

Student Use of Personal Electronic Devices

Purpose

To foster an optimal educational experience and maximize instruction, it is essential for students to feel connected to their school environment and community. Meaningful connections can be built in various ways. While technology has enhanced our ability to connect through numerous virtual platforms—and can enrich the learning environment when used appropriately—it is crucial for students’ developmental health and growth that the District offers opportunities for in-person interactions. These face-to-face connections with peers and school community members are vital, as they teach important life and social skills necessary for students' ongoing success in the community.

To ensure an optimal educational experience, it is the policy of the Dubuque Community School District that student use of personal electronic devices is prohibited during Instructional Time as defined by this policy at all grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school). However, high school students may use personal electronic devices during their scheduled lunch period, but only in the cafeteria. Students have access to District-owned electronic devices as appropriate for instructional needs.

Definition of Instructional Time

For the purpose of this policy, Instructional Time is defined as the entire school day, from the first school bell until the last school bell. This includes all periods of instruction, lunch, recess, passing periods, and school-sponsored field trips. However, Instructional Time shall not include the lunch period for high school students, but only in the school’s cafeteria.

Definition of Personal Electronic Device

A personal electronic device refers to any device capable of electronically communicating, sending, receiving, storing, recording, reproducing, and/or displaying information and data. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Cell phones and smartphones
- Smartwatches and smart glasses
- Headphones and audio earpieces
- Handheld gaming devices

This definition excludes laptop computers or tablets issued by the school or District for educational purposes. Students may wear smart or electronic watches but may not use any communication applications or features that are otherwise prohibited on other electronic devices. All notifications must be turned off.

Communication During School Hours

Parents or guardians who need to communicate with students during the school day may contact the school's main office personnel who will arrange for communication with the student. Students may also request permission to use a school phone should they need to initiate contact during the school day. In the event of an emergency at school, the school and/or District will communicate with parents or guardians using the District's mass communication system.

Exemptions

A personal electronic device specifically authorized under a current Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, and Individual Health Plan (IHP) is exempt from this policy. These students may maintain access to their personal electronic device only during the appropriate portion of the school day as documented in the individualized plan.

Exceptions and Appeals

Parents or guardians may request that building-level administrators (e.g., the principal) allow a student to retain access to their personal electronic device during Instructional Time. Any denial may be appealed in accordance with the procedures outlined in the regulation corresponding to this policy. The Superintendent or designee will serve as the final decision-maker in such appeals. The parent or guardian is responsible for providing a valid, documented justification for the request.

Compliance and Consequences

Students who choose to use personal electronic devices outside of Instructional Time—but while on school property, at school-sponsored events, or in a manner that may impact the educational environment—must do so in accordance with all applicable laws and Board policies. Students who violate this policy may face disciplinary consequences.

Student Responsibility for Personal Devices

Students who violate this policy and use a personal electronic device during Instructional Time assume all risk associated with the possession and use of such devices. If a device is collected by school officials due to a policy violation, it will be logged and stored in a secure location designated by appropriate school personnel. The District is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of personal electronic devices—whether the device is in the student's possession, in storage, or temporarily held by school personnel.

The Superintendent or designee in conjunction with building-level administrators will develop administrative guidelines in accordance with this policy.

Adopted: June 9, 2025

Commitment

The District is committed to fostering an inclusive educational environment for all students and families. Family engagement is a valuable component of a student's educational experience. As part of this commitment, the District will create opportunities for peer-to-peer interaction and ensure that personal electronic devices are not used during Instructional Time as defined in District policy.

General Expectations

All District staff members are empowered to help enforce District policy and this regulation regarding the use of personal electronic devices. To minimize distractions during Instructional Time, students must keep personal electronic devices:

- Turned off
- Stored in backpacks or lockers
- Not accessed or used

Exception: High school students may use their personal electronic devices during their scheduled lunch period in the cafeteria only. After the scheduled lunch period, personal electronic devices must be immediately returned to a backpack or locker.

Storage of Devices

Personal electronic devices must not be carried directly on the student's person. These devices must be stored in locations such as:

- Backpacks
- Lockers
- Other designated areas as determined by authorized school staff

Students shall keep their personal electronic devices secure and turned off at all times. Students may wear smart or electronic watches but may not use any communication applications or features that are otherwise prohibited on other electronic devices. All notifications must be turned off. Devices turned in to school staff will be securely stored and logged into a location designated by school officials.

Protocols

If a student is observed using a personal electronic device during Instructional Time:

- The staff member will notify building administrators.
- The student will be required to turn the device in to a building administrator or designee.
- The device will be secured in the designated office until the end of the school day.

All surrendered devices will be logged and stored in a secure location designated by appropriate school officials. The District is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of personal electronic devices brought to school, on District property, or to school-sponsored events.

Violation Consequences:

- **First Violation:** The student will surrender the device, which will be returned at the end of the school day.
- **Second Violation:** The student will surrender the device, which will be returned at the end of the school day. The parent or guardian will be notified.
- **Third or Subsequent Violations:** School administrators will schedule a meeting with the student and their parent or guardian to develop a plan for preventing and responding to further violations. Until the meeting occurs, the student may be required to turn in their personal electronic device at the start of each school day.

Repeated violations may result in additional disciplinary action in accordance with Board Policy #5200 – Student Conduct.

Assessment Integrity:

If a student uses a personal electronic device during an assessment without authorization, they may face disciplinary actions in accordance with Board Policy #5200 – Student Conduct and/or Board Policy #5206 – Use of Information Resources and Academic Integrity.

These consequences are in addition to those outlined in the **Violation Consequences** section. For state or federally mandated assessments, the school will follow all applicable security protocols.

Appeal Process for Use of a Personal Electronic Device Access

Parents or guardians may request an exception to the personal electronic device policy for health-related reasons tied to a student's support plan.

Step 1: Submit Request

- Submit a written request to the building principal that includes:
 - The health-related reason for the request.
 - Supporting documentation (e.g., medical recommendation).
 - A description of why access to the personal electronic device is necessary to support the student.

Step 2: School Administrator Review & Notification of Decision

- The school principal will review the request with relevant staff and respond within five school days.
- The request may be approved or denied.
- If approved, the notification will include:
 - The specific conditions under which the student may access the device.
 - The duration of the exception.
- Any monitoring or reporting requirements.
- If denied, the parent or guardian may submit a written appeal to either the Executive Director of Elementary Schools or the Executive Director of Secondary Schools within five school days of the principal's decision.

Step 3: Appeal to the Executive Director of Elementary Schools or Secondary Schools

- The Executive Director will review the request with relevant staff and respond within five school days.
- The request may be approved or denied.
- If approved, the notification will include:
 - The specific conditions under which the student may access the device.
 - The duration of the exception.
 - Any monitoring or reporting requirements.
- If denied, the parent or guardian may submit a written appeal to the Superintendent within five school days of the Executive Director's decision.

Step 4: Appeal to Superintendent – Final Determination

- The Superintendent will review the request with other relevant staff, when necessary.
- The request may be approved or denied.
- If approved, the notification will include:
 - The specific conditions under which the student may access the device.
 - The duration of the exception.
 - Any monitoring or reporting requirements.
- The Superintendent will issue a final decision within five school days of receiving the appeal.
- The decision of the Superintendent shall be final.