



# BALDWIN-WHITEHALL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## Baldwin Middle School

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Dear Baldwin Middle School Parents and Guardians,

As we near the start of the new school year, we are notifying parents/guardians of a change in the expectations regarding cell phone use by students, during school hours. Over the past few years, our staff has seen a dramatic increase in the use of mobile devices by students throughout the school day. As we reviewed the 21-22 school year, we identified that the students' usage of cell phones has become a major distraction to the safe and productive learning environment. During the past school year, we experienced a dramatic increase in the number of instances of cyber-bullying and student discipline associated with cell phone usage. This increased cell phone usage has also negatively impacted the educational process, as it has become more difficult for teachers to keep students engaged and focused during their instructional periods.

With the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, Baldwin Middle School is re-introducing a set of cell phone expectations for students. Students are expected to turn off their phones upon entering the building. Throughout the school day, cell phone use will NOT BE permitted in the classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, restrooms, etc, for any reason. Cell phones are expected to be turned off and away at all times in either the student's locker, pocket or purse.

By limiting the amount of time students are on their cell phones, we hope to increase the amount of time students are engaged with their classroom activities and limit the amount of time students spend in the office. We are also hoping to limit the impact of social media in our school and the negative impact it has on our kids.

If you need to contact your child during the school day, the middle school office can be reached at 412-885-7505. You can also email your child on their school gmail account. We are asking that you do not text and/or call your child's cell phone during school hours. We greatly appreciate your cooperation and support.

If a student is found to be using a cell phone, the phone will be confiscated, placed in a labeled envelope, and delivered to the office by the teacher. The consequences will be as follows:

### **1st Offense:**

- Cell phone held in the office until the end of the day.
- Student will sign for their cell phone at the end of the day in the office.
- Parent or guardian notified.

### **2nd Offense:**

- Cell phone held in the office until the end of the day.
- A parent or guardian is notified
- Administration will schedule a check-in / check-out procedure with the student.
- The student will be subject to one (1) day of lunch detention.

### **3rd Offense:**

- Cell phone held in office until parent pick -up.
- A parent or guardian will sign for the cell phone after a meeting with the student and administrator.
- The student will be subject to progressive disciplinary consequences including, but not limited to:
  - Multiple lunch detentions
  - Extended check-in / check-out
  - In-school suspension
  - Social probation

Additional offenses will be considered an act of insubordination and the student will be subjected to progressive disciplinary consequences. A student that refuses to comply with a request to surrender their cell phone by any member of the faculty or staff and/or administrator, will be considered insubordinate. Rules governing insubordination will apply as outlined in the student handbook.

We highly encourage you to talk with your child about these new expectations before the start of the new school year. We will also be addressing this change with students during the first week of school, as well as, updating the Student Handbook. As always, we appreciate your support as we try to provide each and every student with the best educational experience possible.

Best Wishes,



Mr. Scott Ross  
Principal



Mr. Jonathan Peebles  
Assistant Principal

### **Possible Negative Impacts of Cellphone Usage**

**Distractions** - When a student is in school, his or her purpose is to learn. Young people can be easily distracted from their studies - and having easy access to a mobile phone during class can make it easier for them to lose focus. According to a recent study, 64% of students say they have texted in class and 25% have made or taken a call. And it's not just talking to others. That same study noted that 46% of students play games and 23% access social networks on their phone at any time. If they become bored with the class material, it doesn't take much for them to take their cell phone to play some games or to check their news feed on Facebook or Twitter.

**Falling Grades** -. When students look at their phones it usually takes about 5 minutes to focus again on whatever they were doing before. Information is not being stored in their brain so work can't be done.

**Can cause students to get upset** - With the rate of Cyberbullying going up many students will get picked on over social media and continue looking at different things throughout the day and get upset and not be able to concentrate on their work.

**Homework** - If students are constantly on their phones at school; more than likely they are doing the same thing at home. If they're distracted throughout the day and not doing work in school, homework is less likely to get done at home. Grades constantly drop because of students doing school work, but even more because of homework. By banning cell phones during school, students may at least be able to get their work done in school and could reduce homework.

**Disrespect** - When a teacher is talking and teaching a lesson to students, and many are on their phones while few are trying to learn, the students on their phones are distracting the others. Even if the device is muted, if they're playing a game or watching a video on silent, most of the time someone else will catch a glimpse and not be able to stop looking back. This is disrespecting the teacher who is taking time out of their day to teach and help students.

**Social life** - During the middle school years, students' social life becomes increasingly more important. School is a place to teach students how to interact with people in a healthy manner to build relationships and to prepare them for a profession later in life. We need to teach students that social interaction isn't just texting, it's going out and verbally talking to someone. Many times, without a real social life it can also cause depression, it can make someone think they have no friends and no one likes them, but in reality it's because they're always on their phones instead of going out and actually trying to connect with someone.

**Cheating** - According to some studies, 41% of students admit to storing notes on phones to use during tests and 46% of teens admitted to texting friends about answers. The possibilities for cheating and copying are literally limitless when students have access to cell phones in class.

**Theft** - Cell phone theft is a problem in America with 3.1 million cell phones being stolen in 2013, according to Consumer Reports. Now add still developing brains, hormones and social status to the mix, and you can have the perfect combination for stealing if a particular individual brings an especially expensive cell phone to school.

**Illicit Pictures**- Given that nearly every cell phone these days has a built-in camera it becomes too easy to take a picture of someone without the person even noticing. These photos are also easily uploaded and shared over the Internet, social media or texted to friends. All it takes is a simple Google search to see news stories of teenagers expelled or suspended for distributing illicit pictures.

**Cyberbullying** -Data from the Cyberbullying Research in 2016 showed that 33.8% of students have been bullied in their lifetime, 11.9% have been threatened through a cell phone text and 11.1% have had a hurtful image of them posted.

**Additional information can be found <https://shapethesky.org/>**