



New Hanover County Schools

Great Expectations. Every School, Every Child.

Cell Phones Can Detract From School Safety & Crisis Preparedness

Cell Phones and other portable electronic devices have become widespread in our society and schools are no different. Of course, with the widespread use of such devices **inappropriate use** has become evident in our schools. Therefore, the **New Hanover County Board of Education** recognize the need to regulate such devices within **Board Policy #8431 and #8410** which covers disciplinary action when these devices are used inappropriately.

The **New Hanover County Board of Education** has not totally eliminated the use of cell phones or other electronic devices because it understands the positive aspects of having such devices. The students are given an opportunity to maintain self control and use their cell phones and devices within the parameters of the school rules.

Therefore, I extend a **safety appeal to students and their parents to help the schools by maintaining restraint in not using cell phones during school emergencies unless given the approval by school administration. We have learned that cell phones and other electronic devices can ignite gas during gas leaks and bombs or other electronic explosive devices during bomb threats on campus if your cell phone or other devices are being used. Here are three other important reasons why students should impose self restriction on the use of cell phones;**

1. Cell phone use by students can hamper rumor control, and in doing so, disrupt and delay effective public safety personnel response.
2. Cell phone use by students can impede public safety response by accelerating parental response to the scene of an emergency during times when officials may be attempting to evacuate students to another site.
3. Cell phone systems typically overload during a real major crisis (as they did during the Columbine tragedy, and other similar events), and usage by a large number of students at once could add to the overload and knock out cell phone systems quicker than may normally occur. Since cell phones may be a backup communications tool for school administrators and crisis teams, widespread student use in a crisis could thus eliminate crisis team emergency communications tools in a very short period of critical time.

Keep in mind that Safety Is Everybody's Business. It is important for students and other visitors to be cooperative and voluntarily restrict the use of their cell phones during emergency or crisis activities unless authorized by the school administration during the event. This practice will help maintain safety within our schools.

The policy regarding the normal use of cell phones and electronic devices is also listed below for your general knowledge. According to **Board Policy #8431** the following regulation shall apply to students with the **use of portable electronic devices**:

- 1. Cellular telephones and other personal communication devices shall not be used by students during class time. These devices shall be turned off and put away while the students are in class.**
- 2. Handheld computers, such as PALM devices, shall not be used in class except under the direction of the teacher. Beaming and text messaging by students while in class with the use of these handheld computers and cellular phones are prohibited.**
- 3. Picture phones and handheld computers with photographic capabilities present many unique challenges. Therefore, students shall not use these devices to send pictures of other students by email or by other electronic means during class. In addition, these devices, if used in academically reprehensible conduct (cheating), will be punished in accordance with Policy 8410.**

If I can answer further questions regarding this matter please don't hesitate to contact the Safety Office at 254-4308 or 254-4275. Thank you and have a great school year.