Thornton Academy Personal Electronic Device Policy

Purpose

To maintain a focused, safe, and respectful learning environment by establishing clear expectations for personal electronic devices. Personal electronic devices include, but are not limited to, cell phones, smartwatches, AI-enabled glasses, smart glasses, earbuds, headphones, tablets, computers, gaming devices, cameras, and other internet-connected or recording devices.

School-issued technology used for educational purposes is governed by separate school expectations.

Scope

This policy applies to all students during school hours, on school property.

Policy

Academic Blocks and Advisory

Cell phones, smartwatches, and other personal electronic devices may not be used during academic blocks, including advisory and study halls. Students who have TA Release may only use personal electronic devices once they have left campus.

During these times:

- Cell phones and smartwatches must be turned off or placed in airplane mode and kept out of sight during academic time. At the teacher's discretion, students may be required to store their devices in the classroom device pouch provided by the school.
- Earbuds, headphones, and other personal electronic devices must be stored out of sight unless specifically authorized by a teacher for an educational purpose.
- Devices may not be accessed in classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, or other areas during an academic block.
- Students leaving class for any reason remain subject to these expectations for the entire block.

Teachers may authorize the limited use of a personal electronic device, such as earbuds or headphones, when it directly supports a specific educational activity.

Prohibited Personal Technology

AI-enabled glasses, smart glasses, personal laptops, tablets, iPads, Chromebooks, and similar non-school-issued technology are prohibited at school. Students may not bring, possess, or use these devices during school hours unless prior approval has been granted by a school administrator for a documented educational, medical, or accessibility-related purpose.

Non-Instructional Time

Students may use permitted personal electronic devices before school, during passing periods, during lunch in the cafe or designated small lunch room, and after school, provided that their use does not disrupt school activities, compromise safety or privacy, or violate any other school policy.

This privilege may be restricted or revoked when a device is misused, or its use becomes disruptive.

Testing and Assessments

Unless specifically authorized by the teacher, personal electronic devices are prohibited during tests, quizzes, and standardized assessments.

Unauthorized possession or use of a device during an assessment may result in disciplinary action and the assessment's invalidation, in accordance with the school's academic honesty expectations.

Privacy, Recording, and Respectful Use

Students may not:

- Photograph, record, livestream, or otherwise capture another student or staff member without permission.
- Post, distribute, or share unauthorized photographs, videos, audio recordings, or other digital content.
- Use electronic devices in bathrooms, locker rooms, or other areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.
- Use a device to harass, intimidate, threaten, deceive, or disrupt others.

Violations may result in disciplinary action regardless of whether, when, or where the content is posted, shared, or distributed.

Emergencies and Family Communication

During an emergency, students must follow the directions of school personnel. Depending on the circumstances, students may be permitted to use their cell phones to communicate with parents or guardians.

During lockdowns or other safety situations, students may not use a device unless directed by school personnel. Unauthorized device use could compromise emergency response efforts.

Parents and guardians who need to contact a student during an academic block should communicate through the Attendance Office.

Disciplinary Actions

First offense: The device will be confiscated and returned following consultation with a parent or guardian. The student will meet with the class dean and be assigned an office detention.

Subsequent offenses: The device will be confiscated, a parent or guardian meeting may be required, and additional disciplinary action may be assigned by the class dean. Consequences may include loss of device privileges, a required daily device check-in, detention, suspension, or other appropriate measures.

Failure to surrender a device when directed by a staff member will be considered insubordination and will result in an immediate referral to the Dean's Office and additional disciplinary action.

Responsibilities

- **Students** are responsible for following this policy and ensuring their personal electronic devices are properly stored.
- **Faculty and staff** are responsible for communicating and consistently enforcing these expectations.
- **Parents and guardians** are encouraged to reinforce responsible device use and avoid contacting students directly during academic blocks.

Thornton Academy is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of personal electronic devices brought onto school property.

Exceptions

Students with a documented medical condition, disability, or other identified need requiring access to a personal electronic device must receive prior administrative approval. Approved exceptions will be communicated to the appropriate faculty and staff.

Review and Questions

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to reflect changes in technology and school needs. Questions should be directed to the Dean's Office.

Updated: 2026