

Frequently Asked Questions Electronic Communications Policy

Why is Fulton County Schools updating this policy?

Fulton County Schools (FCS) is updating its electronic communications policy in response to Georgia's new Distraction-Free Education Act (House Bill 340) and growing concerns about how personal devices affect students' learning, attention, and well-being.

How is a personal electronic device defined?

A personal portable electronic device is defined as anything capable of transmitting, receiving, or accessing communications, data, or media, including but not limited to personal laptops, smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, smart glasses, e-readers, headphones, and other devices with functionalities such as wireless communication, internet access, messaging, video recording, gaming, social media access, or data transmission.

What is the rule for elementary students?

Kindergarten – 5th grade students are prohibited from accessing personal electronic devices during the school day.

What is the rule for middle school students?

6th – 8th grade students are prohibited from accessing personal electronic devices during the school day.

What is the rule for high school students?

9th – 12th grade students are prohibited from accessing personal electronic devices during instructional time.

What is the difference between school day and instructional time?

The "school day" includes everything from when the students come to school to when they leave. This includes arrival, dismissal, classroom instructional time, lunch, recess, and transitions.

"Instructional time" refers to when students actively participate in learning, such as classroom lessons, group work, independent assignments, and assessments. It does not include lunch, recess, or hallway transitions.

Can students use an electronic device on the bus?

Students should not use personal electronic devices while riding the school bus. Misuse may lead to consequences under the FCS Student Code of Conduct.

How can I reach my student during the day?

Please reach out to your school for details on this process. Keep in mind that receiving messages during class can distract students and may cause stress or confusion.

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How can my student reach me during the school day?

If your student or school needs to contact you during the day, they can go to the front office, and school staff will assist them. Tip: Save your school's phone number in your contacts so you don't miss a call from your student.

What if there is a lockdown or emergency?

In the event of a lockdown or other emergency, the school will notify families through official communication channels such as phone, text, or email. During emergencies, it is critical for students to focus on the directions of teachers and staff. Research shows that phone use during crises can create more safety risks by spreading misinformation or interrupting emergency responses.

What if my child uses a device as part of their IEP or 504 Plan?

Students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan that requires the use of a device will be allowed to use their device as needed for educational or medical purposes in accordance with their plan. Please reach out to your school if you have questions regarding your child's IEP or 504 plan.

What if my child needs to make after-school plans or contact a sibling?

We encourage students to make after-school plans outside of the school day.

Will my student miss out on technology-based learning without a personal device?

No. Fulton County Schools provides access to school-issued technology and digital learning tools. Students will still benefit from technology in the classroom but without the added distractions of their personal devices.

What if my child forgets and uses their phone?

We understand that adjusting to new rules takes time. If a student uses their phone when it's not allowed, staff will remind them of the expectations and take appropriate steps in accordance with the FCS Code of Conduct. The goal is to support students in learning responsible habits. If a student uses a personal electronic device when they should not, it may result in disciplinary action.