe, focused, and free from distractions. This policy outlines the appropriate use of cell phones and personal electronic communication devices (PECDs) on school property in accordance with the latest guidance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), fostering a cell phone-free education setting.

1. Definitions

- a. **“Bell-to-Bell”** means from when the first bell rings at the start of the school day to begin instructional time until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic school day. “Bell-to-bell” includes lunch and time in between class periods.
 - b. **Cell Phone:** Any mobile device that can make or receive phone calls, send text messages, access the internet, or run software applications.
 - c. **Cell Phone-Free Education** means the age-appropriate elimination or restriction of cell phones and other personal electronic communication devices in public schools.
 - d. **Instructional Time:** Any period during which students are engaged in scheduled educational activities, including but not limited to class time, assemblies, testing, and other school-directed learning experiences.
 - e. **Personal Electronic Communication Device (PECD)** means any personal device capable of connecting to a smartphone, the internet, a cellular or Wi-Fi network, or directly connects to another similar device. Personal electronic communication devices may include some wearable devices such as smart watches, as well as personal headphones, laptops, tablets, and other future personal electronic communication devices with the abovementioned characteristics.
 - f. **Stored** means a cell phone or personal electronic communication device not being carried on the student’s person, including not in the student’s pocket. The Academy of Technology and Innovation may define as storage options the student’s backpack, a daily assigned locker, a locked pouch, or a designated place in the classroom/school building.
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2. General Provisions

Students may possess cell phones and personal electronic communication devices on school property and at school-sponsored activities under the following conditions:

a. During Instructional Time ('Bell to Bell'):

i. **Prohibited Use:** Cell phones and PECDs must be turned off or set to silent and stored out of sight during all instructional periods unless specifically authorized through the noted exceptions.

b. During Non-Instructional Time:

i. Students may use cell phones and PECDs outside of bell-to-bell instructional time, such as before or after school, unless otherwise restricted by administration due to inappropriate use.

3. Privacy and Security

a. **Inappropriate Use:** Use of cell phones or PECDs to photograph, record, or share images or audio of students, staff, or others without explicit permission is prohibited. This includes sharing content on social media or other platforms.

b. **Cyberbullying:** The use of cell phones or PECDs to harass, intimidate, or bully other students, staff, or individuals is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the school's anti-bullying policy as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

c. **Confidentiality:** Students are prohibited from accessing or sharing confidential information through cell phones or PECDs. This includes academic records, personal data, or sensitive school information.

4. Consequences for Violations

a. **First Offense:** Verbal warning and confiscation of the device for the remainder of the class period or school day.

b. **Second Offense:** Confiscation of the device, with the requirement that a parent or guardian retrieve the device from the school office.

c. **Subsequent Offenses:** Escalated disciplinary action, including detention, suspension, or revocation of device privileges for the remainder of the semester.

In cases of severe misuse, such as harassment, bullying, or violations of privacy, additional disciplinary measures, including suspension or legal consequences, may apply.

5. Exceptions

- a. **Medical Devices:** Students with documented medical needs for personal devices, such as health monitoring equipment (e.g., glucose monitors), are permitted to use these devices as necessary and are not subject to the restrictions in this policy, provided the cell phone or PED is designated in the IEP or 504.
 - b. **Emergency Situations:** Students may use cell phones and PEDs to communicate with family or authorities in the event of an emergency.
 - c. **IEP or 504 Plan:** Students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan that includes the use of technology will be allowed to use devices in accordance with the plan.
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6. Staff Use of Personal Devices

- a. **During Instructional Time:** Staff are expected to model appropriate use of technology by refraining from using personal cell phones or PEDs during instructional periods unless necessary for instructional purposes or in case of emergencies.
 - b. **Outside Instructional Time:** Staff may use personal devices during non-instructional time but should ensure that their use does not interfere with student supervision or other professional responsibilities.
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7. Parent and Guardian Communication

- a. Parents and guardians are encouraged to limit calls or text messages to students during the school day, except in cases of emergency.
 - b. Communication between parents and the school should occur through official channels (e.g., the school office) to minimize disruptions to instructional time.
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8. Review and Enforcement

- a. **Administrative Oversight:** The Executive Director and Assistant Director, in partnership with the Executive Director's Council, will ensure that this policy is consistently enforced at the regional program.
 - b. **Annual Review:** This policy will be reviewed as necessary, but at minimum every 3 years, to comply with any updates to state or federal guidelines, including changes in the VDOE guidance.
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9. Legal References

- VDOE Guidance on Cell Phone Use in Schools
 - Virginia Code § 18.2-60.3 (Cyberbullying)
 - Virginia Student Privacy Protection Act
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