

550.00 CELLULAR PHONES AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

I. PURPOSE AND VALUES

- A. The purpose of this policy is to minimize the impact of cell phones and personal electronic devices on academic performance, mental health, learning environments, and effective teaching.
 - 1. **ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:** research shows that students who use cell phones in the classroom regularly correlates with lower academic performance. Completing tasks while using cell phones is also associated with lower retention of information.
 - 2. **MENTAL HEALTH:** High cell phone use is linked to increased anxiety, stress, social isolation, and depression.
 - 3. **LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS:** Cell phones in classrooms make it challenging for teachers to maintain a focus on student learning, including increased cheating and reduced classroom participation.
 - 4. **EFFECTIVE TEACHING:** Teachers report more effective instruction and a feeling of empowerment when district policies and procedures limit cell phone use.
 - 5. Reference: MESPA and MASSP (July 2024). [The Cell Phone Toolkit](#).
- B. This policy is grounded in the following values community members have expressed:
 - 1. Clarity, consistency, and enforceability are important.
 - 2. Student safety is paramount.
 - 3. Two-way communication with the school and a way to reach their student(s) must be clearly available to parents/guardians.
 - 4. Students should not be excluded from learning as a result of personal electronic device use.
 - 5. Students should be empowered to learn to responsibly manage personal electronic devices.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Personal electronic devices include, but are not limited to, cellular telephones, tablets, laptops, ~~headphones, earbuds~~, bluetooth and wired devices (e.g. earbuds) connected to personal electronic devices, pagers, walkie-talkies, electronic mail devices, MP3 players, smart watch features beyond time/date, and personal gaming systems.
- B. Use of personal electronic devices is defined as, but not limited to, texting, calling, browsing the internet, using social media, taking photos or videos, or using apps.

III. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. Personal electronic devices are not allowed during school hours. They should remain at home or locked in lockers. If students choose to carry their personal electronic devices, they must be completely turned off and out of sight.
 - 1. Schools with grades 9 and above (e.g. 6-12, 9-12, 12+) can develop a documented plan with a team of school stakeholders (e.g. principal, staff, students, and/or parents) to allow personal electronic device use before and after school, between class periods, and/or during lunch. Personal electronic devices are not allowed during class periods, in bathrooms, and in locker rooms.
- B. In schools providing special education transition services, students can use cellular phones to support independent travel and communication with employers, school staff, and families during instructional times per their IEP and school and workplace personal electronic device guidelines.

- C. Saint Paul Public Schools assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, or damage of a personal electronic device brought to school and will not assume responsibility for investigating loss or theft of such items.
- D. Students who misuse personal electronic devices will be held to the expectations of the behavior violations and level responsibilities outlined in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, including the possibility of losing the privilege of bringing a cell phone or other personal electronic device to school. Consequences for violations of this policy:
 - 1. Cannot be exclusionary.
 - 2. Should be tiered.
 - 3. Should be consistently applied.
- E. Students are prohibited from using a cell phone or other personal electronic device to engage in conduct prohibited by school district policies including, but not limited to, cheating, bullying, harassment, and malicious and sadistic content. If the district has a reasonable suspicion that a student has violated a district policy, rule, or law by use of a cell phone or other electronic communication device, the district may search the device. The search of the device will be reasonably related in scope to the circumstances justifying the search.
- F. Parents/guardians are asked to limit calling/texting their children during the school day as that can be disruptive. Students and families should review their individual school's cell phone and personal device expectations and communications processes.
- G. School staff are expected to adhere to the intent and underlying principles of personal electronic device expectations, with reasonable exceptions to address their personal needs and responsibilities.
- H. Exceptions:
 - 1. Students who must use a personal electronic device to monitor a medical condition may have their personal electronic device with them at all times, but must adhere to all other expectations of this policy. School-issued devices may be used for management of medical conditions, when possible. These accommodations require prior approval and will be written into the student's health plan, if applicable.
 - 2. Students who must use a personal electronic device as indicated on their Individualized Education Program (IEP) may have their personal electronic device with them at all times identified on their IEP, but must adhere to all other expectations of this policy. School-issued devices must be used for IEPs whenever possible. These accommodations must be written in the student's IEP and communicated to school administration.
 - 3. Students **who are parents** or acting in the capacity of a volunteer firefighter or Emergency Medical Service (EMS) worker may have their personal electronic device with them at all times, but must adhere to all other expectations of this policy.
 - 4. During emergency situations, use of personal electronic devices must follow the School Emergency Operations Plan.

IV. NOTICE OF POLICY

- A. Notice of this policy and penalties for violating it shall be published annually in the District's Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.
- B. Schools must communicate their practices, including methods of communicating between students and families, annually to staff, students, and families.

V. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

- A. Implementation of this policy begins September 2, 2025.

LEGAL REFERENCES:

Minn. Stat. § 121A.73 School Cell Phone Policy

CROSS REFERENCES TO DISTRICT POLICIES:

506.06 Search of Student Lockers, Desks, Personal Possessions, and Student's Person
520.00 Technology Usage & Safety
812.00 School Emergency Management