

Use of Cell Phones and Portable Communication Devices

The North Middlesex Regional School Committee recognizes that today's society differs from previous generations. Cell phones and portable communication devices (PCDs) play an important part in employee and student safety and communications. Cell Phones and PCDs are defined as current and emerging technologies that are wireless units that send and/or receive electronic communications in an analog or digital data transmission. The use and possession of cell phones and other electronic devices at school or on school property are privileges, not rights. Therefore, students who bring cell phones and/or electronic devices to school or onto school property, including buses, agree to the following policy. *NMRSD is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged devices.*

I. Employees

1. School District employees are granted permission to possess and use cell phones and PCDs in their official job capacity consistent with their job descriptions.
2. Employees' use of a personal cell phone and/or PCD must ensure that the device does not ring or interrupt the academic classroom environment or the employee's job performance. Employees must take proactive steps to ensure that their cell phones do not ring during instructional or business hours.

II. Students

1. K-4 students are not allowed to possess electronic devices (including smart watches).
2. In grades 5-12, students may use their cell phones and PCDs before and/or after school.
3. In grades 5-8, students may possess cell phones and PCDs; however, these devices must be turned off and put away during the academic school day to prevent disruptions and interference with the school's instructional academic climate. This policy covers text messages and photo transmissions.
4. The "academic school day" is defined as the period from when students enter the building to final dismissal. Additionally, school meetings, activities, events, and trips are considered extensions of the school day, and therefore, the staff may restrict cell phone use.

5. At its sole discretion, the school administration may grant exceptions for cell phone and PCD use for critical needs and with appropriate documentation.
6. Cell phones and other electronic devices are not permitted in the classroom unless administrator approval has been granted and the devices are used for educational purposes closely aligned with the course content. Video gaming applications and social networking sites not connected to the course content are prohibited.
7. For safety reasons, students are not to use headphones during school hours unless they have explicit permission from a classroom teacher or school administrator.
8. Students who violate this policy may face disciplinary action by the administration. Cell phones and other electronic devices confiscated for unauthorized use must be picked up at the end of the academic day. The student may also be subject to additional disciplinary action. The device must be picked up by a caregiver at the school office during regular school hours on the second offense and all subsequent offenses. The student may again be subject to additional disciplinary action. The School District will not be liable for any property not picked up by parents within 48 hours. Multiple violations of the policy may result in further disciplinary action consistent with the CODE OF CONDUCT, including the loss of the privilege to possess cell phones and electronic devices at school.
9. The use of PCDs to take pictures is not permitted on school property without the administration's express consent. No photographs, pictures, or electronic images may be taken or transmitted without the expressed consent of the individuals whose photo, picture, or electronic image is taken.

In grades 9-12, the use of cell phones and electronic devices will be permitted during lunch times and hallway passing times (except headphones and earbuds), so long as it does not violate existing school policies in the handbook, including, but not limited to:

1. Bullying, intimidating, and harassing behavior via texting and social networking sites;
2. Academic integrity-sharing of assessment or assignment information;
3. Safety protocols (i.e., fire drill procedures);
4. Any act that may interfere with the learning opportunities of other students within the operation of the school; and

5. Unauthorized audio/videotaping or photographing of any individual without the express consent of the school administration.

6. Headphones/ earbuds are only allowed before and after school.

At its sole discretion, the school administration may grant exceptions for cell phones and PCD use based on critical needs and appropriate documentation.

Staff members are obligated to call home as the first step in addressing a violation of this policy. All subsequent offenses will be reported to the main office. Staff members must also report violations pursuant to the Bullying Policy herein. See Cyberbullying.

Administration has the right to confiscate any and all electronic devices (including smart watches) if they become disruptive to the learning environment. In addition, in grades 5-12, teachers/middle school teams may collect cell phones and PCDs at the start of class or the start of the academic day. This will be at the discretion of individual teachers or middle school teaching teams.

Adopted by the NMRSD School Committee:

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