

Change to South Cache Middle School Student Cell Phone Policy

(This policy also applies to smart watches and earbuds.)

With Utah's new law prohibiting student cell phone use during the school day, beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, we want to provide parents and students with clear information about what this means at South Cache Middle School.

This letter is organized into the following sections:

1. South Cache Middle School Cell Phone Policy
2. How to Contact Your Student During the School Day
3. The Benefits of This Policy
4. Consequences for Violating the Cell Phone Policy
5. Parent Resources

South Cache Middle School Cell Phone Policy

Policy

In accordance with Utah Code **53G-7-227**, South Cache Middle School is implementing the following student cell phone policy:

Students may not use or possess cell phones, smart watches, or earbuds from the first bell of the school day until the final dismissal bell. This includes passing periods and lunch.

Students should either:

- Leave their devices at home, **or**
 - Store them in their assigned locker, powered off, for the entire school day.
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How to Contact Your Student During the School Day

Main Office: (435) 245-6433

Although students will not have access to their personal devices during the school day, keeping families connected remains a priority.

Urgent or Emergency Situations

If there is a family emergency or another urgent situation, please call the main office immediately. We will bring your student to the office as quickly as possible so they can speak with you.

Important but Non-Emergency Matters

For time-sensitive information, such as a change in transportation or a doctor's appointment reminder, call the office. We will have your student return your call during the next class transition using a school phone whenever possible.

Everyday Messages

For routine reminders, practice updates, weekend plans, or casual check-ins, please text or leave a voicemail on your student's personal phone. Students may check and respond to these messages after school.

To allow office staff to focus on student safety and urgent needs, we are unable to deliver non-essential messages during instructional time.

Thank you for partnering with us as we work together to create a distraction-free learning environment.

Quick Reference

Urgent/Critical

- Family emergency
- Serious illness
- Immediate safety concern

Important (Time-Sensitive)

- Doctor appointment reminder
- Last-minute transportation change

Non-Essential

- General check-ins
 - Practice schedule updates
 - Weekend plans
 - Routine reminders
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The Benefits of This Policy

Improved Mental Health

Jonathan Haidt, author of *The Anxious Generation*, argues that between 2010 and 2015, American teenagers transitioned to smartphones with continuous access to social media and the internet. He refers to this shift as the "**Great Rewiring of Childhood**" and believes it is the primary cause of the dramatic increase in adolescent mental illness that began in the early 2010s.

The rise in anxiety, depression, self-harm, and suicide has affected both boys and girls, but research suggests it has had the greatest impact on girls—particularly preteen girls—due to the constant social comparison encouraged by image-based social media.

Haidt identifies four major harms associated with a phone-based childhood:

Social Deprivation

Face-to-face interaction has declined significantly. According to Haidt, average daily in-person time with friends dropped from **122 minutes per day in 2012** to **67 minutes per day in 2019**, reducing opportunities for students to develop important social skills.

Sleep Deprivation

As smartphones became widely available to adolescents, both the quantity and quality of sleep declined. Poor sleep negatively impacts emotional health, learning, and overall well-being.

Attention Fragmentation

Attention is the ability to stay focused despite distractions and is an important aspect of executive functioning. Constant notifications and the fear of missing out (FOMO) interrupt students' concentration and make sustained focus more difficult.

Addiction

Many social media platforms and mobile games intentionally use behavioral design strategies to keep users engaged for long periods of time. These features can make it difficult for adolescents to regulate their screen use.

Creating a Distraction-Free Learning Environment

Middle school is an important time for students to develop **executive functioning skills**, including self-control, planning, focus, and the ability to resist distractions.

Removing phones during the school day helps students:

- Stay engaged in instruction.
 - Improve concentration.
 - Participate more fully with teachers and classmates.
 - Develop healthy habits for managing technology.
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Improving School Safety

In many schools, students use phones to record and share videos of classmates without permission. While some videos may seem harmless, others involve bullying, harassment, or physical altercations that can quickly spread through social media.

Limiting access to personal devices during the school day helps protect student privacy and contributes to a safer learning environment.

Knowing what we now understand about the effects of smartphones on learning, mental health, and school safety, South Cache Middle School supports Utah's implementation of this law. We look forward to the benefits of fewer distractions, stronger student relationships, improved academic focus, and a safer school environment for all students.

Consequences for Violating the Cell Phone Policy

If any school employee observes a student using or possessing a cell phone, smart watch, or earbuds during the school day—including passing periods or lunch—the device will be confiscated and taken to the office.

The device will be securely stored and **may only be picked up by a parent or legal guardian.**

There will be **no first warning.** This letter serves as the official notification of the policy.

Repeated Violations

Students who violate the policy more than once may be required to check their phone into the office at the beginning of each school day and retrieve it after school.

If violations continue, school administration will schedule a conference with the student and their parent or guardian.

Refusal to Surrender a Device

Respectfully following staff directions is essential to maintaining a safe and orderly school environment.

If a student refuses to surrender a device when directed by a staff member, the refusal will be considered **insubordination.** The student will be escorted to the administration office, and parents or guardians will be contacted immediately.

Parent Resources

Recommended Books

- *The Anxious Generation* — Jonathan Haidt
- *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* — Jean M. Twenge

Helpful Resources

The Anxious Generation Website

<https://www.theanxiousgeneration.com/>

Jonathan Haidt Presentation

How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Impacted Everything—and What We Can Do About It

<https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/parent-teacher-talk>

Utah Code 53G-7-227

<https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53G/Chapter7/53G-7-S227.html>
