

South Barber USD 255 Announces New Personal Electronic Device Policy for the 2026-2027 School Year

At its Special Board meeting on July 22, 2026, South Barber USD 255 approved its new Personal Electronic Device Policy, effective for the upcoming 2026-2027 academic year. This comprehensive update aligns with newly enacted Kansas state law, Sub HB 2299, requiring school districts to regulate student access to personal communication devices during the instructional day.

Focused on Academic Success and Student Safety

The core of the new policy is a "bell-to-bell" storage requirement designed to minimize digital distractions and foster a more collaborative and secure learning environment. By restricting access to personal devices, South Barber USD 255 aims to enhance student engagement in the classroom and promote meaningful face-to-face interactions among peers.

Mandatory Storage Protocol

Starting this fall, all personal electronic communication devices—including cellular phones, smartwatches, tablets, and wireless headphones or earbuds—must be powered off immediately upon a student's arrival at school. Students will be required to surrender their personal devices to designated school staff. All surrendered devices will be securely stored for the duration of the school day and will remain inaccessible until the final dismissal bell.

Policy Scope and Exceptions

While the prohibition applies universally across all district facilities during regular hours, the district recognizes specific needs for flexibility. Exceptions to the requirement include:

- **Extracurricular Activities:** Students may possess devices during school-sponsored sports, clubs, and athletic activities that occur strictly before or after the regular school day.
- **Medical and Educational Needs:** Authorized exceptions may be granted if a device is required by a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 plan, or is documented as medically necessary by a licensed physician.

Preparation for a Smooth Transition

South Barber USD 255 is committed to ensuring that all families and students are fully prepared for these changes before the start of the new term. Detailed information will be distributed to parents and guardians through district approved building handbooks and the newly adopted school-to-home communication platform, "ParentSquare."

"Our priority is the academic and social-emotional well-being of our students," said Andi Giesen, Superintendent of South Barber USD 255. "This policy update provides the structure necessary to ensure our classrooms remain places of high-quality learning and safe personal growth." For more information regarding the 2026-2027 Student Handbook and specific policy language, please visit the district website at www.southbarber.com or contact the district office.