

CELL PHONE INFO FOR PARENTS

In the day of instant communication, cell phone devices carry much convenience for parents to always having access to their children. Statistics show that 70% of 12 year olds have a cell phone and nearly 90% of high schoolers. The majority of students utilize their phones in useful and appropriate ways. That being said, I think it is important for all parents to know and share with their children the serious effects that inappropriate usage can have.

Currently, the most common applications being used by kids are Snapchat, Instagram, Tik-Tok. Although, Twitter and Facebook are still active, they are less of a tool for kids. You Tube can be a great resource to assist us in fixing a home repair, but it also is being used by kids to view inappropriate content.

Our school handbook has a cell phone and mobile device policy on the expectations on proper usage. Infractions of this policy result in guidelines set within the discipline policy.

I think it is very important as parents that you know some actions taken by kids on their cell phones not only may be disciplinary issues but may rise to criminal actions. Every school year I see cases nationwide, and even within our local Sioux Falls area, of kids that have made poor decisions using their cell phone as a “joke” or “prank” which has led to serious consequences – some of which have resulted in criminal charges. Did you know that we have state laws in place that are taken very seriously by law enforcement and State’s Attorneys. Here are the most common inappropriate uses of cell phones by kids that could result in criminal charges:

- Posting a threat on social media to a school or person. Threats can also be perceived by the picture shown. An example would be a picture of a gun with a comment “See you all at school tomorrow”. It is not a direct threat but certainly perceived. All threats – direct or perceived – will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. There is no such thing as a joke about threats. I tell kids try walking through TSA at the airport and making a bomb comment and see how that ends up for you. Same goes for schools. Charges could range anywhere from disruption to schools up to making terrorist threats.
- Bullying via social media could also be considered criminal. Just a few short years ago, SD state legislators made bullying a criminal act. We have guidelines in our student handbook and charges could apply under some circumstances.
- Sexting is a term you may or may not have heard, but know that your kids probably know of this term. It may be easiest if you see what state law says:
 - No minor, as defined in subdivision 26-7A-1(21), may intentionally create, produce, distribute, present, transmit, post, exchange, disseminate, or possess, through any computer or digital media, any photograph or digitized image or any visual depiction of a minor in any

condition of nudity, as defined in subdivision 22-24A-2(9), or involved in any prohibited sexual act, as defined in subdivision 22-24A-2(16). Any violation of this section constitutes the offense of juvenile sexting, which is a Class 1 misdemeanor.

This information is not meant to alarm you or have you believe that we have a big problem with cell phone usage at SFC. However, my experience has shown me that if there are issues nationwide, statewide or locally on any given topic we certainly will see it at SFC as well. This information is meant for you as a parent to have a conversation with your children at the time you feel it is appropriate.

I am always available for a phone call or a visit if you want more information.

Security Director Galen Smidt