

# Policy JICJ Possession/Use of Electronic Communication Devices in School

Issued 10/24

The purpose of this policy is to create a phone-free school environment that fosters a positive learning experience free from electronic distractions. By prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day, this policy aims to provide an environment that enhances focus and engagement, allowing students to develop the college and career-ready skills outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Students will have more opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions, collaborate with peers, and cultivate the essential skills necessary for success in college, careers, and life.

This policy has been developed in compliance with the General Appropriations Bill, H. 5100 of 2024, Proviso 1.103, and is applicable to grades prekindergarten through twelve.

**Proviso 1.103** (SDE: Anti-Bullying/School Safety) To receive state funds allocated for State Aid to Classrooms, a school district shall implement a policy adopted by the State Board of Education that prohibits access to personal electronic communication devices by students during the school day. For purposes of this provision, a personal electronic communication device is considered to be a device not authorized for classroom use by a student, utilized to access the Internet, wi-fi, or cellular telephone signals.

The board believes electronic communication devices may be useful tools for students in the educational environment and can play a vital communication role during emergency situations. However, the use of electronic communication devices in school situations must be regulated to ensure that the use of such devices does not disrupt or interfere with the educational process or school operations.

For purposes of this policy, *electronic communication devices* are defined as any telecommunications device (including, but not limited to, wearable technology, such as smartwatches that have the capability to interact with wireless technology; cell phones; laptops; tablets; mp3 players; and other current and future similarly utilized devices) that emits an audible signal; vibrates; displays a message; records; live streams; or otherwise summons or delivers a communication to the possessor.

The district is not responsible for the loss, theft, or destruction of electronic communication devices brought onto school or district property or in a student's possession while he/she is attending district or school-sponsored activities or events.

Students are responsible for conducting themselves in a manner that respects the rights of others. Misuse of any electronic communication device, whether district or student-owned, that interferes with a positive, orderly classroom environment or does not respect the rights of others is expressly forbidden.

Electronic devices may not be used in locker rooms, bathrooms, or other locations where the presence of such devices poses an unreasonable risk to the safety, welfare, or privacy of others as determined by the building principal. If the building principal believes a student's possession or use of an electronic communication device may involve a violation of the law, the principal may also refer the matter to law enforcement.

## I. Definitions:

A. "Personal electronic device," hereinafter referred to as "device," means any device utilized

to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture images or video. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, smart watches, tablets, and gaming devices.

- B. "Personal Electronic Device accessories," hereinafter referred to as "device accessories," include any wired or wireless accessory or wearable technology that connects to a device and any other accessory commonly used in conjunction with a personal electronic device.
- C. "School day" is defined as the period of time that a student is present on the school campus from their arrival (*i.e.*, tardy bell) until afternoon dismissal at the end of the instructional day. This policy may also apply to field trips. The applicability of this regulation to these activities will be determined by the principal or his/her designee.
- D. "Access" is defined as viewing, holding, wearing, or otherwise using a device for the purpose of communication, internet access, gaming, recording, or any other function commonly associated with devices. During the school day, devices should be powered off and stored as directed by the school district. Exceptions granted for medical necessity, authorized for classroom use, or other authorized reasons should be in writing by a physician and are not considered violations of this definition.
- E. "Authorized for Classroom Use" is defined as the use of a personal electronic device that is explicitly approved by the District Superintendent or his/her designee in writing. The approval must include alignment with a standards-aligned educational objective that cannot be reasonably achieved using district-owned devices. Students must be provided with clear instructions on the appropriate use of devices and ensure that their use aligns with the approved educational objectives. The District Superintendent or his/her designee may revoke approval at any time if it is determined that their use does not meet the intended educational objectives or is causing disruptions.

## **II. Policy Implementation and Enforcement**

- A. During the school day, students are prohibited from accessing their personal electronic devices, unless authorized for classroom use. Students may not wear or access device accessories during the school day. Students must store their devices and device accessories in backpacks during the school day. The District may forbid student possession of devices and device accessories on school property.
- B. If explicitly required by a student's IEP, Medical Plan, or 504 plan, the student shall be allowed to access their personal electronic device for medically or educationally necessary purposes described and required for administration of the IEP, Medical Plan or 504 plan.
- C. A student who is a member of a volunteer firefighting organization or emergency organization may be authorized to carry a device with written permission from the District Superintendent, his/her designee, or verification from their commanding officer.
- D. If a student violates the preceding rules during the school day, the student will be subject to progressive consequences in the student code of conduct and disciplinary enforcement procedures; therefore, administrative actions will adhere to Behavior Code 390 - Unauthorized Use of Electronic Devices.

Students may not use electronic devices to:

- Engage in, promote, or facilitate any conduct that otherwise violates board policy, school rules, and/or the Code of Conduct
- Disrupt the educational environment or school-sponsored extracurricular activities or events
- Impair or interfere with the district or school operations
- Photograph or record the activities of other students, staff members, volunteers, visitors, or any other individual on district property without the express permission of a district staff member

The principal or his/her designee may grant a student permission to use such a device at his/her discretion.

Use of an electronic communication device is permitted to the extent it is approved in a student's individualized education program (IEP); is utilized in conjunction with membership in a voluntary firefighting or emergency medical service organization; or is needed in an emergency that threatens the safety of students, staff, or other individuals.

In exchange for the privilege of bringing electronic communication devices into the educational environment, each student and his/her parent/legal guardian agrees to voluntarily forfeit the electronic communication device until it is picked up by a parent/legal guardian if the student is found to be in violation of this policy. The student is also subject to discipline in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Cf. JICDA

Adopted 5/23/11; Revised 9/22/14, 8/10/15, 10/30/24

Legal References:

S.C. Code of Laws, 1976, as amended:

[Section 59-63-280](#) - Requires board to adopt a policy on student use of electronic devices.

**Sumter School District**

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