

Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices in School

The Amherst County School Board recognizes that student access to cell phones and other personal electronic devices is common in current society. It is imperative, however, that students, families, and staff understand there are appropriate and inappropriate times for the use of such devices. Schools must provide a learning environment free from unnecessary distraction and disruption. The Amherst County School Board establishes expectations for student conduct so that public education is conducted in a respectful atmosphere free from disruption and threat to persons or property, and supportive of individual rights.

Expectations for Students

The use of cell phones (and all other personal electronic devices including, but not limited to, headphones, earbuds, smart watches, and other Bluetooth enabled devices) is prohibited during the regular school day. Upon students' arrival at school, and continuing through dismissal from school, cell phones and other personal electronic devices are required to be out of visible sight and powered off. The following requirements have been established based on student grade level:

Elementary Schools: cell phones and other personal electronic devices are to be off and stored in the student's backpack/book bag.

Secondary Schools: cell phones and other personal electronic devices are to be off and stored in the student's locker.

Failure to comply with this expectation will result in the following actions:

Elementary and Middle Schools:

First Offense	Parent/Guardian contacted, verbal warning, and the device will be confiscated until the end of the school day.
Second Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated, and the parent/guardian must retrieve the device from school.
Third Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated, and the parent/guardian must retrieve the device from school. In addition, for a period of 30 calendar days, the student shall be restricted from possessing a cell phone or other personal electronic device at school during instructional hours. The student may either leave their device at home or will be required to check their device into the office at arrival and retrieve it following dismissal. Students who violate this restriction will be subject to further discipline.

High School:

First Offense	Parent/Guardian contacted, verbal warning, and the device will be confiscated until the end of the school day.
Second Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated until the end of the day, and the parent/guardian must meet with school administration regarding the offense.

Third Offense	Parent/Guardian will be contacted, the device will be confiscated, and the parent/guardian must meet with school administration regarding the offense. In addition, for a period of 30 calendar days, the student shall be restricted from possessing a cell phone or other personal electronic device at school during instructional hours. The student may either leave their device at home or will be required to check their device into the office at arrival and retrieve it following dismissal. Students who violate this restriction will be subject to further discipline, including placement at the Alternative Suspension Center.
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Cell Phones and other personal electronic devices may be used:

- when students are attending non-instructional after school events/activities;
- when students have a documented medical exception approved by the principal and school nurse;
- when students are riding the school bus, as long as such use is not disruptive or distracting; students must use earbuds or headphones when listening to music or watching videos with sound while on the school bus.

Parental Involvement and Responsibility

Each parent/guardian of a student enrolled in Amherst County Public Schools has a duty to assist in enforcing this regulation, along with the Standards of Student Conduct.

Expectations for Teachers and Other School Personnel

Teachers and other school personnel are expected to strictly enforce this regulation so that students experience consistent expectations and consequences in all school settings. Teachers and other school personnel who confiscate devices must store the device in a safe location until the first available opportunity to turn it over to school administration. Confiscated devices may be retrieved during normal office school hours or at times designated by the school administration.

Teachers and other school personnel are expected to model expectations and are prohibited from using cell phones and other personal electronic devices during scheduled class time or other times when personnel are responsible for the instruction and/or direct supervision of students. Teachers and other school personnel may use cell phones when on break, during planning time, and to communicate with staff on school related issues.

Prohibited Conduct

1. Using cell phones or other personal electronic devices to:
 - a. tease, bully, intimidate, threaten or harass another individual;
 - b. collaborate with, encourage, or incite others to participate in violent or unlawful acts on school property or at school sponsored activities. This includes creating and sharing video of an act in a manner that causes disruption and disturbance;
 - c. create, possess, exchange, distribute, post, or transmit and photograph, digitized image, or video of a person in any condition of nudity, or a person engaged in any sexual act;

- d. engage in academic dishonesty and cheating.
 - e. Taking videos or photographs of students or Amherst County Public Schools personnel.
2. Refusing to surrender a cell phone or other personal electronic device when directed to do so by school personnel. Such refusal shall result in placement at the Alternative Suspension Center.

Students engaged in such conduct are subject to disciplinary action. At a minimum, the cell phone or other personal electronic device will be confiscated and used as evidence, and the student will be restricted from possessing a cell phone or other personal device at school for the remainder of the school year. Other consequences, including short or long term suspension or expulsion, may apply based on the outcome of the investigation.