

Photos and examples of storage options in VT and beyond can be found [here](#).

Current Phone Free School Policies in Vermont Schools and beyond for Reference

1. The Sharon Academy High School Phone Policy 2024-2025
2. Harwood Union Middle and High School
3. Newark Street School
5. Hartford Memorial Middle School: Student Cell Phone / Device Policy
6. ****Our favorite: Montpelier High School 2025-2026 Device- -Free Plan & Procedures (includes social media limits)**
7. Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Ohio

1. The Sharon Academy High School Phone Policy 2024-2025



Policy Expectations:

As of the 24-25 school year, TSA will not permit students to have access to cell phones and personal electronic devices (excluding laptops) during the school day from 9:00 am to 3:15 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm on Wednesdays.

Every school day upon arrival, TSA students are required to place their cell phones and/or personal electronic devices in a locked cabinet located in the lobby labeled by student's name and corresponding number. Students will retrieve their devices at the end of each school day.

If you have concerns about phone security, we recommend leaving your cell phone at home.

Cell phones and personal electronic device definition

- Cell phones (both phones that connect to the internet and non-internet connected cell phones that send and receive text message and make phone calls)

- Personal electronics devices such as tablets and video games
- Airpods, earbuds, Bluetooth connected headphones
- Smartwatches and other accessories that connect to the internet

Rationale:

TSA prides itself on being an integrated, inclusive and collaborative community. We have observed first-hand that students interact and connect with each other in a more meaningful way when phones are not available to distract them from interacting with fellow members of the community.

Additionally, there is a scientific consensus that cell phones distract students from their learning and reduce their focus and attention spans. Phones in school create a detrimental environment in that they promote unhealthy behaviors, they provide students with more incentive to not stay in the classroom and they significantly impact mental health. Studies have shown that schools that enforce restrictions see improved academic performance and less bullying. It is our aim that this policy will facilitate an increase in academic achievement and engagement, increase social connections and significantly strengthen the ties of the TSA community.

Consequences:

When a student is found to have a phone during school hours, the following will occur:

First-time offense:

Device is confiscated for the day and can be picked up by the student at the end of the day.

Second offense:

Device is confiscated, parents are notified by a call or email home, and the student must meet with either the school counselor or Dean of Students (DOS) to discuss strategies on how to mitigate potential device addiction.

Third offense:

Device is confiscated, parents are notified by a call home, parents/guardians are required to pick up the device from the school, a meeting is held between parents and SST to discuss how the problem is going to be addressed.

Fourth offense:

Phone is confiscated, parents/guardians are required to pick up the device from the school, the student is sent home for the school day, suspension may be enacted and the student may be required to submit their device to the school for the remainder of the year.

Ways for Families to Communicate with TSA:

- Reach out to Jen Tewksbury at the Front Desk, 802-763-2500, Ext 200
 - Jen works from 7:30 to 3:15 every day, and when she is away from her desk for any extended period of time we make sure someone else is answering the phone.
- Email the Student Support Team at sst@sharonacademy.net for a quick response from one of the team members.
 - There are six of us who receive these emails and are checking email very frequently throughout the day, so it is an excellent and reliable way to reach someone who can respond right away.
- Email your student directly.
 - Students use their computers frequently in class and are encouraged to use email to communicate in general.

Note: If it is an emergency your student will be notified immediately.

2. Harwood Union Middle and High School

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gazl27wquFIhlxw8bnwm_bfLsPCLDEU6EsG1wbeqiY/edit?tab=t.0

HUMHS PHONE PROCEDURES

HUMHS is a phone-free space. If students chose to bring their phones to school instead of leaving them at home or in their car they are expected to follow the procedures described below.

DAILY PROCEDURE:

As students **Arrive to School**, they will:

1. Unlock pouch
2. Turn phone off
3. Place their phone, smartwatch and Bluetooth headphones/AirPods inside their Yondr Pouch and lock it at the threshold (in the lobby they enter). *Please note: School staff will supervise this process but it is the responsibility of students to follow this expectation.*
4. Store their Pouch:
 - Grades 9-12 in their backpack for the day.

- Grades 7-8 in their lockers for the day.

At dismissal, students will unlock their Pouch, remove their phone and put their Pouch in their backpack.

Students arriving late or leaving early will lock/unlock their pouch in the **Front Office when signing in or out**.

It is the student's responsibility to bring their Pouch to school with them each day. Every student is assigned a personal Yondr Pouch. While the Yondr Pouch is considered school property, it is each student's responsibility to bring their Pouch with them to school every day and keep it in good working condition.

Students not meeting cell phone expectations are subject to disciplinary action, this may include but is not limited to the following responses:

If a student is found to have a cell phone that is not locked in their Yondr pouch,

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Office Referral Log Entry Phone is kept in office for the remainder of the day/parent can come pick it up Parent Communication	Office Referral Log Entry Phone must be checked in/out at the front office for 2 weeks Parent Communication	Office Referral Log Entry ISS/OSS for the remainder of the day Parent Meeting Phone must be checked in/out at the front office as determined by student plan

If a student forgets/fails to turn their phone off and the volume is heard, they will be sent to the office to unlock Pouch, turn cell phone off, return phone to pouch, lock the pouch and return to class.

PLEASE NOTE: *The response to students not meeting the HUMHS' Cell Phone expectation is managed by Student Support and Administration. The administration reserves the right to exercise discretionary authority in the implementation of disciplinary measures when circumstances warrant such action.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why is the school introducing a Cell Phone free school environment?

Harwood is seeking to limit distractions in the classroom and improve overall student engagement, mental health and well-being.

Requiring students to lock their phones away seems like a punishment for students. Is this the case?

This is not a punitive measure. The intention is three-fold:

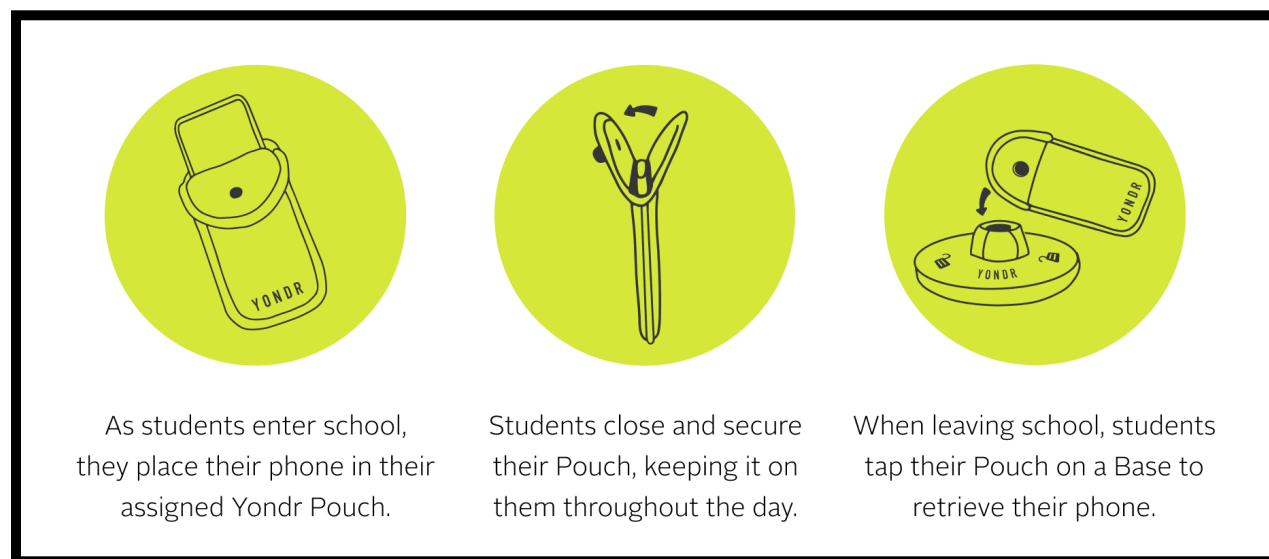
- to create classroom environments where teachers can teach and students can learn free from distractions caused by the personal use of devices;
- to reduce the negative impacts for ALL students of inappropriate use of devices at school, such as cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content, and incidents involving mobile phones that detract from a healthy school climate; and
- to increase meaningful face-to-face connections between students.

Can students leave their phones in the car or at home?

Yes, students can leave their phones outside of school! If they are found to have a phone in the building, the levels of consequences apply.

What is a Yondr pouch?

The Yondr Pouch is a secure bag that is used to store an individual's mobile device or devices. It is locked and unlocked with a special magnetic locking device.



How will students receive a Yondr pouch?

Upon returning to school in August 2024, all students in grades 7-12 will be assigned a Yondr pouch to secure their phone, smartwatch and Bluetooth headphones/AirPods. The pouch is the property of the school and is considered on loan to the student during the school year. Students are responsible for the Yondr pouch at all times and for bringing the pouch to and from school each day and keeping them in good condition.

How will students know whose Yondr pouch is whose?

When the school year begins, the pouches will be distributed and each pouch will be labeled with the student's name. Students 9-12 will keep their pouches with them at all times and students 7-8 will keep them in their lockers.

How will the process work at arrival and dismissal?

Upon entering school, students will turn their phone off, place the phone, smartwatch and Bluetooth headphones/AirPods inside of the Yondr pouch, and lock it in front of the designated staff. The pouches will be unlocked at the end of the school day at several designated locations within the building.

What devices will go in the Yondr pouch?

All phones, as well as other Bluetooth devices, including AirPods, smartwatches and other wireless headphones, must be stored in the Yondr pouch.

How is the “end of the day” defined?

The end of the day is 3:20 p.m. Students who leave school before 3:20 will be able to unlock their phones when they sign out.

My student attends a tech center where Yondr pouches are not required. What will the process be for these students?

Tech centers have their own cell phone procedures that are followed when students are there. Upon arrival at Harwood for afternoon classes, students will lock their devices in a Yondr pouch when they sign in.

What if a student needs their personal device for a medical reason?

Students who have a documented medical condition and who need a personal device for monitoring their condition will be provided with a Yondr pouch that has a velcro seal.

Will my student's phone be safe?

Phones in Yondr pouches will remain in student backpacks/lockers for the school day.

Will my student still be able to listen to music?

Students will be able to use headphones with cords to connect to their Chromebooks. They will be able to use the headphones for classroom work when allowed or for listening to music during non-class time. Spotify and Pandora are available on Chromebooks for students to access.

What if a student needs to leave the building before regular dismissal?

If a student needs to leave school early for an approved early dismissal, medical emergency, work assignment, athletic event, or other school-sponsored trip, students will be able to unlock their devices at school just prior to their departure. If returning to school during the instructional day, the Yondr pouch would be locked upon re-entry to the building.

What if a parent or guardian needs to reach their child during the school day?

We understand that emergencies will occur. Parents may contact the main office at (802) 244-5186 to speak with their child if the need arises.

What if a student needs to reach their parent or guardian during the school day?

Students can access a phone in the Front Office to call home if needed during the school day.

How will students find out about changes in athletics and other extracurriculars?

Email will be used to communicate changes in games and practices. Time-sensitive changes will also be announced over the intercom.

What if a student does not comply or damages the case to access their phone?

Students who are found with an unlocked pouch, cause damage to the pouch, or use an alternate phone will be subject to disciplinary action.

What happens if a student doesn't have their Yondr Pouch?

The phone will be turned over to front office staff and secured in the school, safe until the end of the school day. At the end of the school day, students will retrieve their phone from the front office staff.

If a student forgets to unlock the pouch before leaving the building, is there a way for students to unlock the pouch – ie an unlock station outside the school building?

There will not be an unlocking station outside the building. If the student forgets to unlock their pouch, they will be able to return to school before the last late bus departs to unlock it.

If the Yondr pouch is stolen/lost, who is responsible for replacement?

Students will ultimately be responsible for the care of their Yondr pouch. If a student damages or loses their pouch, they will be responsible for replacement and may face disciplinary consequences. As the new school year gets underway, the district will provide families and students with replacement protocols.

How will families be notified if there is a “secure the building” or emergency situation?

Students and staff at all schools practice option-based drills (such as secure the building) throughout the year. Students and staff are instructed to be silent during a drill. The response action guidelines outlined in the high school’s building-level safety plan has a community notification plan for all emergency situations. This notification plan includes first and foremost, parents and guardians of students in the building.

What if my child is at school and needs to call 911?

Every classroom is equipped with a phone that can dial 911. There are no codes or prefixes needed to dial outside of the district. Anyone can dial directly.

What happens if there is an emergency at school?

Every classroom and office in the school is equipped with a phone that can dial 911. Our staff is trained to execute safety and [emergency procedures](#). Students will follow the school’s emergency procedures in the case of an emergency. Schools will communicate with parents through the district’s mass notification and communication tools.

Will teachers be using the Yondr pouches as well?

The expectation for all staff in the building is that phones are away when students are present. Teachers and staff are expected to model responsible cell phone use for students.

What is the cell phone use procedure for visitors during the school day?

Visitors are asked to follow the same cell phone expectations as staff.

Are students able to use their Chromebooks to email outside of huusd.org?

Currently, students in grades 7-12 can email outside the district and will continue to have access to do so. All district email is filtered and monitored.

Will students be able to put their personal email accounts on the district-owned Chromebooks?

No. Students will only be able to use their huusd.org accounts on district-owned devices. All devices and networks owned by the district are monitored.

What tools will the school use to help gauge effectiveness of the Yondr pouches?

The district will use quantitative and qualitative data to assess the effectiveness of Yondr in

improving the student experience. This includes School Climate Survey data, DESSA, Youth Risk Behavior Survey data, discipline referrals, as well as student and staff feedback.

HU Cell Phone Free Agreement (Pouch Opt Out)

If you do not ever plan to bring a phone into the building - including a smartwatch, Bluetooth headphones/AirPods and you would like to opt out of the responsibility of a Yondr Pouch assigned to you, please complete this [form](#).

PLEASE NOTE by completing this form you are committing to not bringing a phone, Bluetooth headphones or smartwatch into the Harwood building and thus do not want a pouch assigned to you. The same expectations regarding phones apply to you as specified in the Harwood Handbook. By signing this form, you acknowledge that you do not have a phone, Bluetooth headphones or smartwatch and thus does not want a pouch assigned to you. You acknowledge that all signatures are valid and authentic.

3. Newark Street School (East Haven, VT)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MYJjIM9GBe8YYvLLwM5doYmemkVE2jZP5F9y62zBLbg/edit>

Student Phone Calls & Use of Electronic Devices

Student phone calls and messaging: School telephones are to be used by students *only* in emergencies. Parents/Guardians should call the main office to leave a message for the student's teacher or administrative assistant to deliver. Students are allowed to use the classroom telephones with permission from school staff. Parents and guardians should avoid communicating with their child using electronic devices while students are in school. **Students are advised to leave their cell phones at home. If they are brought to school, they will be turned off and stored in their totes in their homeroom. Parents/Guardians may be required to pick up the device from the main office if these protocols are not followed.**

Fidgets have become a distraction to students and teachers. We ask that fidgets be left at home. If a student requires a fidget as a request/recommendation from the educational team, the school will supply the fidget, or make arrangements with the child's parents.

5. Hartford Memorial Middle School: Student Cell Phone / Device Policy

Link to full Student Handbook here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hMheih5RWZEIAXUhKx71tT_3ZiVLDSWsT2u_BJIP0E/edit

Students are encouraged to leave their phones/devices at home, however we do recognize there are times it is important for before and after school use. Given the tremendous distraction devices cause during the school day, cell phones (or any device used to access the internet) are not permitted at any time during school hours. If families are needing to reach their student during the school day, please call the Main Office number, and we will immediately locate your student.

All students will be assigned a Yondr Pouch in which to store their device for the day. While the Yondr Pouch is considered school property, it is each student's responsibility to bring their pouch with them to school every day.

Building Entrance: As students enter the building, they will:

1. Turn off their device.
2. Unlock their Yondr Pouch using an Unlocking Base at their assigned building entrance.
3. Place their device inside the pouch, securely close it, and store it in their backpack. If a student doesn't have a backpack, staff will work with the student to find another place to store the pouch for the day.
4. Watches with internet access must be set to airplane mode.
5. No other personal devices may be brought to school without prior approval.

Each student may maintain possession of their device inside their Yondr Pouch for the duration of the school day. Students arriving late will be asked to complete this process when signing in at the front office.

Building Exit: As students exit the building at the end of the school day they will:

1. Unlock their pouch using an Unlocking Base at the designated building exit.
2. Remove their device from their pouch.
3. Securely close their empty pouch and place it in their backpack for the next day.

If a student is leaving school early for any reason, they will be able to unlock their pouch in the nurse's office or the main office before their dismissal.

****Device and Pouch *may* be confiscated at any time for misuse, including:**

1. Intentional physical damage to the pouch.

2. Using the device during school hours.
3. Repeatedly forgetting or losing the pouch.
4. Repeatedly being asked to put the pouch away.

If the device and/or pouch is confiscated, school administration will notify the parent/guardian, and the device may be held in the office until a parent/guardian can pick up the device. Parents/guardians MAY be asked to pay a \$10 replacement fee if a pouch is lost or damaged.

6. Montpelier High School 2025-2026 Device-Free Plan & Procedures (includes social media limits)

Why is our school adopting a device-free plan?

- The school day is when students need to be able to focus, learn, interact with each other, build community, and engage with teachers. Data shows that even having a cell phone turned off in their backpack decreases student test scores. A phone and social media free school gives students back many needed opportunities for development.
- The "why" for having a bell-to-bell (7:30 am - 3:00 pm) restriction for adults and students:
 - Medical evidence of positive mental health impacts.
 - The opportunity to engage with classes and peers.
 - Going device-free is happening for all students and staff and not selected individuals. Hopefully, the shared experience will lessen the individual impact.
 - The opportunity for self-reflection of how one interacts with their device.
 - An invitation to learn, be social, and create a space of community.
 - It is likely to become law.
- The plan must be from first bell to last bell (all-day) in order to maximize the benefits for students, teachers, staff, and administrators. An instructional time-only plan is ineffective because:
 - Cell phones disrupt not only academic learning but social-emotional learning as well. The use of cell phones during lunch, passing periods and free time prevents students from engaging with their peers and creating a sense of community.
 - Cell phones create an additional burden on teachers who have to police cell phone use in their classroom when the plan isn't building-wide.
 - Removing phones from the person eliminates the urge to check notifications, scroll social media, communicate via text, watch videos and engage in other distractions. It also eliminates privacy violations that

occur in the building, including locker rooms and restrooms, where privacy is of utmost importance.

What does this plan include?

- Cell phones (both phones that connect to the internet and non-internet connected phones that send and receive text messages and make phone calls).
- Personal electronic devices such as electronic tablets and video game consoles
- Airpods, earbuds, and Bluetooth-connected headphones.
- Smartwatches, fitness trackers, and other accessories that connect to the internet.

How has this worked in other schools?

Phone-Free Schools Movement's in-depth discussions with administrators who have effectively implemented device-free policies have consistently highlighted the same positive outcomes. Below are some of the tangible benefits noted by these administrators, as well as administrators from Harwood Union High School:

- Less distractions: Teachers report improved focus, attention, and comprehension, leading to better skills and grades.
- Less cyber bullying
- Fewer fights and social media-related drama: Administrators report spending less time on discipline referrals.
- Increased engagement: Students engage more with their peers and teachers both in and out of the classroom.
- Improved attendance: Students aren't texting their caregivers to call them out of school
- Boosted efficiency: Teachers report being ahead of schedule on their lesson plans because they aren't spending time policing phones and because students are completing classwork and assignments faster.
- More reading: Device-free schools report an increase in books checked out from their libraries.
- Improved teacher morale and retention
- Less mid-class absenteeism: Students request to use the restroom less frequently, and trips to the restroom are shorter because students aren't using that time to be on their phones.
- More vibrant lunchrooms: Lunchrooms at device-free schools are markedly louder because students are having face-to-face conversations with their peers.
- Less cheating
- Less reported stress among students: School counselors are seeing a decrease in the rate of mental health-related student visits.

- MHS will continue to monitor the academic and social-emotional learning data we receive from going device-free. Throughout the school year, there is ample opportunity to offer feedback from students, caregivers, and staff to the MHS Administration team and to learn from this opportunity.

In summary, a bell-to-bell device-free plan provides students with an average of 7 hours each school day to be fully present and free from the pressures and harms of phones and social media. This plan helps them restore connections and reclaim a critical period in their development.

Resources:

[Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Ban Smartphones in Vermont Schools](#)
[Phone-Free Schools Movement](#)

What are the procedures?

Storage:

- Students walk in the door and deposit their phones and/or devices in the envelope with their name on it.
- Students with flex schedules or off-site CBLs can pick up their device when exiting the building to go off-site and must re-deposit it when they return to campus.
- Staff members store their devices with their personal belongings.

Medical Needs

- Exceptions may be made for students to use a personal electronic device if a licensed physician or licensed advanced practice registered nurse determines that it is necessary to monitor a medical condition (i.e. diabetes, epilepsy). Documentation from the medical provider will be necessary and the exception must be outlined in an IEP or 504 plan. The student will be allowed to keep the device in a manila envelope within their backpack if deemed necessary. The exception is specific to the need only and still prohibits cell phone and headphone/earbud use for any other purposes.

Field Trips

- Students cannot access their phones or devices on school-related field trips.

Athletics

- Teams will be required to use Google Chat or Email to communicate. Social Media apps will not be allowed. After 3:00 PM, students will be able to access their phones.

Open Campus

- Students with flex schedules or off-site CBLs can pick up their device when exiting the building to go off-site and must re-deposit it when they return to campus.
- Students who arrive at MHS after 8:15 would bring their phone to the storage container.

Dual Enrollment

- Students will come to the MHS office to access their phones if needed for two-factor authentication for digital log-on access for classes.

What happens when a device is found?

- 1st Offense
 - The staff member will:
 - direct the student to bring the device to the main office
 - contact the main office
 - document the incident in Panorama
 - The device is turned in directly to an administrator for the remainder of the day, and the device may be picked up at the end of the day. Students with flex schedules may not pick up their phone for times they leave school during the day.
 - Communication goes home for documentation.
 - Students who deposit a fake phone or are dishonest about delivering it automatically go to 2nd offense.
- 2nd Offense
 - The staff member will:
 - direct the student to bring the device to the main office
 - contact the main office
 - document the incident in Panorama
 - The device will be kept in the office for the remainder of that day, and the device must be picked up by the caregiver from the Administration.
 - The device is turned in directly to an administrator for an additional 3 full school days after the infraction. Students with flex schedules may not pick up their phone for times they leave school during these days.
 - Communication goes home for documentation.
 - Students who deposit a fake phone or are dishonest about delivering their phone automatically go to 3rd offense.
- 3rd Offense
 - The staff member will:
 - direct the student to bring the device to the main office

- contact the main office
 - document the incident in Panorama
- The device will be kept in the office for the remainder of the day, and the device must be picked up by the caregiver from the Administration.
- The device is turned in directly to an administrator for an additional 5 full school days after the infraction. Students with flex schedules may not pick up their phone for times they leave school during these days.
- At the 3rd offense, a meeting with the student and their caregivers will be required to determine a plan moving forward.
- Letters and email go home for communication.

FAQ:

What if my child needs their phone in case of a crisis or lockdown at the school?

- The notion of an active shooter in your child's school is terrifying. And these valid concerns must not be conflated with the device-free school plan, which actually makes schools safer. The most powerful protective factor against school violence is school connectedness. Student use of cell phones during the school day degrades vital social cohesion and enables increased bullying and harassment.
- On a practical level, the adults in the building need every ounce of attention from students during an emergency. Students are less safe when they are paying attention to their phones instead of following instructions provided by the adults who are trying to help them. Additionally, heavy use of cell phones during an emergency can clog communications bandwidth, making it more difficult for first responders to do their jobs. Regular communication between caregivers and students is always available by calling your child's school or reaching your child directly via their school-issued email address.
- School security experts say phones can make children less safe in crisis situations for the following reasons:
 - Student use of cell phones during an unfolding emergency can distract their attention from safety and emergency response directions being given by school staff.
 - Cell phone use by students can hamper rumor control and, in doing so, disrupt and delay effective public safety personnel response.
 - Cell phone use by students can impede public safety response by accelerating caregiver and community arrival at the scene of an emergency during times when officials may be attempting to evacuate students to another site.
 - Victims and worried family members trying to get through can jam communications, interfering with first responders.

- For more information, visit the National School Safety and Security Services

What if my child doesn't have a cell phone?

- If your child does not have a cell phone or personal electronic device that they will bring to school, you will need to complete and sign the "No Phone" form to keep on file at MHS.

What if my child struggles without their phone, increasing their stress and anxiety?

- Constant notifications and texts lead to increased anxiety among adolescents. If a student struggles without their phone, they can access the MHS Counseling Department for support in adjusting and developing habits to stay device-free during the school day.

How do I contact my student during the school day? (i.e. schedule change, after-school activity)

- Contacting your child via their cell phone during the school day distracts them from their studies and the needed in-person interaction with their teachers and peers.
- Caregivers who need to contact their student during the school day and or change the pick-up time of their child, may do so by calling the main office.

What if my child needs to contact me during the school day?

- By having 24/7 access, we prevent growth opportunities that our children need educationally, socially, and developmentally. If students text their caregivers every time they have a question, they miss the opportunity to think for themselves and develop problem-solving skills.
- If the student needs to contact their caregiver during the school day, a phone will be available in the main office.

Why can't teachers be in charge of the class and collect the phones?

- Children need consistency, and one plan and procedure for the entire school benefits all students.
- Teachers benefit by regaining classroom instructional time instead of having to police phones, as monitoring phones takes time and energy away from teaching and supporting students.
- Students are less likely to push back on the plan if there is a consistently enforced building-wide plan and procedure in place.

Why is it important to allow our children to be independent during the school day?

- Students need to be given independence from their caregivers during the school day to develop foundational skills.
- Constant contact can fuel a cycle of anxiety for both students and caregivers. Research shows encouraging independence fosters a child's self-confidence, resilience, problem-solving ability, and mental health.

What if my child has a medical condition that must be monitored by their cell phone?

- Exceptions may be made for students to use a personal electronic device if a licensed physician or licensed advanced practice registered nurse determines that it is necessary to monitor a medical condition (i.e. diabetes, epilepsy). Documentation from the medical provider will be necessary and the exception must be outlined in an IEP or 504 plan. The student will be allowed to keep the device in a manila envelope within their backpack if deemed necessary. The exception is specific to the need only and still prohibits cell phone and headphone/earbud use for any other purposes.

What if my child has an IEP/504 plan?

- An IEP/504 plan does not exempt a student from the device policy. Cell phone/device exemptions will only be made for specific, documented medical needs such as diabetes or seizure monitoring. Those medical needs must be included in the child's 504 plan or IEP, along with proper documentation from a licensed physician or licensed advanced practice registered nurse. The exception is specific to the need only and still prohibits cell phone and headphone/earbud use for any other purposes.

Will it be harder for students to make connections and friends if they are offline all day?

- Social media tends to foster asynchronous interactions leading to greater levels of anxiety, loneliness, and depression. In-person socializing forms far stronger connections and supports the development of healthier social and emotional skills.

Don't some students benefit from having social media?

- Even for students who use social media for connection and activism, it is still a distraction during school hours. As a school community, we work hard to foster a culture of inclusion.
- Our goal is to limit use during the school day to minimize disruption and mitigate the potential harms of social media dependency.

Phones and social media can be a lifeline for marginalized students who want to access their support systems during the school day.

- Sadly, data shows that marginalized children are also those most likely to be harmed on social media. According to the [Phone-Free School's Movement Administrator Toolkit](#), former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy explains that when people are harmed by a product at a population level, we stop using the product while it is unsafe – even if that product allows for some benefits. Dr. Murthy also says that children who are most vulnerable should not be exposed to harm in order to access benefits. All children need to receive support from trusted caregivers.

Isn't it better to teach kids to use phones responsibly rather than take them away?

- Brain science research and expert psychiatrists say the adolescent brain is not able to manage the addictive pull of cell phones and social media.
- The social media platforms and games that young people spend much time on were deliberately designed to be addictive. Additionally, part of teaching responsible use is creating device-free zones that help students understand that phones are tools to be used at specific times in specific ways, rather than something that is on and used 24/7.
- Caregivers are encouraged to continue educating their kids on cell phone responsibility outside of school hours.

What if the phone is needed for educational purposes?

- The potential risks of using cell phones in the classroom outweigh the benefits. The district provides devices that are fully capable of handling all classwork and assignments. The staff will ensure that students are well-informed about the new process.

Why can't we just eliminate phones during instructional time?

- The social aspect of the school day is just as important as academics. Students need to build meaningful relationships and foster a sense of belonging within their community. By creating a device-free environment, we restore essential opportunities for social development.

7. Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Ohio

A link to their online policy is here: <https://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/domain/8659>