

Diocese of Harrisburg Catholic Schools

Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Device Policy

July 2026

Purpose and Rationale

Catholic education is ordered toward the integral formation of the human person, within a community rooted in the Gospel. Use of cell phones and personal electronic devices during the school day often disrupts learning, diminishes interpersonal relationships, can undermine the development of virtue, discipline, and attentiveness and facilitates exposure to social media content that can be harmful to our students.

Therefore, a policy limiting student access to cell phones and personal electronic devices will support student well-being, minimize distractions and facilitate a safe, positive learning environment. This policy promotes respectful community life and safeguards the well-being of students in our Diocesan Catholic schools while cultivating:

- Respectful face-to-face communication
- Attentiveness to learning and prayer
- Responsible stewardship of technology
- Habits of self-discipline and moderation

Accordingly, this policy establishes clear expectations regarding the possession and use of cell phones and personal electronic devices by students during the school day.

General Policy

While students may bring a personal electronic device to school, during the school day, bell-to-bell, students are prohibited from using cell phones or personal electronic devices as follows:

1. Devices must be powered off (not on silent or vibrate) and stored in accordance with school procedures.
2. Cell phones and personal electronic devices (e.g. smart watches, earbuds) may not be used at any time during the school day unless explicit permission is granted by school administration.
3. This policy does **not** apply to school-issued technology (e.g. Chromebooks, tablets, laptop computers) used for instructional purposes under faculty supervision.
4. Personal electronic devices/cell phones will be stored for the duration of the school day or until students otherwise leave the school grounds.

Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled in all grade levels at diocesan Catholic schools during the entire school day including all classes, school activities, liturgies, communal prayer, assemblies, lunch and recess periods and any other school-supervised activity unless otherwise specified.

Individual schools may not adopt policies that are less restrictive than this diocesan policy but may implement additional restrictions consistent with diocesan guidance.

Definitions

- **Cell Phone:** Any personal mobile device capable of voice communication, text messaging, internet access, photography, or video recording.
- **Personal Electronic Device:** Includes, but is not limited to, smartwatches, tablets, gaming devices, earbuds, or any device capable of digital communication or media use.
- **School Day:** The period beginning upon a student's arrival on campus and ending at dismissal, including transitions, lunch periods, and study halls.

Exceptions

The following limited exceptions may be permitted at the discretion of the president, principal or designee:

1. **Medical or Student Support Needs:** Students with documented medical conditions or support plans (e.g. Instructional Support Plan, Medical Support Plan) requiring device access may be granted written exemptions.
2. **Emergency Situations:** In the event of an emergency, school administrators may authorize temporary use of cell phones under staff supervision.
3. **Administrative Discretion:** The president and principal or designee may, at their discretion, allow temporary and limited cell phone use, as particular circumstances may require.

The school and diocese are not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices brought onto campus.

Parent and Guardian Communication

Parents and guardians are expected to support this policy by ensuring students understand and comply with device restrictions and communicating with students through school offices during the school day.