

## **Policy Code: 4318 Student Use of Personal Wireless Communication Devices**

The Wake County Board of Education 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 1610-7800 Professional Learning.

The Board also prioritizes the socioemotional health and well-being of students, 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 communication devices and device accessories (hereafter “personal devices”).

For the purpose of this policy, “personal devices” are any portable electronic devices that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more entities. Personal devices may include, but are not necessarily limited to: cellular telephones, paging devices, two-way radios and similar devices, smartphones, smartwatches, smart glasses, tablet computers, laptop computers, gaming devices, Bluetooth® headphones, earbuds, smart glasses, smartwatches that depend upon a connection to a smart phone or other communication device, and other such internet-accessing devices (whether by cellular, wired, or wireless connection). Smartwatches and smart glasses may be worn and used as watches and glasses throughout the school day, but any features that require wireless connections to a smartphone must be disabled when use of the wireless communication device is prohibited.

This policy does not apply to district-issued and managed devices or personal laptop computers that are used exclusively for approved instructional purposes consistent with [Policy 3225/4312/7320 Technology Responsible Use](#).

### **A. Communication Expectations**

The school day is a time for students to learn and grow, and uninterrupted class time is beneficial for all students. The Wake County Public School System asks that families reach out to the appropriate school staff member (e.g., front office staff, school counselor, school administrator, or classroom teacher) via phone, email, or otherwise to share an expected schedule change for their student. Staff will partner with families to help ensure students receive the information in a timely manner.

It is the hope of WCPSS that families will discuss this policy with their children and support a learning environment free of distractions.

## **B. 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 devices during the school day.

### **1. Elementary and Middle Schools**

Students are permitted to possess personal devices (and device accessories) at school. Students must keep them turned off and put away between morning and afternoon bells. For the purpose of this policy, a device is “put away” when it is out of sight and not easily accessible (e.g., stored in a locker, backpack, or bag). Students may not display, use, or make devices visible during this time period unless one of these exceptions applies:

- a. Use of the personal device during school hours is specifically authorized or required by a student’s individualized education program (IEP), Section 504 plan, or the individualized health plan (IHP) on file for that student, or has been approved by the administration for translation purposes, assistive communication, or a safety plan.
- b. School staff, in their discretion, may authorize brief use of a personal device if there is a reasonable and legitimate need to communicate with someone outside the school during the instructional day. Students must ask for permission in advance and must honor any specific directions from staff regarding the duration or specific time of day for any such authorized use.

NOTE: No permission is required to call 911 emergency services when appropriate.

### **2. High Schools**

Students are permitted to possess personal devices at school. Students must keep them turned off and put away during instructional time between morning and afternoon bells. For the purpose of this policy, a device is “put away” when it is out of sight and not easily accessible (e.g., stored in a locker, backpack, or bag). Students may not display, use, or make devices visible during this time period unless one of these exceptions applies:

- a. Use of the personal device during school hours is specifically authorized or required by a student’s individualized education program (IEP), Section 504 plan, or the individualized health plan (IHP) on file for that

student, or has been approved by the administration for translation purposes, assistive communication, or a safety plan.

- b. The personal device is displayed, used, or made visible for instructional purposes with the prior authorization of the classroom teacher consistent with a school-wide rule regarding such instructional use.
- c. School staff, in their discretion, may authorize brief use of a personal device if there is a reasonable and legitimate need to communicate with someone outside the school during the instructional day. Students must ask for permission in advance and must honor any specific directions from staff regarding the duration or specific time of day for any such authorized use.

NOTE: No permission is required to call 911 emergency services when appropriate.

### 3. Buses

Although use is generally permitted before and after school, use of personal devices may be regulated or prohibited on school buses by transportation or school staff when such devices interfere with the safe operation of the buses. Audio should be played only with headphones or earbuds and at a reasonable volume so as not to disturb other students or distract the driver. Students should still be able to hear directions from the driver or district staff while using headphones or earbuds.

## C. Consequences for Unauthorized Use

WCPSS hopes that all students will follow this policy and support a learning environment free of distractions.

In addition to imposing disciplinary consequences when authorized by the Code of Student Conduct, school staff are authorized to temporarily confiscate a student's personal device if any of the following apply. However, the student will first receive a verbal warning to put their device away and/or silence their device.

- The student does not immediately follow this policy in response to directives of a school employee;
- The student has repeatedly violated this policy, and the student and parent/guardian have been notified that further violations may result in immediate confiscation of the wireless communication device; or
- The student's improper use of the device substantially disrupts school events or activities or interferes with other students' ability to focus on instruction or extracurricular programming.

In general, a confiscated device should be returned at the end of the class period, school event, or activity when the device was improperly used. Parents/Guardians should be notified if this is a repeated pattern.

School administration may determine that a device will be confiscated until the end of the school day if the improper use is willful, repeated, substantially disruptive, or interferes with other students' ability to focus on instruction or extracurricular programming. Parents/Guardians should be notified before the afternoon bell rings if a device is confiscated for the remainder of the school day.

Additionally, a school administrator may require a parent/guardian, rather than the student, to recover a confiscated device if there is a pattern of violations during the same school year and the student and parent/guardian have been warned in writing that further violations may result in the device being held for pick-up by the parent/guardian.

Confiscated devices must be stored securely until the device is returned to the student or parent/guardian.

Additionally, as inappropriate student use of personal 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 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.

#### **D. Search of Personal Wireless Communication Devices**

In accordance with policy 4342 Student Searches, a student's personal device and its contents, including, but not limited to, text messages and digital photos, may be searched whenever a school official has reasonable suspicion 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.

#### **E. Responsibility and Security**

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

Adopted: June 3, 2025

Revised:

**Wake County Board of Education**