

STUDENT USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES

To support school environments in which students can fully engage with their classmates and their teachers, and to focus attention upon classroom instruction, the Chester Board of Education has determined that the use of cell phones and other wireless communication devices by students during school hours should be limited.

The objective of this policy is to strengthen the Chester Public School District's focus on student wellness, in alignment with our mission to ignite students' passion for learning, cultivate a strong foundation of knowledge, support classroom attention upon the delivery of instruction, enhance engagement with teaching staff, and foster a sense of community within our schools.

I. Research

Research shows that student use of wireless communication devices in schools, particularly cell phones, has negative effects on academic performance, focus, and mental health. These devices distract students from classroom instruction, resulting in unnecessary challenges, smaller learning gains, and suboptimal test scores. Increased use of such devices contributes to higher levels of depression, anxiety, and other mental health disorders in students.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to the use of wireless communication devices by students while on school property during school hours. As used in this policy, "wireless communication devices" includes cell phones and other devices that transmit and receive voice or data via electromagnetic signals without the use of wires or cables, including but not limited to ancillary devices such as smart watches, ear buds, and wireless headphones.

III. Use of Wireless Communication Devices

Students are prohibited from using wireless communication devices during instructional periods, in between class periods, and while on District school buses. Students are prohibited from taking pictures and recording audio or video at all times.

Students may use wireless communication devices during co-curricular activities (unless otherwise prohibited by the School Principal or co-curricular Supervisor).

Teachers are prohibited from utilizing or directing use of students' wireless communication devices as a teaching aid or a resource for reference material.

IV. Exception

Nothing in this policy shall prohibit a student from using a wireless communication device for a purpose documented in a classified student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a plan developed under section 504 of the "Rehabilitation Act of 1973," 29 U.S.C. 794. A student may use a wireless communication device to monitor or address a health condition, which shall be with prior permission of the School Nurse and documented in the student's Individual Health Plan.

V. Cell Phone Storage

A. Bragg and Dickerson Elementary School Students

Wireless communication devices shall be turned off and/or silenced when entering school campus and shall be kept in a student's backpack (or other permitted school bag) placed in a teacher-designated storage location in the student's classroom for the duration of the school day.

B. Black River Middle School Students

Wireless communication devices shall be turned off and/or silenced when entering school campus and shall be kept in a student's locker for the duration of the school day.

VI. Smart Watch Usage

- A. All students may wear smart watches at all times, but shall refrain from using the devices for any purpose other than timekeeping during instructional periods. All smartwatches must remain in School Mode, or similar, during instructional hours.

VII. Discipline

- A. Discipline for violation of this policy shall be governed by the Student Code of Conduct.
- B. Teachers and staff shall not gain or attempt to gain possession of any student owned wireless communication devices. In the event that a student is found to be improperly in possession and/or utilizing a personal wireless communication device, that student shall be directed to place the phone in a designated area and the staff member shall immediately contact the school administrator who will secure the device in the administrative office until the completion of the school day.

Adopted: June 9, 2025
NJSBA Review/Update: