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Dear Parents/Guardians,

You are receiving this letter to inform you about our school's student cell phone/personal device rules and guidelines. Cell phones and personal digital devices are NOT required resources for students at school. However, we recognize that the prevalence of cell phones among students has increased significantly in recent years. In the school environment, cell phones can be a distraction, an interruption, and occasionally, a tool for exchanging inappropriate information.

### **AWAY FOR THE DAY!**

Starting the first day of school from the first class bell to the last class bell, cell phones or other electronic devices including smart watches, and earbuds/air pods should be turned off and put away.

We believe this new guideline will create a more positive learning environment and allow our students to be more engaged in classroom activities, and, conversely, less likely to be distracted by non-school activities. It will allow teachers to focus on lessons, instead of cell phone distractions in the classrooms. As more research on the impacts of cell phone use on adolescents is being published, we understand that it can lead to increased mental health issues in adolescents. As protecting and supporting the mental health of our students is a priority, we believe that eliminating cell phone use during school will assist us in these endeavors.

### **WHY do we require cell phones to be off and put away during school?**

- **Relationships** In order to be connected to learning in the classrooms students must be connected to one another and to the instructional staff. Significant research and experience have determined that student access to cell phones distracts from the learning environment and creates a significant barrier to the interactions and connections crucial to rich, relationship-based learning.
- **Focus** Students learn best when they are "present" and engaged in the learning activities and interactions from moment to moment. Research has determined that not only cell phone use but also the proximity of cell phone availability and access for students during class is a distraction from learning.
- **Safety** It is acknowledged that families may choose to have students carry cell phones for a variety of reasons related to safety, however, cell phones as vehicles for social media access and use have proven detrimental to our school community.

### **HOW do students manage phones?**

- Cell phones are required to be off and put away in backpacks/lockers during the school day. Phones are never allowed in bathrooms or locker rooms.
- Students who have a medical or other emergency reason for accessing their phone during the day should discuss an exception with an administrator.
- If parents need to reach their child during the school day, please call the main office. We will ensure students receive messages in a timely manner. For all other non-emergency messages, students may check their phones after school as they leave the building.



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**IF a student does not meet this expectation, what happens?**

- On the first offense, a student will be referred to the office and will pick up their cell phone at the end of the day. Expectations around cell phone use at school will be reinforced in partnership with the parent/guardian.
- If there is a second or third offense, the student's parent/guardian will be required to pick up the cell phone from the office.
- If there is a fourth offense, a plan will be made in partnership between the school and the family to either store the cell phone in the office each day or to leave it at home.

Please review this letter with your student prior to the start of school. Thank you for your continued support in ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment for your child. If you have any questions regarding our cell phone guidelines, please do not hesitate to contact the school directly.

Sincerely,

Cologne Academy