



SCHOOL DISTRICT OF TURTLE LAKE

*"To foster a culture of excellence where every person
belongs, learns and succeeds."*

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Away for the Day: Cell Phone and Mobile Device Expectations

The School District of Turtle Lake values communication and collaboration, providing Chromebooks to all students for academic productivity. However, cell phones and mobile devices have increasingly become distractions in classrooms, hindering the learning environment rather than serving as convenient tools. To prioritize academics and minimize disruptions, we are implementing new cell phone expectations for students in grades 4K-12. We believe that students need their full attention focused on learning to reach their highest potential while at school.

Policy:

Students in grades 4K-12 are no longer permitted to use their cell phones during the school day. All cell phones and mobile devices must be stored in their lockers during school hours. The school office is equipped to communicate with students in case of emergencies.

Specific Expectations:

- Cell phones, all mobile devices (including smartwatches), headphones, and earbuds must be kept in a student's locker from the first bell (8:10 AM) to the final bell (3:28 PM).
- The use of cell phones and all mobile devices is prohibited in classrooms, the library, restrooms, and locker rooms.
- If a staff member observes a cell phone in a student's possession, the device will be confiscated.
- Cell phones and all mobile devices may be turned on after dismissal and used for direct communication with parents/guardians regarding transportation.

Why This Change?

This policy is based on evidence highlighting the negative impacts of cell phones in schools:

- **Distraction and Reduced Academic Performance:** Research indicates that cell phone use in class significantly distracts students, diverting attention from lessons and materials. This leads to decreased focus, reduced engagement, and potentially lower academic achievement. Studies show that students without access to cell phones may perform 13-20% better on exams, and even the presence of a phone with notifications can disrupt concentration, requiring up to 20 minutes to refocus.
- **Negative Impact on Mental Health and Well-being:** Social media apps, readily available on cell phones, are linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and body image issues among adolescents. Limiting phone access can reduce exposure to these negative influences. Constant notifications and online interactions can contribute to stress and anxiety. The fear of missing out (FOMO) due to constant connectivity can also amplify these feelings. Furthermore, banning phones can help mitigate cyberbullying by reducing opportunities for it to occur during school hours.

- **Reduced Physical and Social Activity:** Without the distraction of cell phones, students are more likely to engage in face-to-face interactions, which are crucial for developing social skills. Studies have also shown that smartphone bans can increase students' physical activity levels during recess.
- **Classroom Management and Discipline:** Cell phones can be a source of disciplinary issues and conflict between students and teachers.
- **Potential for Misuse:** Cell phones can be used for academic dishonesty, such as cheating, and can provide access to inappropriate or harmful content.

Parent Questions and Answers:

- **What should a student do if they need to make an emergency phone call during the school day?**
 - Students should go to the office to use school phones.
- **How do I contact my child during the school day?**
 - Parents needing to reach their child during school hours should call the office to relay a message.
- **What if there is a threat in the building and my child needs to contact parents?**
 - During a crisis, students should prioritize listening to teachers and avoid distractions from phones. Using phones can overload Wi-Fi or cell signals, potentially hindering police communications.

Infractions:

- **1st Offense:** Any personal communication device will be confiscated, stored in the principal's office, and returned at the end of the school day.
- **2nd and Subsequent Offenses:** Any personal communication device will be confiscated and stored in the office. A parent or guardian must come to the school in person to pick up the device.
- **Repeated Violation or Refusal to Comply:** Repeated violation of this rule or refusal to surrender a personal communication device to staff will result in more severe disciplinary consequences, including detention and suspension for insubordination.