



Book Policies and Regulations  
Section 700 – Students  
Title POLICY – Cell Phone-Free Education 729  
Code Active  
Status August 1, 2025  
Adopted  
Last Revised  
Prior Revised  
Dates

## **Students**

## **Policy 729**

### **Cell Phone-Free Education**

#### **I. Purpose**

This policy supports students in their academic success by removing the significant distraction posed by cell phone usage and other personal electronic communication technology. The goals of this policy are to enhance student engagement and participation in classroom activities by reducing the influence of social media-related disruptions; to foster meaningful connections and interpersonal skill development by encouraging face-to-face interactions among students; to support students in achieving academic success by minimizing interruptions to the learning process; and to model and promote responsible digital citizenship among students.

#### **II. Definitions**

- A. “Bell-to-Bell” means from when the first bell rings at the start of the school day to begin instructional time until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic school day, including lunch and time in between class periods.

- B. "Cell Phone-Free Education" means the age-appropriate elimination or restriction of cell phones and other personal electronic communication devices in public schools.
- C. "Cell Phone" means a personal device capable of making calls, transmitting pictures or video, or sending or receiving messages through electronic means. The definition of cell phone is inclusive of a non-smart phone that is limited to making phone calls or text messages, a smart phone that encompasses the above features, and other future personal electronic communication devices with the abovementioned characteristics.
- D. "Instructional period" means any structured or unstructured learning experiences that occur from when the first bell rings at the start of the school day until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic school day.
- E. "Personal Electronic Communication Device" means any personal device capable of connecting to a smart phone, the internet, a cellular or Wi-Fi network, or directly connects to another similar device. Personal electronic communication devices may include some wearable devices such as smart watches, as well as personal headphones, laptops, tablets, and other future personal electronic communication devices with the abovementioned characteristics.
- F. "Stored" means a cell phone or personal electronic communication device not being carried on the student's person, including not in the student's pocket. Storage options include the student's backpack, in the student's locker, in a locked pouch, or in a designated place in the classroom.

### **III. Guidelines**

#### **A. Elementary and Combination Schools**

1. All cell phones and personal electronic communication devices must be turned off and stored away and may not be used at any time within the school building or on school grounds or during any instructional periods regardless of location including field trips.
2. Students are permitted to use their cell phones and personal electronic communication device(s) while on school buses, while in parent/guardian vehicles, and before they enter or after they exit school grounds.

#### **B. Middle and High Schools**

1. All cell phones and personal electronic communication devices must be turned off and stored away during the Bell-to-Bell school day and during any instructional periods regardless of location including field trips.
2. All cell phones and personal electronic communication devices may be turned on and used within the school and on the school campus before or after the Bell-to-Bell school day.

### **C. Rules Applicable to All Schools and Grade Levels**

1. Students, regardless of age or grade level, are required to follow the rules applicable to the specific school where they are present. For example, if a high school student is attending an activity at an elementary school, the high school student must follow the cell phone and personal electronic communication device rules applicable to elementary schools while present on the elementary school campus.
2. Use of cell phones and personal electronic communication devices is prohibited in all locker rooms and restrooms at all times.
3. Cell phones and personal electronic communication devices may be used on school buses provided the device does not distract the driver, compromise safety, or violate the Prohibited Content and Use for All Students provisions detailed below.
4. Use of cell phones and personal electronic communication devices during extra-curricular and co-curricular activities held outside of the Bell-to-Bell school day will be determined by the coach, sponsor, or instructor.

### **D. Disability and Other Accommodations**

Exceptions to these guidelines may be granted as disability accommodations through Section 504 plans or Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or for students in English Language Learner programs when necessary to ensure student access to the curriculum, school, and school-sponsored activities. Exceptions also may be granted as part of a student's safety or other support plan.

## **E. Prohibited Content and Use for All Students**

Students are not allowed to create, access, or share content that is incompatible with a K-12 educational environment while on school property, including school buses, or at school-sponsored events regardless of location. Violations may result in disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Content that is obscene, contains profanity, or that involves or threatens illegal acts.
2. Content that bullies, harasses, threatens, or degrades others is strictly prohibited including the use of artificial intelligence to impersonate others.
3. Photographing or video recording students engaged in misconduct or experiencing a medical emergency.
4. Use of cell phones and personal electronic communication devices in restrooms or locker rooms is strictly prohibited. Photographing or videorecording other students in a state of undress in these or other areas of the school, school grounds, or during school-sponsored activities regardless of location will result in discipline and may result in a referral to law enforcement.
5. Use of cell phones and personal electronic communication devices to cheat or in ways that violate the School Division's acceptable use policy.

## **F. Privacy and Respect for Others**

Respecting the privacy of others is emphasized; taking photos or videos of classmates, peers, and staff without prior approval of an administrator or staff member is strictly prohibited on school property, including school buses, or while involved in school-related activities.

## **G. Expectations**

1. Students must comply with staff directives and the provisions of this policy to avoid disruption of the educational environment or they may be subject to disciplinary actions in compliance with the Code of Behavior.
2. The student is responsible for adhering to these guidelines and always securing their belongings. Classes and/or instruction will not be

stopped to resolve or search for a lost cell phone or personal electronic communication device.

3. Adults in the school should model responsible use of cell phones and personal electronic communication devices.

#### **H. Parent and Student Communications During the School Day and School Sponsored Activities**

1. Parents/guardians should not contact their students through the students' cell phone or personal electronic communication devices during the Bell-to-Bell school day. Parents/guardians should contact the school office with messages for students and the school office will facilitate communication.
2. Students may use a phone in the school office to contact a parent/guardian during the Bell-to-Bell school day should a need arise.

#### **I. Emergency Situations**

1. School-based staff supervising students shall have access to a cell phone (if designated by the School Division) or classroom phone to coordinate crisis communications and emergency plans should a need arise.
2. Students using cell phones or personal electronic communication devices during an emergency may compromise safety and/or response efforts. If a cell phone or personal electronic communication device is needed to contact a parent/guardian as part of a reunification plan following an emergency, staff will provide direction to students when approved to do so.

#### **J. Notices and Communications**

1. Students and parents/guardians will receive notice of the provisions of the Cell Phone-Free Education rules at the beginning of the school year and must read the notice. A student and/or parent's failure to read the Cell Phone-Free Education notice does not exempt a student from the responsibility to follow these rules.
2. PWCS will make information publicly available at the beginning of the school year regarding how school-based staff are trained to handle crisis and emergency situations, reunification plans, and family notification processes during crisis situations.

3. All staff communications with students shall comply with Regulation 503-1, "Standards of Professional Conduct for all Employees."

The Associate Superintendent for Student Services and Post-Secondary Success is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.

This policy and any related regulations shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.

Legal      [VDOE Guidance for Cell Phone-Free Education Pursuant to Executive Order 33 \(September 16, 2024\).](#)