

DOWNINGTOWN AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

237-AG. ELECTRONIC DEVICES

REVISED: AUGUST 8, 2026

1. Purpose

The Downingtown Area School District recognizes that while personal electronic devices are a common part of modern life, their unregulated use during the school day can disrupt the educational environment, facilitate academic dishonesty, and negatively impact student mental health and social development. The purpose of this administrative guideline is to maintain a safe, focused, and distraction-free learning environment.

2. Definitions

- Personal Electronic Device (PED): Includes, but is not limited to, cellular phones, smartwatches, tablets, personal laptops, e-readers, wireless earbuds/headphones, and any other internet-connected or communication device not owned and issued by the District.

3. General Guidelines (K-12)

All students, regardless of grade level, are bound by the following baseline rules:

- Academic Integrity: PEDs shall not be used to photograph, record, or transmit test questions, homework, or any other academic materials without explicit teacher permission. Violations will result in academic dishonesty penalties and/or student discipline.
- Privacy Protections: Capturing audio, video, or photography of any student or staff member without their explicit, prior consent is strictly prohibited. Under no

circumstances may PEDs be used or exposed in locker rooms, restrooms, or health suites.

- District Liability: The District assumes no responsibility for the loss, theft, damage, or unauthorized use of any PED brought to school by a student. Students bring these items at their own risk.

4. Grade-Level Specific Restrictions

Elementary and Middle Schools (Grades K-8)

The District enforces a strict "Bell-to-Bell, Off and Away" procedure for all students in grades K-8.

- Expectation: Upon entering the school building, all cellular phones must be powered completely off (not on silent or vibrate) and stored immediately out of sight in designated student cubby or locker.
- Permitted Storage: PEDs must remain in the student's assigned locker or cubby for the duration of the entire school day.
- Audio Restriction: Earbuds or headphones may not be used during the school day.

High School (Grades 9-12)

The District enforces a "Classroom Clear" policy for high schoolers, balancing academic focus with digital self-regulation.

- During Instructional Time: cellular phones must be silenced and placed in a designated classroom storage area (e.g., phone caddy/cubby).
- During Non-Instructional Time: High school students are permitted to use PEDs responsibly during their scheduled lunch periods in the cafeteria and during designated hallway passing periods, provided the use does not delay arrival to their next class.
- Audio Restriction: Earbuds and headphones may not be used during instructional time.

5. Exceptions

Exceptions to the restrictions above will be granted under the following conditions:

- Medical Mandate: The student has a documented medical condition (e.g., Type 1 Diabetes monitoring via a continuous glucose monitor) requiring device access. A medical exception form must be signed by a physician and filed with the school nurse.
- Educational Accommodations: Use of the device is explicitly written into the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 Service Agreement, or English Language Learner (ELL) accommodation plan.
- Emergency Situations: Device restrictions may be lifted under the explicit direction of administration or law enforcement.

6. Enforcement and Disciplinary Action

Violations of this policy will be handled progressively to ensure fairness and compliance.

First Offense:

- Grades K-8:
 - The teacher will confiscate the device and it will be secured in the main office.
 - The teacher will contact the parent/guardian via email or phone.
 - The student may retrieve the device from the main office at dismissal.
- Grades 9-12:
 - The teacher will issue a verbal directive to put the device away.
 - The incident is documented in the student information system.

Second Offense:

- Grades K-8:
 - The teacher will confiscate the device and it will be secured in the main office.
 - The administrator will contact the parent/guardian via email or phone.
 - The parent/guardian may retrieve the device.
- Grades 9-12
 - The teacher will complete a discipline referral form.
 - The administrator will meet with the student, review the rules and procedures (including future violations), and contact the parent/guardian.

Third Offense:

- Grades K-8:
 - The device will be confiscated and turned over to the building administration.
 - The device will be held in the main office in a secure location.
 - The device will only be released directly to a parent or legal guardian.
 - The student will be assigned a detention.
- Grades 9-12:
 - The teacher will complete a discipline referral form.
 - The administrator will meet with the student, review the rules and procedures (including future violations), and contact the parent/guardian.
 - The student will be assigned a 1-hour lunch and learn detention.

Persistent Violation:

- Repeated violations will be Defiance of Authority/Insubordination .
- Consequences may include but limited to: detention, in-school suspension, out of school suspension, loss of high school privileges (e.g., parking, attendance at dances), and/or a mandatory "Check-In/Check-Out" policy where the student must surrender their phone to the office every morning until the completion of the school day for a designated period of time.

7. Parent-Student Communication Emergency Protocol

To ensure the success of this policy, parents and guardians are requested not to text or call their child's personal cell phone during the school day. * For Urgent Messages: Parents must call the school's main office. Staff will immediately relay vital messages to the student.

- Student Outbound Calls: If a student needs to contact a parent due to illness or an emergency, they must request a pass to use the landline phone located in the main office or the health suite.

Search and Seizure Boundaries

Pennsylvania administrators must follow specific legal guardrails regarding a student's privacy:

- **Confiscation:** Administrators have the right to take a device that is being used in violation of school policy.

- **Searching Content:** Under the Fourth Amendment and PA Case Law, school officials **cannot** search the contents of a phone (texts, photos, social media) simply because a student violated the "no use" rule. They must have **reasonable suspicion** that the phone contains evidence of a specific crime or a threat to school safety (e.g., bomb threats or drug distribution).