

Model Policy Prohibiting Use of Personal Electronic Devices during the School Day

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create a phone-free school environment that fosters a positive learning experience free from electronic distractions. By prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day, this policy aims to provide an environment that enhances focus and engagement, allowing students to develop the college and career-ready skills outlined in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. Students will have more opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions, collaborate with peers, and cultivate the essential skills necessary for success in college, careers, and life.

The Model Policy Prohibiting the Use of Personal Electronic Devices during the School Day has been developed in compliance with the General Appropriations Bill, H. 5100 of 2024, Proviso 1.103.

Proviso 1.103. (SDE: Anti-Bullying/School Safety) To receive state funds allocated for State Aid to Classrooms, a school district shall implement a policy adopted by the State Board of Education that prohibits access to personal electronic communication devices by students during the school day. For purposes of this provision, a personal electronic communication device is considered to be a device not authorized for classroom use by a student, utilized to access the Internet, wi-fi, or cellular telephone signals.

This proviso requires each local school district to adopt a policy adopted by the State Board of Education that prohibits access to personal electronic communication devices by students during the school day. This model policy must be adopted by districts and is applicable to grades kindergarten through twelve for the 2024-2025 school year. The local school board must ensure that this policy is included in the school district's publication of the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for schools and in the student handbook. Administrative support for teachers is critical for this or any policy to be successfully implemented.

School Districts may, but are not required to, publish additional guidance or administrative rules as may be necessary to implement this policy with fidelity. Any previous device or cell phone policies in conflict with this policy are superseded by this model policy.

Model Policy Language

I. Definitions:

- A. "Personal electronic device," hereinafter referred to as "device," means any device utilized to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture images or video. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones, smart watches, tablets, and gaming devices.
- B. "Personal Electronic Device accessories," hereinafter referred to as "device accessories," include any wired or wireless accessory or wearable technology that connects to a device and any other accessory commonly used in conjunction with a personal electronic device.

- C. “School day” is defined as the period of time that a student is present on the school campus from their arrival (*i.e.*, tardy bell) until afternoon dismissal at the end of the instructional day. This policy may also apply to school buses, field trips, and athletic events. The applicability of this regulation to these activities will be determined by the school district.
- D. “Access” is defined as viewing, holding, wearing, or otherwise using a device for the purpose of communication, internet access, gaming, recording, or any other function commonly associated with devices. During the school day, devices should be powered off and stored as directed by the school district. Exceptions granted for medical necessity, authorized for classroom use, or other authorized reasons should be in writing and are not considered violations of this definition.
- E. “Authorized for Classroom Use” is defined as the use of a personal electronic device that is explicitly approved by the District Superintendent or his/her designee in writing. The approval must include alignment with a standards-aligned educational objective that cannot be reasonably achieved using district-owned devices. Students must be provided with clear instructions on the appropriate use of devices and ensure that their use aligns with the approved educational objectives. The District Superintendent or his/her designee may revoke approval at any time if it is determined that their use does not meet the intended educational objectives or is causing disruptions.

II. Policy Implementation and Enforcement

- A. During the school day, students are prohibited from accessing their personal electronic devices, unless authorized for classroom use. Students may not wear or access device accessories during the school day. Students must store their devices and device accessories in lockers, backpacks, or otherwise as directed by the school district during the school day. Districts may forbid student possession of devices and device accessories on school property.
- B. If explicitly required by a student’s IEP, Medical Plan, or 504 plan, the student shall be allowed to access their personal electronic device for medically or educationally necessary purposes described and required for administration of the IEP, Medical Plan or 504 plan.
- C. A student who is a member of a volunteer firefighting organization or emergency organization may be authorized to carry a device with written permission from the District Superintendent or his/her designee.
- D. If a student violates the preceding rules during the school day, the student will be subject to progressive consequences in the student code of conduct and disciplinary enforcement procedures.
- E. Before the expiration or codification into state law of Proviso 1.103 (General Appropriations Bill, H. 5100 of 2024), a survey will be administered to all superintendents and other applicable personnel soliciting input and seeking what worked best and what can be improved upon within the proviso prior to the 2025-2026 school year. This survey will be administered prior to April 30, 2025.