



Southwest Academy

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Electronic Device & Cell Phone Policy 2023-2024

Southwest Academy Magnet School's electronic device and cell phone policy is directly aligned with BCPS' policy. Board of Education Policy and Superintendent's Rule 5552 indicates that all personal devices are to be **OFF** and **AWAY** during the school day.

Students are only to use the BCPS-issued devices. Research shows that student cell phone use in schools is the source of several negative outcomes. Upon arrival, students must **POWER OFF** their personal devices and **PUT THEM AWAY**.

Possible Outcomes of Student Cell Phone Use in School

Distractions

When a child is in school, his or her purpose is to learn. Young people can be easily distracted from their studies - and having easy access to a mobile phone during class can make it easier for them to lose focus and ultimately, decrease their achievement.

Illicit Pictures

Given that nearly every cell phone has built-in cameras, it becomes easy to take a picture or record a video of someone without the person even noticing. These pictures and videos are easily uploaded and shared over the internet, social media, airdrop, or text to friends.

Cyberbullying

Along the same lines as distributing illicit pictures, cell phones make it easier to cyberbully, which is when a person uses electronic communication to intimidate, threaten or humiliate a person. Not only can cell phones make it easier for rumors to spread through the school with a simple click of a button, but students can also send mean or hurtful texts to students and post inappropriate pictures of students. Data from the Cyberbullying Research in 2016 showed that 33.8% of students have been bullied in their lifetime; 11.9% have been threatened through a cell phone text and 11.1% have had a hurtful image of them posted. In addition, 25.7% have had one or more different types of cyberbullying done to them. With cell phones readily available in schools, cyberbullying can become a lot easier to accomplish.

Target for Predators

Many students use the internet or access social media sites without teacher or parent supervision. These students can be targeted by predators. Predators lurk in chat rooms, on social media sites, and other websites that are of interest to students. With the use of smartphones, it can be hard to monitor a student's online activity.

Harmful Physical Effects

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has regulations that discourage too much exposure to technology and allowing students to have cell phones in school can increase their screen time during the day. Cell phones give off a low level of non-ionizing radiation for which the long-term effects at low levels are still being studied. However, allowing students to use their cell phones during school adds to their exposure to this radiation, which can in turn have increased harmful effects on the developing bodies and minds of teenagers.

School Support

School staff are able to assist students immediately if issues arise. For emergencies, please contact the main office at 443-809-0825.

Consequences for Personal Device Infractions:

1. Parent Contact
2. After-school Detention
3. Southwest Academy Alternative Learning Center Assignment (SWALC)
4. Confiscation: Administrator will place the personal device in the school safe. The personal device will be released to the parent/guardian **ONLY**.

A suspension may be issued in the event the Electronic Device & Cell Phone policy is chronically violated.

In order for our students to achieve the high academic goals set at Southwest Academy, we must work together to limit disruptions and distractions to the instructional program. Thank you for your partnership in ensuring students' undistracted focus on academic achievement, as well as their social and emotional safety.