



## Personal Electronic Communications Guidelines

To promote the best possible learning and social environment in Belton ISD's classrooms and schools, students will adhere to the guidelines listed below during the school day on school property. The cell phone guidelines limit access and use of personal electronic communication devices to avoid distractions from learning and the loss of instructional time.

Multiple studies have documented the harmful effects of cell phone and social media use on student well-being and academic progress. As a result, Texas law requires public schools to prohibit the use of personal communication devices during the school day on school property. This policy is adopted to implement this requirement and improve the quality of the learning environment in our schools.

Personal communication device is defined in Texas Education Code Section 37.082(d). It also includes any wearable technology that is capable of digital communication or telecommunication, like glasses. Under the Personal Electronic Communications Guidelines, all Cell Phones, Smart Watches, AirPods, Headphones, and other personal devices used to communicate electronically are considered personal electronic communications devices.

### Guidelines

**Grades PK-12:** Students are required to store their personal electronic communication devices, turned off and put away during the school day while on school property. *The **school day** begins when the students arrive at the campus and ends when they are dismissed at the end of the day.* Students who violate these guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action.

When the school day begins, each student shall power off all personal communication devices and ensure their personal communication device(s) remains unused by securing the device(s) in the student's backpack for the entirety of the school day; students should not hold/have a device in their hands at any time during the school day; students found physically accessing the device, either in the open or by attempting to access within a backpack, are in violation of the policy.

At the conclusion of the school day, subject to any other limitations contained in this policy, each student may begin using their personal communication devices.

PK – 12 Area of Directed Use	Appropriate Use
Arrival / Dismissal	No
In Classroom	No
During Transition	No
In the Cafeteria	No
In Restrooms	No
At Recess	No
Buses	Yes

## Statement of Expectations

- The expectations will be clearly posted in common areas and the syllabus. Students will be taught and reminded of the expectations.
- Verbal and visual reminders will be given.
- Students will have all personal electronic communication devices put away as stated in the use guidelines.
- Campus administrators, teachers, and staff will consistently communicate and strictly enforce the policy of a cell phone-free environment throughout the academic year.
- Campus administrators will also monitor violations and assign appropriate consequences as applicable. Referrals will be addressed within a reasonable timeframe.
- Students will **never** use their phones/devices in restrooms or locker rooms at any time.
- Two-Factor Authentication should be done through the email option, not the cellphone.

## Definitions

- **School property:** means anywhere on a school’s campus or in a district facility where instruction is provided, including but not limited to: classrooms, hallways, gyms, cafeterias, band halls and all other extracurricular spaces; outdoor fields, tracks, and other athletic areas; all breezeways, courtyards, and playgrounds. Excludes off-site education locations where the facility is subject to rules outside the control of the school district. This includes off-site dual credit college course attendance. While at an off-site educational location, students must follow any communication device requirements in place at that location.
- **School day:** *The school day begins when the students arrive at the campus and ends when they are dismissed at the end of the day.* Before- or after-school activity for a school-sponsored extracurricular activity is not part of the school day.
- **Put away:** Personal electronic communication devices should not be visible to the student or others. This typically means inside a backpack stored away from the student to limit illegal use.
- **Off:** The personal electronic communication devices should be turned off to prevent any disruptions from notifications, calls, or alarms.
- **Use:** is defined as a device in possession of a student that is turned on and capable of receiving or sending a communication signal.

- **Possession:** is defined as being on the person of the student, directly held, in pockets, in a backpack, in a pouch, or otherwise accessible and under the control of the student directly.

## **Student Safety and Emergencies**

Campus principals are authorized to use discretion in permitting student use of personal communication devices during emergency situations. Any use permitted under this exception must be reported to the board during the next regularly scheduled school board meeting. In case of a family emergency, parent(s) can call the front office for assistance.

## **Exceptions to Guidelines of Use for Personal Electronic Communication Devices**

- A student who has a documented need to use a personal communication device in an individualized education program (IEP), Section 504 accommodation plan, individualized health plan, or other similar program or plan.
- A student has a documented need to use a personal communication device based on a directive from a qualified physician; a directive must be submitted to the campus principal. A qualified physician for purposes of this policy shall mean a physician licensed to practice in Texas. The directive must state the conditions under which the student would need to access and use their personal communication device during the school day on school property. The parent may be asked to sign consent for school staff to contact the physician should the school need more information in order to comply with the directive. Use authorized under this provision should be conducted in a manner that minimizes disruption to instruction and the school environment, and may be subject to reasonable limitations on time, place, and manner as determined by the principal or designee. Authorization under this provision can be revoked if the device is being used in a way that is found to disrupt the learning environment.
- If the superintendent determines that a legally required health or safety requirement would authorize or require the use of a personal communication device, the superintendent shall notify all appropriate staff of the circumstances by which this would be authorized or required. The school board must vote to approve any use under this exception.

Any student who is provided an exception in accordance with the above remains subject to disciplinary measures if the student uses a personal communication device outside the scope of the documented authorized use.

# Consequences

## Violations of the Personal Electronic Communications Device Guidelines

### Elementary Students

Offense	Consequence
1st Offense	Teacher reminder. Parent Contact. The school shall issue a written warning to both the student and the parent or guardian about further consequences for failing to comply with this policy.
2nd Offense	Student referred to Admin. Lunch detention for 1 day. Parent contact.
3rd Offense	Student referred to Admin. Lunch Detention for 3 days. The student will surrender their phone to the Admin office/designated location for 3 days. Parent contact.
4th Offense	Student referred to Admin. The student will surrender their phone to the Admin office/designated location for 5 days. Parent contact.
5th Offense	Student will no longer be allowed to bring their personal electronic communication devices to school for the remainder of the school year.

\*\*\*The progressive consequences for discipline start new each school year.

### Secondary Students

Offense	Consequence
1st Offense	Teacher reminder. Parent Contact. The school shall issue a written warning to both the student and the parent or guardian about further consequences for failing to comply with this policy.
2nd Offense	Student referred to Admin. Lunch detention for 1 day. Parent contact.
3rd Offense	Student referred to Admin. The student will surrender their phone to their Admin office/designated location for 3 days. 3 days lunch detention. Parent contact.
4th Offense	Student referred to Admin. The student will surrender their phone to their Admin office/designated location for 5 days. 1 day ISS. Parent contact.
5th Offense	Student referred to Admin. The student will surrender their phone to their Admin office/designated location for 10 days. 2 days ISS. Parent contact.
Subsequent Offenses	Student will no longer be allowed to bring their personal electronic communication devices to school for the remainder of the school year. Failure to adhere could result in a DAEP Placement.

\*\*\*The progressive consequences for discipline start new each school year.

## **Additional Disciplinary Considerations for the Use of Personal Electronic Communication Devices**

Students who refuse to put their personal electronic communication devices away or surrender them upon request will be held to consequences for **Disregard for Authority**, as defined by the Student Code of Conduct, for failure to comply with directives given by school personnel. (p.9)

Students will receive additional disciplinary consequences for violating the personal electronic communication guidelines for any offense categorized as disregard for authority.

### **Definition of Surrender of Phone to Assistant Principal**

When required, students will report to the designated location before the beginning of school and surrender their phone to the AP or designee. The phone will be locked away and can be picked up at or after the dismissal bell rings at the conclusion of the school day. If the referral for the violation comes in at the end of the day, the surrender may not begin until the subsequent day that the AP has had an opportunity to notify parents and give instructions to the student.

If a personal communication device is in the possession of the school, the school will take appropriate efforts to keep the device appropriately stored and free from damage. However, parents should note that the school specifically disclaims any liability for devices that are damaged or lost while in the school's possession. Parents will not be compensated for devices that have been in the school's possession in the event those devices are lost or damaged while in possession of the school.

### **District Alternative Education Program**

Students are not allowed access to personal electronic communication devices anytime during the school day while attending DAEP, including the bus ride to and from the campus. Personal electronic communication devices are turned in to campus staff upon arrival, and students are given their phones back at dismissal.