

DRAFT: 4318 Student Use of Personal Wireless Communication Devices

The Wake County Board of Education recognizes that personal wireless communication devices are vital tools for parents and guardians to communicate with their children. Families choose to equip students with personal wireless communication devices, for example, to facilitate transportation, ensure the safe location of children, and monitor health information. These devices serve families well, though inappropriate use at school may challenge student engagement in classrooms and disrupt safe, orderly school environments.

The Board promotes digital literacy, citizenship, and agency as key factors in helping students make healthy choices about their learning and digital habits. The Board supports intentional, standards-based instruction that cultivates these student skills and fosters ethical digital behavior and effective learning as described in the North Carolina Digital Learning Standards for Students and policy 1610 Professional Learning.

The Board also prioritizes safe, orderly schools and engaging classroom environments conducive to learning. Accordingly, the Board seeks to minimize distraction and disruption for learners and teachers, including those brought about by inappropriate use of personal wireless communication devices.

For the purpose of this policy, “wireless communication devices” are any portable wireless devices that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties. Such devices may include, but are not necessarily limited to: cellular telephones, paging devices, two-way radios and similar devices, smartphones, smart watches, smart glasses, tablet computers, laptop computers, gaming devices, and other such internet accessing devices (whether by cellular, wired, or wireless connection).

A. Authorized Use

The Board supports clear expectations for student behavior. To promote student classroom engagement, prevent disruptions to safe, orderly school environments, and assist students in making healthy choices about their learning and digital habits, the Board establishes these parameters for the authorized student use of personal wireless communication devices during the school day.

1) Elementary and Middle Schools

Students are permitted to possess personal wireless communication devices at school but must keep them **turned off/silenced/in airplane mode** between morning and afternoon bells and may not display, use, or make them visible during this time period unless one of these exceptions applies:

- a) Use of the personal wireless communication device during school hours is specifically authorized or required by a student’s individualized education

program (IEP) or Section 504 plan or by the individualized health plan (IHP) developed by school nursing staff for that student.

- b) The school administration has elected to allow teachers, through the development of a school-wide policy, to authorize such devices to be displayed, used, or made visible for instructional purposes during instructional time, provided that teachers supervise students during such use, and the use is consistent with the teacher's authorization.
- c) The student needs to use the device to communicate with parents/guardians or emergency service personnel in the event of a sudden emergency.

2) High Schools

Students are permitted to possess personal wireless communication devices at school but must keep them **turned off/silenced/in airplane mode** between morning and afternoon bells and may not display, use, or make them visible during this time period unless one of these exceptions applies:

- a) Use of the personal wireless communication device during school hours is specifically authorized or required by a student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan or by the individualized health plan (IHP) developed by school nursing staff for a particular student.
- b) The school administration has elected to allow teachers, through the development of a school-wide policy, to authorize such devices to be displayed, used, or made visible for instructional purposes during instructional time, provided that teachers supervise students during such use, and the use is consistent with the teacher's authorization.
- c) The school administration has elected to allow, through the development of a school-wide policy, such devices to be displayed, used, or made visible during specified non-instructional times during the school day, such as class transitions, lunch, and breaks, and the use is consistent with that authorization.
- d) The student needs to use the device to communicate with parents/guardians or emergency service personnel in the event of a sudden emergency.

3) Buses

Although use is generally permitted before and after school, use of personal wireless communication devices may be regulated or prohibited on school buses when such devices interfere with the safe operation of the buses.

B. Consequences for Unauthorized Use

As inappropriate student use of personal wireless communication devices may challenge student engagement in classrooms and disrupt safe, orderly school environments, and established parameters for authorized use of such devices are set forth above, unauthorized student use of personal wireless communication devices may result in consequences under policy [4309 Student Behavior – Code of Student Conduct](#). Consistent with that policy, the specific consequences will depend in part on the specific conduct at issue. For example, unauthorized use of a personal wireless communication device to threaten, bully, or harass others may be subject to more serious disciplinary consequences under the applicable Code of Student Conduct rules on bullying, harassment, and threats, whereas merely possessing or using a wireless communication device without authorization will ordinarily be considered only a violation of Code of Student Conduct rule I-6 (Electronic Devices).

In addition to disciplinary consequences consistent with the Code of Student Conduct, school staff are authorized to temporarily confiscate a student's personal wireless communication device.

C. Search of Personal Wireless Communication Devices

In accordance with policy [4342 Student Searches](#), a student's personal wireless communication device and its contents, including, but not limited to, text messages and digital photos, may be searched whenever a school official has reason to believe the search will provide evidence that the student has violated or is violating a law, Board policy, the Code of Student Conduct or a school rule. The scope of such searches must be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the nature of the suspected infraction. Mere use of a personal wireless communication device in violation of this policy does not authorize a search of the device's contents.

D. Liability

Students are personally and solely responsible for the security of their personal wireless communication devices. The school system is not responsible for the theft, loss, or damage of such devices.

E. Annual Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to provide necessary updates that reflect the Board's priority of providing safe, orderly learning environments that are conducive to learning and the evolving needs of students, parents, and guardians.

Legal References: [G.S. 115C-36](#), [-390.2](#)

Adopted: