

Use of Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices in Schools and by School Bus Operators

McDowell County Board of Education believes that the school district was created for the primary purpose of effectively educating the children attending school within the school system. The Board further believes that to accomplish this mission, it is imperative that classroom instructional time be protected. In order to accommodate the growing use of cell phones or other signaling devices by both staff and students, the following guidelines are established for use of these devices during the work or school day.

1.0 Purpose:

- 1.1 This policy regulates the use of cell phones and other electronic signaling devices in order to insure uninterrupted instruction, safety, decreased bullying, and reduction of theft.
- 1.2 Students and staff may bring cell phones and other electronic signaling devices to school; however, use of such devices by students and staff may not interfere with instruction, safety, or work for which the individual has been hired.

2.0 Definitions:

- 2.1 The term “electronic signaling devices” refers to and includes, but is not limited to, a pager, hands-free phone apparatus, 2-way (walkie-talkie) radio, hand-held radio, computer-phone texting, portable signaling device, smart devices used for communication, and other similar electronics.
- 2.2 The term “misuse” includes, but is not restricted to inappropriate language, harassment, intimidation, bullying, threats, or continued use of the device when instructed otherwise by a person in authority.

3.0 Student Use of Cell Phones or Other Electronic Signaling Devices:

- 3.1 All students may use a cell phone before or after school while on school property. High school students may also use a cell phone between classes or during lunchtime at the discretion of the building administrator except as prohibited by 3.5 and 3.6 of this Policy.
- 3.2 During the instructional day (after starting time and before dismissal time) cell phones and electronic signaling devices must be stored and silenced. Appropriate storage areas include a locker, pocket, purse, or backpack (when backpacks are permitted at that school). Cell phones should not be visible or be used on the school bus unless permission is secured from the bus operator.
- 3.3 Any cell phone or other signaling device that rings or vibrates at a prohibited time or location is considered in use and will be subject to confiscation by the school administration or school staff.
- 3.4 Any device that is confiscated by administration will be released to the student or parent according to the school’s student handbook.
- 3.5 Cell phone communication, including text messages or any cell phone function or feature, or electronic signaling devices should not be used during a school-wide emergency unless

- otherwise instructed. Such use violates safety regulations and could be considered a Level III inappropriate behavior
- 3.6 Student use of a cell phone or electronic signaling device feature such as; camera, audio recording, video recording, or other image producing feature as well as text messaging for academic dishonesty, harassment, intimidation, bullying, threats or other inappropriate means is strictly forbidden. The school administration will consider such use a serious infraction, and school policy will be fully enforced.
 - 3.7 Any repeated offense for violation of policy regarding cell phones or other electronic signaling devices will result in the student being prohibited from possession of any such device on school property.
 - 3.8 This policy does not prohibit any device that is used for medical purposes and is worn by a student because of a condition that requires its use. The student must have on file at his/her school a signed statement from a licensed physician (MD, DO) prescribing its use.
 - 3.9 Any student who violates this policy in conjunction with any other disciplinary offense will be in violation of both this policy and the McDowell County Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools Policy and Manual. Such action will increase the level of the inappropriate behavior in addition to any disciplinary action taken pursuant to this Policy.
 - 3.10 As communication devices will continue to be an integral part of education, teachers are encouraged to incorporate such devices into the curriculum for purposes of instruction and learning if permission from the administration is granted.
 - 3.11 Students are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their personally-owned devices. The Board assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, or damage to, or misuse or unauthorized use of, personally-owned devices brought onto McDowell County School Property, or the unauthorized use of such devices.

4.0 Employee Use of Cell Phones or Other Signaling Devices:

- 4.1 Staff, both professional and service personnel, may bring personal cell phones or electronic signaling devices to work; however, these devices are not to be utilized when engaged in the supervision of students.
- 4.2 Misuse of cell phones or electronic signaling devices will result in disciplinary action.
- 4.3 Bus operators are prohibited from use of cell phones or any personal electronic device while operating a school bus whether or not student passengers are present. If communication with the Transportation Department is necessary, the operator must bring the bus to a complete stop in a safe area.
- 4.4 This policy does not prohibit any device that is used for medical purposes and is worn by an employee because of a condition that requires its use. The employee must have on file with

his/her immediate supervisor a signed statement from a licensed physician (MD, DO) prescribing its use.

- 4.5 This policy does not prohibit the use of a personal device to manage calendars, set reminders, make work-related calls, or utilize productivity apps. County issued devices are to be used for programs/apps such as Class Dojo.
- 4.6 Employees are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their personally-owned devices. The Board assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, or damage to, or misuse or unauthorized use of, personally-owned devices brought onto McDowell County School Property, or the unauthorized use of such devices.

5.0 Promulgation of Policy:

- 5.1 A copy of this policy shall be provided via the McDowell County Schools' website.

6.0 Severability:

- 6.1 If any provision of this policy or application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of this policy

Adoption date: January 28, 2008

Revised: November 4, 2019