

# Madison County Public Schools

## Student Cell Phone Policy

### Policy JFCM

**Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to ensure a focused and distraction-free learning environment for all students in Madison County Public Schools.

Grades PreK-12: All use of personal cell phones and other forms of electronic communication are prohibited from “bell-to-bell” (7:45 am to 3:15 pm).

### General Guidelines

- Grades K-5 Students: If a parent determines an **elementary** student needs to bring a cell phone or personal electronic communication device to school, it must be stored, off, and away from the student during the school day. It will not be used in the school building or on the school grounds before or after school. A parent must notify the school administration in writing if their child needs to possess a cell phone during the school day, including the specific reason for the request. The approval authority for such parental requests is the school principal.
- Grades 6-12 Students: Students in grades six through twelve may bring cell phones to campus, but they are not permitted to have a cell phone or personal electronic communication device on them during the bell-to-bell school day. Cell phones must remain off and stored in their lockers. Students are not permitted to use their cell phones during school hours, including in between classes or during lunch.

### Personal Electronic Communication Device Usage on School Bus Guidelines:

Grades 6-12: Students may use personal cell phones after school and while traveling to and from school on buses if adhering to the following guidelines:

1. Inappropriate use of social media, vulgar pictures, text messages, videos, etc., shall not be permitted at any time while the personal cell phone is on school property. This includes school transportation to and from school and during extracurricular, athletic, or field trips.
2. The student is solely responsible for his/her personal cell phone. The school and any school staff are not liable for loss or damage to the student's personal cell phone or other forms of electronic communication.
3. Cyberbullying will not be tolerated in any form. Engaging in cyberbullying during school hours or during any school-sponsored event or activity after hours will result in disciplinary action. In some cases, law enforcement may be involved.
4. Violations of these bus rules may result in a loss of the student's privilege to carry a phone on the bus.

## **Grades PreK-5 -- CELL PHONE VIOLATIONS and CONSEQUENCES**

If a teacher or staff member sees a student with a cell phone:

1. First Offense:
  - The teacher will contact the administration, and the phone will be confiscated immediately.
  - A referral will be written for the offense.
  - The student's parent or guardian will be notified.
  - The parent or guardian must come to the school to pick up the confiscated cell phone.
2. Second Offense:
  - The teacher will contact the administration, and the phone will be confiscated immediately.
  - A referral will be written for the offense.
  - The student's parent or guardian will be notified.
  - The parent or guardian must come to the school to pick up the confiscated cell phone and attend a conference with a school administrator.

Note: Repeated violations of this policy may result in additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the Madison County Public Schools' Code of Conduct. The Administration at each school reserves the right to determine what constitutes appropriate cell phone usage according to the policy. Parents will be contacted to advise them of the situation.

## **Grades 6-12 -- CELL PHONE VIOLATIONS and CONSEQUENCES**

If a teacher or staff member sees a student with a cell phone:

1. First Offense:
  - The teacher will contact the administration, and the phone will be confiscated immediately.
  - A referral will be written for the offense.
  - The student's parent or guardian will be notified.
  - The parent or guardian must come to the school to pick up the confiscated cell phone.
2. Second Offense:
  - The teacher will contact the administration, and the phone will be confiscated immediately.
  - A referral will be written for the offense.
  - The student's parent or guardian will be notified to pick up the device.

- The student must turn in their cell phone to the office each morning immediately after arriving at the school building and retrieve it at the end of the school day for the remainder of the school year.

Note: Repeated violations of this policy may result in additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the Madison County Public Schools' Code of Conduct. According to the policy, the Administration at each school reserves the right to determine what constitutes appropriate cell phone usage. Parents will be contacted to advise them of the situation.

### **School-based Communication Tools and Platforms**

Students must use school-based communication tools and platforms to communicate non-emergency needs with parents.

### **Parental Communication Tools and Channels**

Parents should use school-based communication tools and channels to communicate emergencies and non-emergencies. A school official will be available to support students in the event of communication involving a family emergency.

### **Emergency Communications**

In the event of a school-based emergency, students should not access their stored cell phones to ensure safety and effective communication. Unauthorized use can spread unverified information, causing panic and disrupting emergency services. Cell phone use may also overload communication networks and interfere with emergency responders. Additionally, phones can distract students from following safety instructions and may inadvertently disclose sensitive information. Restricting access helps maintain clear communication, supports the execution of safety protocols, and minimizes anxiety among students and parents.

School-based personnel are trained to manage crisis and emergency situations each year. This training equips them with the necessary skills to respond promptly and efficiently when unexpected events occur, ensuring the safety and well-being of students and staff.

In addition, comprehensive re-unification plans have been established to facilitate the orderly and swift reunion of students with their parents or guardians following an emergency. These plans outline specific procedures to follow, ensuring that every child is accounted for and returned to their family as quickly as possible.

Throughout any crisis or emergency, clear communication with parents is a top priority. To keep families informed and updated on the situation, school personnel will utilize our all-call system, which simultaneously disseminates phone calls, emails, and text messages to families. This system allows for rapid dissemination of information, ensuring that parents receive timely alerts and instructions regarding their children's safety and the actions being taken by the school.

### **All Co-curricular and Extra-curricular Activities**

All co-curricular and extra-curricular activity sponsors must use a non-social media-based app for communications with students regarding activity and athletic scheduling information during school hours. MCPS will use an app to communicate with parents and guardians. This will be shared at each preseason Sports Information Night. Schools will announce changes via the intercom system and email teachers.

### **Educational Guidance and Support**

Schools will give students developmentally appropriate guidance and support on the appropriate use of school-issued technology devices, educational apps, and educational tools for academic (both classroom and homework assignments) and for educational research purposes.

### **Allowable Exemptions:**

When an exemption is necessary to comply with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act), viable alternatives to using a cell phone or personal electronic communication device will be explored and implemented in collaboration with the student's family.

Allowable exemptions for cell phones and personal electronic communication devices must be written into 504, IEP, and/or individualized health care plans. The principal must approve all individualized health care plans that include cell phone or personal electronic communication device usage.

We appreciate the support and cooperation of students, parents, and guardians in helping maintain a productive learning environment.

### **Definitions:**

“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. “Bell-to-bell” includes lunch and time in between class periods.

“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.

“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. Options school divisions could choose to define as storage options include, but are not limited to, in the student's backpack, in the student's locker, in a locked pouch, or in a designated place in the classroom.