



Board Policy 5131.8 - Mobile Communication Devices

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Parents, Students, and the Community

The Orange Unified School District Board of Education adopted Board Policy 5131.8 to support student learning, engagement, well-being, and school safety while providing clear expectations for the use of smartphones and other mobile communication devices on campus. The policy establishes age-appropriate guidelines for students in elementary, middle, and high school.

1. Why did Orange USD adopt a Mobile Communication Devices Policy?

The policy was adopted to help maximize instructional time, reduce distractions, promote student engagement, support student well-being, and create positive learning environments. Research has shown that excessive device use can negatively impact academic focus, mental health, and social interactions.

2. What devices are covered by this policy?

The policy applies to smartphones and other mobile communication devices, including:

- Cell phones
- Tablets
- Smartwatches
- Wireless earbuds and headphones
- Smart glasses
- Other portable wireless communication devices

3. Does the policy prohibit students from bringing phones to school?

No. Students may bring mobile communication devices to school. However, use of the devices is subject to the requirements outlined in Board Policy 5131.8.

4. Can elementary school students use their phones during the school day?

No. Elementary students may not use smartphones or other mobile communication devices during the instructional day. Devices must be turned off and kept out of sight throughout the school day.



5. How can an elementary student contact a parent during the school day?

Students who need to contact a parent or guardian during the school day may use the school administrative office.

6. Can middle school students use their phones during the school day?

No. Middle school students may not use smartphones or other mobile communication devices during the instructional day. Devices must be turned off and remain out of sight throughout the school day.

7. How can middle school students contact their parents?

Students who need to contact a parent or guardian during the school day may use the school administrative office.

8. Can high school students use their phones at school?

Yes. High school students in grades 9–12 may use smartphones and other mobile communication devices during non-instructional time and when directed by school personnel or as part of instruction.

9. What is considered instructional time?

Instructional time includes scheduled class periods and any other time during the school day when students are expected to engage in learning activities. During instructional time, devices must be turned off and kept out of sight unless otherwise authorized by school personnel.

10. Can high school students use phones during passing periods?

Students are strongly encouraged not to use mobile communication devices during passing periods.

11. What happens during an emergency?

Students are permitted to possess or use a mobile communication device in the event of an emergency or in response to a perceived threat.

12. Can students use phones for medical reasons?

Yes. Students may possess or use a device if a licensed physician determines it is necessary for the student's health and well-being.



13. Are there exceptions for students with disabilities?

Yes. Students may possess or use a device when it is required as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan.

14. Can a teacher or administrator allow a student to use a phone?

Yes. A teacher or administrator may grant permission for a student to possess or use a mobile communication device, subject to reasonable limitations.

15. How should parents contact their child during the school day?

Parents are encouraged to contact the school office if communication with their child is necessary during the school day. This practice helps minimize classroom disruptions and protects instructional time.

16. Will parents still be able to reach their child in an emergency?

If your child is involved in an emergency, the school site will contact the parents or caregivers.

In the event of an emergency at a school, the school or district will promptly communicate with parents or caregivers about the situation and next steps. There are times when the situation is dynamic, and other agencies are involved. Because communications require coordination with these other agencies, this may cause delays in notification. If school staff are responding to an urgent situation, it is unlikely that school phones will be answered, as their priority will be student and staff safety and the resolution of the emergency.

17. Can students use phones to take pictures or record others at school?

Students may not use mobile communication devices in a way that infringes upon another person's privacy rights. Unauthorized recording, photographing, or sharing of images may result in disciplinary action and could violate state or federal law.

18. Can school staff search a student's phone?

A student's personal electronic device may be searched only when a school official, acting in good faith, believes that an emergency involving danger of death or serious physical injury requires access to the device's information.



19. What happens if a student violates the policy?

Students who use mobile communication devices in an unauthorized manner may be subject to school discipline. District employees may also temporarily confiscate the device and store it securely until it can be returned or provided to the principal or designee.

20. Can students be disciplined for off-campus use of a phone?

Yes. Students may face disciplinary action for off-campus use of a mobile communication device when such use poses a threat to students, staff, or District property, or substantially disrupts school activities.

21. Is the District responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged devices?

No. Students bring mobile communication devices to school at their own risk. The District is not responsible or liable for devices that are lost, stolen, or damaged on campus or at school activities.

22. Will the policy be evaluated?

Yes. During the first five years of implementation, the Board of Education will receive annual updates on implementation outcomes and emerging research on student mobile device use.

23. Will parents, students, and community members have opportunities to provide feedback?

Yes. The policy requires significant stakeholder participation during the review process to help ensure the policy reflects the needs and priorities of the Orange USD community.

Additional Questions

For additional information regarding Board Policy 5131.8 – Mobile Communication Devices, please contact your school principal or the Student & Community Services Department.