

# Student Personal Electronic Device Policy

*("Bell to Bell, No Cell" Compliance – Act 122 of 2025)*

## Purpose and Rationale

Our school is committed to providing a focused, safe, and positive learning environment. In line with Arkansas's **"Bell to Bell, No Cell Act" (Act 122 of 2025)**, we are implementing a clear policy on student cell phones and personal devices used during the school day. Research has shown that frequent cell phone use during school can distract students, hinder learning, and even impact mental well-being. By adopting a "phone-free" school day, we aim to improve student focus, academic performance, and social interaction. In fact, studies have found that enforcing a cell phone ban leads to improved grades, better attention in class, more face-to-face social interaction, and fewer disciplinary issues. This policy is designed to support our students' education and development by minimizing distractions and promoting engagement in the classroom. We also recognize the importance of communication for safety and peace of mind, and we have built in provisions to keep students and parents connected in appropriate ways during the day.

## Scope and Definitions

This policy applies to **all students** (Day and Residential) during the academic school day and during school-related activities, as detailed below. It covers **cell phones and other personal electronic devices** that could disrupt the learning environment. For the purpose of this policy:

- **"Personal Electronic Devices"** include but are not limited to cell phones and smartphones, smart watches, earbuds/headphones with Bluetooth, tablets or laptops not issued by the school, portable game devices, digital music or media players, cameras, and any similar electronics. Essentially, **any device capable of sending/receiving messages, connecting to the internet, or recording audio/video** is included.
- **"School Day"** is defined as the period from the time a student is **required to be at school in the morning until the time of dismissal in the afternoon**. In practical terms, this means from the first bell (or required arrival time) to the final bell of the

day. It includes all class periods, study halls, lunch, recess, and transition times between classes.

- **“Possession” of a device** means having it **readily accessible** (for example: in hand, in a pocket, worn, or in a personal bag). Storing a powered-off phone securely in a locker without accessing it does *not* count as being “in possession” under this policy.
- **“Residential/Dormitory Students”** refers to students who live on campus in school dorms. These students have additional rules during non-class hours as described in the **Residential Student Guidelines** section of this policy.

## Policy Overview: Bell-to-Bell “No Cell” Rule

During the school day, students **may not use or possess** personal electronic devices **from bell to bell**. From the moment students are required to be on campus in the morning until they are officially dismissed, cell phones and other personal devices are not to be used, seen, or heard. This **“Bell to Bell, No Cell”** rule means:

- **No device use at any point during classes or breaks.** Devices should not be used during instructional time, between classes, at lunch/recess, or during any school-organized activity in the school day. The phone should not be out for any reason (no texting, calling, social media, gaming, etc.).
- **No carrying personal devices on your person during the day.** Students should not have phones or electronics in their pockets, on belts, in clothing, or in binders once the school day begins. If a device is found on a student (e.g. in a pocket, backpack, or being used), it will be considered a violation of this policy.
- **Devices must be turned in or stored as directed each morning.** To comply with this rule, any cell phone a student brings to school must be secured in the designated storage location before the first bell. Students should power off or silence devices before turning them in.

This prohibition is in compliance with state law, which requires schools to restrict student possession and prohibit the use of phones and personal electronics during the school day. The goal is to ensure a distraction-free environment that maximizes learning and engagement. We want students to interact with their teachers and peers without the distraction of screens, and to keep them safe from the disruptions and social pressures that constant connectivity can bring.

## Procedures for Device Collection and Storage

We understand that many students carry cell phones for use before or after school. Our school has established a procedure to securely collect and store phones during the day so that students can comply with the policy and retrieve their devices afterward. The procedures are:

- **Morning Check-In:** Upon arrival each morning, students must turn in their cell phone (and any other personal electronic device) to the designated “phone locker” or collection station in the school office. Each student will have an individual secure slot where their device will be stored. School staff will supervise this check-in process to ensure all devices are turned in. Residential students should leave their devices in their dormitory rooms or with dorm staff *before* coming to school (see Residential guidelines below). Day students who drive to school may leave phones in their vehicle, or they can use the office locker system for safekeeping.
- **Secure Storage:** The school will securely hold all collected devices in the office phone lockers during the day. Devices will be kept powered off or silent. Students are not allowed to access their device during the school day, except in one of the limited emergency or exempt situations described in this policy (see “Permitted Exceptions” below). Office staff will treat the devices with care and will not use or inspect a student’s phone’s content unless there is a serious emergency or a clear violation of school rules (such as reasonable suspicion of dangerous or prohibited activity, per the student handbook search policies).
- **Afternoon Retrieval:** At the end of the school day (dismissal time), students may return to the office to pick up their devices from the locker. Our staff will facilitate an orderly return of phones. **Students are responsible for promptly collecting their phones after school.** Once dismissed and off campus, students may use their devices again.
- **Forgotten Turn-In:** If a student forgets to turn in a phone in the morning and is later found with it, they should bring it to the office immediately when reminded, and it will be treated as a policy violation (see Consequences below). It’s each student’s responsibility to follow the check-in procedure daily. Parents, please remind your student each morning to turn in their device. We will also have periodic reminders, and homeroom checks to help students remember.
- **Visiting/Checking Out During Day:** If a student leaves campus during the day (for a checkout, appointment, etc.), they may pick up their device from the office *when signing out and* should return it to the office if they come back to school the same

day. If a parent is picking up a student early, the student can retrieve their phone at that time.

These procedures ensure that phones are out of sight and mind during classes, supporting our educational mission, while still being safely stored for students to use after school.

## Permitted Exceptions and Exemptions

We recognize there are special circumstances when a student may need to have or use a device during the school day. In compliance with Act 122 and our commitment to student welfare, the following exceptions are **allowed under this policy**. Outside of these specific exceptions, the **no-phone rule applies to everyone**. If any of these situations apply, students must still exercise responsible use of their devices and follow any staff instructions.

**1. Medical or Disability-Related Use:** A student who requires a device for health reasons or for accommodation will be allowed to carry or use it as specified in their plan. This includes:

- **Health Plan/Medical Device:** If a device (such as a phone or tablet) is medically necessary for monitoring a health condition or other critical purpose as documented by a physician or health plan, the student may use or keep that device with them. For example, certain medical devices connect to an app on a phone (for monitoring blood sugar, etc.). These uses are permitted with prior notification to the school.
- **Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** If a student's **IEP** (Individualized Education Plan) includes the use of a personal electronic device as an accommodation or assistive technology, the school will honor that. Our policy will not prohibit or limit a student from using a device if it is part of an approved accommodation plan. The device should be used only in the manner and at the times described in the plan. School staff may issue a special pass or note for the student to carry the device per their IEP.

**2. School-Issued Devices for Instruction:** This policy **does not apply to devices provided by the school for learning purposes**. If the school or teacher issues a device for use during class, students are allowed and expected to use that device as directed by the teacher. Use of a school-issued device is not considered a violation, as it is an approved instructional tool (these are not "personal" devices). For clarity, the prohibition on phones and personal electronics is meant to cover devices brought from home that are not part of

the school's educational equipment. Students should use school-issued technology responsibly and only for the intended classwork.

**3. Emergencies:** In the event of a genuine emergency, students will be allowed to use personal devices if necessary to communicate for safety. An “emergency” is defined as a serious, unexpected situation requiring immediate action – for example, an active fire, a natural disaster (like a tornado), an active security threat, an evacuation, or a medical crisis. During such emergencies, normal rules about phone use will be relaxed to allow students to contact parents as needed. Our school's first priority in any emergency is student safety and communication. Students should follow staff instructions during emergencies – staff will indicate when phone use is permitted or advisable. In a lockdown or safety situation, sometimes staying quiet and off phones is important; in other scenarios, calling or texting family might be allowed. The school will communicate with parents through official channels as well.

**4. After-School Activities and Off-Hours:** Once the official school day has ended and students have been dismissed, this policy no longer applies. Students may use their phones or devices after the final bell when they are no longer in class or in a structured school activity. For example, during after-school extracurricular activities, sports practices, club meetings, or while waiting for rides after dismissal, students may have their phones. However, coaches or activity supervisors may still set reasonable limits on phone use during practices or rehearsals for safety or to keep students engaged. If an extracurricular event (like a game or competition) takes place off-campus right after school, students may have their devices during travel or downtime, per the activity rules. We trust students to use good judgment and not let devices interfere with after-school obligations. **Important:** If an after-school program is still on campus before general dismissal (for instance, tutoring during lunch or an early club meeting), that is **during the school day** and phones are still not allowed. The exemption is specifically for *after* the normal school day ends. Residential students back in the dorms after classes may also retrieve and use their phones during free time until lights-out (see Residential section).

**5. Special Events or Permission by School Administration:** There may be rare occasions when the school designates a special event or instructional activity during the school day where phone or device use is allowed. For example, the school administration might approve phone use for a special assembly, pep rally, school-wide educational activity, or field trip where device use is part of the program. These events will be clearly announced in advance by the school. **Unless such an announcement is made, students should assume no personal device use is permitted during the day.** This exception will be used sparingly and only when it aligns with educational goals and has administrative approval. If

a teacher believes a certain class activity would benefit from personal devices, they must get approval from the principal before allowing students to use them. In most cases, alternative resources will be provided instead, to maintain consistency with the policy.

**6. Dual-Credit/Concurrent Enrollment Coursework:** If a student is enrolled in a concurrent credit course (a college course taken during high school) that **requires two-factor authentication (2FA) or other verification using the student's personal device**, the student will be allowed to use their phone briefly for that specific purpose. For instance, some online college platforms send a code to the student's phone to log in. The student should notify the school in advance if such a requirement exists. The phone can be accessed at the time needed (e.g., logging in to a college class website) under staff supervision, and then put away again. This use is **only permitted for the minimal time necessary to complete authentication or required academic tasks**. Outside of that, the phone should remain off and stored. This exemption is mandated by law to ensure students can meet their college course responsibilities.

If a student believes they have a legitimate need not covered above, they (or their parent/guardian) should discuss it with the principal. We will consider on a case-by-case basis any *compelling reasons* for an exemption in line with the spirit of the law and the student's well-being. Our aim is to be fair and supportive while upholding the overall no-phone environment.

## Communication During the School Day

We understand that students and parents may still need to communicate during the school day. Under this policy, students won't have immediate access to their personal phones, but communication is still possible through the proper channels:

- **Contacting Your Child:** If you (parent/guardian) need to reach your student during the day for an urgent matter, you should call the school office. Our staff will promptly deliver a message to your child or arrange for your child to call you back from a school phone. We encourage parents to use the office for any time-sensitive communication.
- **Student Initiated Contact:** If a student needs to contact a parent/guardian during the day, they should ask a teacher or come to the office for permission to call home. We have phones available for student use in these cases. Students should not use a cell phone to call or text even if they have one accessible — they are

expected to go through school phones or get staff permission. We will always allow a student to call home when genuinely needed.

- **Emergencies:** In a school-wide emergency situation, as noted earlier, students may be allowed to use cell phones if it's safe and necessary. The school will also use our notification systems to contact parents/guardians with official information and instructions in any emergency. Parents, please ensure your emergency contact information is up to date with the school office. Students, remember that during an emergency your first priority is to follow teacher instructions to stay safe; communication will be coordinated appropriately.
- **General Guidelines:** Because students will not have phones during the day, please plan routine communications *before or after school*. For example, arrange pick-up times or after-school plans in the morning or the night before. If a student texts or calls you during the school day from a personal device, you should know they are violating school rules. We ask parents not to encourage or facilitate non-emergency contact via student cell phones during the day. Support your child in following this policy by communicating through the school office when needed. This will help them stay focused on learning.

By following these guidelines, we can uphold students' rights to communicate with family while still maintaining a phone-free academic environment. The school is committed to working with families to ensure that important communications are handled promptly and that no one feels out of reach in case of urgency.

## Additional Residential Student Guidelines

As a residential school, we also have expectations for dormitory students regarding cell phones outside of regular class hours. These rules are in place to promote a healthy living/learning balance and ensure student well-being during evenings and overnight:

- **No Devices During School Hours:** Boarding students must treat the academic day the same as day students do. **Dormitory students are not allowed to bring phones or personal devices out of the dorm during the school day.** They should leave their devices securely in their dorm room (or turn them in to dorm supervisors) before breakfast/morning classes. Dorm staff will help remind students each morning. If a dorm student accidentally keeps their phone and brings it to class, they must turn it in at the office immediately.
- **Evening Use:** After the school day and afternoon activities, dorm students may use their phones and devices in the dormitory during their free time, up until the

designated curfew or “lights out” time. We encourage responsible use – homework and in-person interactions should come first, and phones should not be a distraction from evening study time or community activities. Dorm staff may set “quiet hours” when device use should be minimal.

- **No Cell Phones After Lights Out:** Once it’s time for lights-out/curfew at night, **students must stop using their phones and other devices.** Bedtime is important for rest and health. Using phones late at night can interfere with sleep quality and next-day alertness, which is why we have this rule. **All personal devices should be put away for the night at lights-out.** Dormitory staff will enforce this by doing checks. If a student is found using a phone after lights out, the device may be confiscated for the night by the dorm supervisor and returned the next morning. Repeated violations of the after-hours rule will result in additional consequences. This rule is for students’ own well-being; a good night’s sleep free from screen interruptions helps academic performance and health. Phone privileges may be earned for students who exhibit trustworthiness in grades 7-12. All K-6 students will not have access to their phones after lights-out.
- **Dorm Emergencies:** In case of an emergency during nighttime, students may use phones to contact help or family as needed, similar to school-day emergency rules. Dorm staff also have protocols to ensure all students are safe, and parents are notified if anything serious occurs at night.

Our residential students should balance their academics, social life, and rest. By limiting phone use at key times (school hours and late night), we help students develop good habits, focus on building in-person friendships, and get adequate sleep – all part of a healthy growing and learning environment. We appreciate the cooperation of our boarding students in respecting these guidelines, and dorm staff are available to support students who have trouble managing their device use.

## Enforcement and Consequences for Violations

We believe that clarity and consistency in enforcement are essential. Our goal is not to punish, but to ensure compliance with this policy so that it can achieve its intended benefits. However, if a student fails to follow the policy, the following steps will be taken:

- **Immediate Confiscation:** If a student is seen **using a device or carrying a device during prohibited times**, a staff member will confiscate the device immediately. For example, if a phone rings in class, or a student is caught texting at lunch, or a device is visible in their pocket/backpack, the device will be taken by a teacher or



administrator on the spot. The staff member will turn the device over to the school office for safekeeping. The student will not get the device back until the end of the school day (or longer, in certain cases described below).

- **First Offense:** On a first-time violation, the device will typically be held in the office until the end of the school day. The student can retrieve it from the office at dismissal after a reminder of the policy. The incident will be documented, and the student will receive a verbal warning and a copy of the policy will be reissued to them. We will ensure the student understands the expectations. Parents may be notified at the school's discretion.
- **Second Offense:** For a second violation, the device will again be confiscated for the day. In addition, the **parent/guardian will be contacted**. A conference (in person or by phone) might be requested to discuss the policy and find ways to support the student's adherence. The student may receive a school detention or similar minor disciplinary action per our Code of Conduct for repeated non-compliance.
- **Third or Repeated Offenses:** Continued disregard of the cell phone rules will be treated as a **disciplinary issue**. At this stage, consequences can escalate: the device may be confiscated for a longer period, and the student could face additional disciplinary measures in line with our student handbook. We will work closely with parents on a plan, which might include the student being banned from bringing any phone to school at all for the remainder of the term. In a residential context, repeated after-hours violations may result in similar escalations.
- **Serious Misuse:** If a device is used in a manner that violates other school rules or laws (**cyberbullying, cheating, taking inappropriate photos/videos on campus, or any illegal activity**), it will be handled with more severe discipline per our handbook, and not just as a "cell phone policy" violation. This could include involvement of law enforcement if necessary. The cell phone policy is not meant to shield students from accountability for other behaviors; on the contrary, prohibiting phones helps prevent many of these issues. But if they do occur, the school will respond accordingly.
- **Refusal to Surrender a Device:** If a student refuses to turn over a device when requested by staff during a violation, this will be treated as insubordination. The student will be referred to an administrator immediately. The refusal may result in additional disciplinary consequences beyond those for the phone violation itself. We expect cooperation when enforcing this rule, and we ask parents to reinforce with their children that they must hand over the phone if asked by a teacher or administrator.

\*All offenses are subject to the administrator's discretion, and consequences may be adjusted accordingly.

Throughout the enforcement process, we will strive to be fair and consistent. Our faculty and staff will all be informed of the procedures so that every student is treated equally under this policy. We also take into account age and intent. However, the baseline rule is firm: **"No Cell" during school means no cell, for all students.**

We also emphasize positive reinforcement: we will acknowledge and thank students for following the policy, and we plan to educate students on why this policy is beneficial. In surveys and studies, many students later acknowledge the benefits of a phone-free school day.

## Policy Communication and Review

We want all students and parents to be fully aware of this policy. Therefore:

- **Website Publication:** This policy will be posted on the school's official website for easy reference, as required by state law. It will be available before the start of each school year and accessible at any time. We will also include it in the Student Handbook and any new student orientation materials.
- **Notification to Parents and Students:** We are distributing this policy to all families via Parent Square. We will also hold an assembly or informational session to explain the rules to students in an age-appropriate way at the beginning of the school year. Residential students will review the policy with dorm staff as well.
- **Ongoing Reminders:** Teachers and staff will reinforce the "Bell to Bell, No Cell" expectations in their classrooms. You may see signage around campus reminding students of when and where devices can or cannot be used. We encourage parents to talk with their children about this policy and set family expectations for compliance.
- **Review and Updates:** This policy will be reviewed annually (and as needed) to ensure it remains effective and in compliance with any new guidance from the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. If modifications are needed, we will update the policy and re-issue it to all stakeholders. Our aim is continuous improvement in creating the best learning environment.

## Legal Compliance

This policy is written to fully comply with Act 122 of 2025 (Ark. Code § 6-18-515 as amended), the **Bell to Bell, No Cell Act**, which mandates that Arkansas public schools restrict student use of personal electronic devices during the school day. All mandatory provisions of the law are incorporated here, including allowable exceptions and the requirement to post the policy online. Our school district has submitted this policy to the state for approval as required.

By following this policy, students and parents will not only be adhering to school rules but also supporting state-wide efforts to improve school climates and student outcomes. The law and this policy were created with the input of educators, parents, and experts who recognize that managing cell phone use is an important part of helping students succeed in school.

Thank you to our students and families for your support and cooperation in implementing the **Bell to Bell, No Cell** policy. We encourage you to discuss the benefits at home and create a plan for how your student will adjust. If you have any questions or concerns about this policy, or if you need to request a specific accommodation, please contact the school administration. We are here to help every student succeed under these guidelines.