

## **USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES**

*Policy Code:* **4318.OPTB**

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The board recognizes that cellular phones and other wireless communication devices are an important tool through which parents communicate with their children and through which students gather information. The board also recognizes that excessive use of wireless communication devices may pose significant health and social risks for students and negatively affect the educational environment. In order to strengthen the school system's focus on learning, promote the well-being of our students, and foster a sense of community within our schools, students are prohibited from having wireless communication devices turned on or possessing such devices during the school day unless otherwise permitted under this policy. Principals may establish additional limitations on the use, possession, or display of wireless communication devices consistent with this policy.

### **A. DEFINITIONS**

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply.

1. The "school day" runs from the beginning of the first class period of the day to the end of the last class period of the day.
2. A "wireless communication device" is any portable wireless device that has the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, including but not limited to cellular telephones, tablet and laptop computers, paging devices, two-way radios, and gaming devices.

### **B. STORAGE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES**

Except when students are authorized to use and possess wireless communication devices pursuant to Section C of this policy, students will store their wireless communication devices during the school day in accordance with a storage plan developed by the principal. If the school does not provide storage for wireless communication devices, the principal shall require that such devices be turned off and stored in the student's locker or bag for the duration of the school day.

### **C. AUTHORIZED USE**

Individual students may use wireless communication devices as required by the student's Individualized Education Program or Section 504 plan or to manage the student's health care in accordance with a documented medical condition. In addition, teachers may authorize individual students to use the devices in the event of an emergency and may authorize the use of school system-issued or approved devices for instructional purposes, provided that they supervise the students during such use.

Although use generally is permitted before and after school, use of wireless communication

devices may be prohibited on school buses when noise from such devices interferes with the safe operation of the buses. In addition, elementary and middle school students who participate in after-school programs are prohibited from using wireless communication devices during such programs.

#### **D. CONSEQUENCES**

School employees may immediately confiscate any wireless communication devices that are on, used, displayed, or possessed in violation of this policy. In general, the confiscated device will be returned to the student at the end of the school day. However, an administrator may require a student's parent to recover a confiscated device if the student has repeatedly violated this policy.

The disciplinary consequences for violations of this policy shall be consistent with Section D of policy 4300, Student Behavior Policies. The superintendent or designee shall list in the Code of Student Conduct the specific range of consequences that may be imposed on a student for violations of this policy.

The following factors should be considered when determining appropriate consequences: whether the wireless communication device was used (1) to reproduce images of tests, obtain unauthorized access to school information or assist students in any aspect of their instructional program in a manner that violates any school board policy, administrative regulation, or school rule; (2) to bully or harass other students; (3) to send illicit text messages; (4) to take and/or send illicit photographs; or (5) in any other manner that would make more severe disciplinary consequences appropriate.

#### **E. SEARCH OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES**

In accordance with policy 4342, Student Searches, a student's wireless communication device and its contents, including but not limited to text messages and digital photos, may be searched whenever a school official has reason to believe the search will provide evidence that the student has violated or is violating a law, board policy, the Code of Student Conduct, or a school rule. The scope of such searches must be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the nature of the suspected infraction.

#### **F. LIABILITY**

Students are personally and solely responsible for the security of their wireless communication devices. The school system is not responsible for the theft, loss, or damage of a personal wireless communication device.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-36, -76.100, -390.2

Cross References: Student Behavior Policies (policy 4300), Disruptive Behavior (policy 4315), Student Searches (policy 4342)

Other Resources: *Best Practices Guide for North Carolina Public Schools Units Establishing Personal Communication Devices Policies*, Advisory Council for Student Safety and Well-Being, Office of Governor Josh Stein (June 3, 2025), available at <https://www.ncdps.gov/best-practices-guide-north-carolina-public-schools-units-establishing-personal-communication-devices>; *Phone-Free Schools Administrator Toolkit*, Phone-Free Schools Movement, available at <https://www.ncsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/V2-PFSM-Toolkit-Final.pdf>

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