

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Why has the personal communication device policy been updated? Parents, teachers, and administrators have noticed that the attention, safety, and social experiences of their students have degraded with the constant access to personal communication devices. Our goal is to increase our children's ability to focus, increase their safety, and increase the quality of their social interactions by restricting access to the devices during the school day.

Can this updated policy work? Yes. Vallivue Middle School has enforced the updated expectations for five years. Vallivue Academy has enforced an even stricter version of the updated expectations for three years. The staff and students at both schools have reported positive outcomes ever since implementing the stricter expectations. Schools districts all over the nation are updating and implementing their policies in order to improve the educational experience for students and teachers.

Are there any exceptions? Use and/or storage location accommodations of personal communication devices may be made for students with medical or health needs (e.g. diabetic monitoring). In these case-by-case circumstances, phone use and/or storage will be determined by administration or the IEP/504 team. The district's team of nurses are proactively communicating with parents and teachers about students who will be allowed to keep their devices on them for medical reasons.

Does the policy include turning off and storing wearables? Yes, any personal device that can be worn and able to transmit communication such as Apple Watches must be turned off and stored away.

Why can't teachers collect and return personal communication devices each class period? Rather than expecting teachers to constantly collect, return, and monitor students who may or may not have submitted their phones every class period, teachers will be able to focus on their students and curriculum.

Why can't a student use their personal communication device during passing periods, lunch breaks, and nutrition breaks like other school districts? Research shows that social media consumption and text messages between instructional hours still impair a student's ability to focus once the instructional hours begin. [For more information, watch this explanation from a child neurologist and student resource office from the timestamp 24:33 to 30:40.](#) Additionally, major policy violations take place

during non-instructional times using the personal communication devices to organize and/or record inappropriate behaviors and offenses.

Why are elementary students allowed to have their personal communication devices in their backpacks but middle school and high school students have to keep them stored in their lockers or cars? Elementary students do not have lockers, and it is easier for teachers to monitor up to 30 students a day to ensure devices are not being used. Secondary teachers have up to 180 students in a day, which makes it significantly harder for teachers to monitor and for students to resist using their devices.

Will staff be allowed to let students use their phones as a reward, for class projects, or if they have down time? No.

How will coaches communicate with student athletes if they can't use their phone during the school day? The athletic directors are working with the coaches to update communication strategies that will be in compliance with the new cell phone policies. Details will be coming soon.

Will schools randomly search students for their personal communication devices? No.

How will I be able to communicate with my child during the school day? The front office will deliver messages to students in a timely manner. Students may also use the office phone to call their parents or guardians during the school day and leave them a voicemail if a parent is unavailable.

What are the consequences for a student that is using their personal communication device during school hours? The device will not be returned to the student. A Parent or guardian may retrieve the phone after school on the first infraction. On the second infraction, a parent or guardian will meet with a school administrator. Subsequent offenses could lead to out of school suspension.

Can students use their personal communication devices during after school activities? Yes.

Will staff members be allowed to use their personal communication devices? Staff will model the new expectations by being fully present with students during both instructional and non-instructional times. When necessary, staff may use their personal devices when they are not in the presence of students during their prep period and

lunch time. Administrators, Safe School Aides, and SROs will have devices for safety communications at all times.

What if I need to communicate with my child during a school emergency? The district has safety protocols in place to maximize the safety of your child during an emergency. The first priority is to ensure safety and coordination efforts with local authorities. Then, the district coordinates communication efforts with local authorities and shares information to all parents and guardians listed in Infinite Campus. Specific instructions are shared with parents and guardians for reunification efforts.

Why can't my child use their personal device during a school emergency?

Although cell phones give a sense of security during an emergency, they actually decrease the ability to conduct emergency operations, which compromises the safety of students and staff. Personal communication devices lead to the following issues during an emergency:

1. Potential to hinder emergency response: During a crisis, mass use of cell phones by students can overload local cell networks and Wi-Fi systems, potentially interfering with emergency responders' communications. This could delay or disrupt critical information flow and response efforts.
2. Distraction from safety protocols: Students using phones during an emergency may be distracted from following important safety instructions given by school staff or first responders. Focusing on phones instead of their surroundings could put them at greater risk.
3. Revealing locations to potential threats: In situations like an active shooter scenario, cell phone use (including ringing, vibrating, or screen lighting) could reveal hiding locations to a perpetrator. This poses a serious safety risk.
4. Spread of misinformation: Panicked students may unintentionally spread inaccurate information through texts or social media, leading to confusion and potentially hampering emergency response efforts.
5. Accelerating parental response: Cell phone use during a crisis can prompt parents to rush to the school, potentially creating traffic congestion and interfering with evacuation or emergency response plans.
6. False sense of security: Relying on phones as a primary safety tool may create a false sense of security, potentially overlooking other crucial safety measures and protocols.
7. Potential exploitation by threats: In cases where the threat is from within the school community, emergency communications sent to students' phones could be intercepted and used against them.