

Mathis ISD Cell Phone/Personal Devices Policy

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.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

- “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, playgrounds, and other outdoor areas, specifically including all school parking lots.
 - “school property” also includes off-site education locations, such as off-site dual credit college course attendance and field trips.
- “school day” means the time of day beginning with arrival on campus and ending with the last bell of the day.
 - Before- or after-school activity for a school-sponsored extracurricular activity is not part of the school day.
- “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 a backpack, or otherwise accessible and under the control of the student directly.
- “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.

Possession of Personal Communication Device

All PK-12 students shall be allowed to possess a personal communication device during the school day on school property, subject to the limitations below.

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 or pockets 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.

Disciplinary Measures for Violations

Each school must designate an appropriately secured location in the school (e.g., a portion of the main office) where confiscated student personal communication devices shall be kept, and a process to ensure the school can identify which student is the owner of each device that is kept.

All district administrators and school-based staff members are authorized to confiscate a personal communication device used in violation of this policy. If a staff member confiscates a student device, the staff member should bring the device to the designated storage location when convenient during the day, and the staff member remains responsible for the device until then.

A student who violates this policy is subject to the following disciplinary measures, subject to and in accordance with the district's Student Code of Conduct (SCOC), including any progressive sanctions for ongoing violations:

First Offense

- The device shall be confiscated and stored in the main office for the remainder of the school day; the student's parent or guardian will be notified.
- 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.
- Only the student's parent or guardian is permitted to pick up confiscated devices.

Second Offense

- The device shall be confiscated and stored in the main office for the remainder of the school day; the student's parent or guardian will be notified.
- Only the parent or guardian is permitted to pick up confiscated devices.
- The student will be assigned one day of in-school suspension (ISS).

Third Offense (and higher)

- The device shall be confiscated and stored in the main office until the conditions for retrieval after a third offense (or higher) are met; the student's parent or guardian will be notified of the requirement for an in-person meeting.
- The parent or guardian will be permitted to retrieve confiscated devices only after an in-person meeting with the principal or designee, student, and parent or guardian in attendance.
- The student will be assigned 2-3 days of in-school suspension (ISS).
- The school may impose additional consequences as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct for continued refusal to follow the rules.

If a personal communication device is not retrieved by a parent or guardian within two weeks of the

school sending notice, the school shall send a second notice that specifies that the school will dispose of the device if not retrieved within 90 days of the second notice. The school may dispose of the device if not retrieved within 90 days of sending a second notice to the student's parent or guardian.

Exceptions to the Prohibition of Use of a Personal Communication Device

Each principal must maintain a list of students for whom an exception applies and any limitations/situations to which the exception applies. Principals must ensure that all appropriate staff are made aware of each student's authorized exception to use personal communication devices.

The following exceptions apply to this policy:

- 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 limitation on time, place and manner as determined by 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.
- Campus principals are authorized to use discretion in permitting student use of personal communication devices in emergency circumstances. Any use permitted under this exception must be reported to the board during the next regularly scheduled school board meeting.

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.

School Liability when a Device is in the School's Possession

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 ***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.