

Achievement First

Cell Phone & Internet Enabled Devices Policy

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Purpose and Rationale

At Achievement First, we believe every minute of the school day matters. To foster a safe, respectful, and productive learning environment, and to minimize distractions to teaching and learning, we maintain clear expectations about cell phones. While we understand families may want students to carry a phone for safety and communication purposes outside of school, we also know that unrestricted use during the school day negatively impacts learning, peer relationships, and school culture.

This policy does not change what we already expect in our schools: **cell phones and internet enabled devices are not permitted for use during the school day including learning time, in classrooms, or in ways that disrupt the school environment.** We are formalizing these expectations so they are consistently understood, applied, enforced and communicated across our schools.

Definitions

- **Internet-enabled device(s):** smartphone, tablet, smartwatch or other devices capable of connecting to the internet and enabling the user to access content on the internet, including social media applications, including, without limitation, computing devices such as laptops, iPad and tablets; portable music and entertainment devices such as iPod and gaming consoles.
- **Non-internet enabled device(s):** cellular phone or other communication device not capable of connecting to the internet or enabling the student to access the internet.
- **School Day:** The entirety of the instructional day (including all non-instructional time during the school day such as homeroom period, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time).
- **School Grounds:** All building structures, athletic playing fields, playgrounds or land contained within the real property boundary line of the school.

General Policy

- Students may bring cell phones or any internet enabled devices to school at their own risk, but they **may not use, display, or access them during the school day (bell to bell)**. *The school day, as defined by the Department of Education, means the entirety of every instructional day (“bell to bell”) during all instructional and non-instructional time. This includes instructional and non instructional times such as homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and transitions.*
- Calculators and school-issued Chromebooks are the only devices allowed for instructional purposes, unless otherwise explicitly authorized by a teacher.
- Possession of cell phones and internet enabled devices are a **privilege, not a right**. Any misuse will result in disciplinary action and loss of privilege.

Exceptions

1. If authorized by a teacher, principal or school for a specific educational purpose.
2. Where necessary for the management of a student’s healthcare.
3. In the event of an emergency
- 4.
5. On a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a principal or their designee, for a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member;
6. Where required by law.

Students must be permitted to use an internet-enabled device where the use is documented on an: a) Individualized Education Program (IEP); or b) Section 504 Plan.

A parent may make a request under one of the above exceptions to the Principal. Any healthcare related exception must also include documentation from a healthcare professional affirming such need.

Guidelines by Grade Level

Grades K–4

- Students must keep their device turned off and stored in backpacks or another designated area determined by the school throughout the school day.
- Phones must not be visible or used at any time during school hours, including lunch and recess.

Grades 5–12

- Students may use phones before and after school (including afterschool programming).
- During instructional time, devices must be turned off and stored (school designated storage area).
- Schools may implement additional classroom-specific procedures aligned to this policy, including requiring phones to be placed in collection bins or designated areas.

During Exams and Assessments

- Possession of a personal device during any exam or assessment even if not in use is a violation of academic integrity and subject to discipline.
- All assessments must be completed using the school issued technology.

Prohibited Uses - Subject to Disciplinary Actions

- Using cell phones to photograph, record, or livestream any student, staff member, or activity during the school day or school-sponsored events without permission is strictly prohibited.
- Sharing, posting, or distributing unauthorized photos, videos, or recordings will result in a disciplinary action.
- Talking on a phone, texting, or using social media during instructional time will result in a disciplinary action.

On-Site Storage of Internet-Enabled Devices

Students must store their Internet-enabled devices in designated on-site storage areas during the school day. On-site storage areas may include, but are not limited to backpacks (K-4 only), lockable pouches and centralized secure storage.

Principals will communicate the procedures for storing and retrieving devices, ensuring that students understand their responsibilities in using the on-site storage facilities provided.

Security of Devices

AF Schools will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the School but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. AF Schools shall not be responsible for any personal device that is lost, stolen or damaged during the School Day or at school-sponsored activities. Any lost, stolen or damaged personal device should be reported immediately to the Principal.

School Response to Policy Violation

- Any unauthorized possession of cell phone devices during instructional time or in violation of this policy will result in the following actions:
 - (1st Time) Verbal Warning to put the device away in the school designated area
 - (2nd Time) Call to Family
 - (3rd Time) Family Meeting
 - (4th Time) Confiscation of device and returned at the end of the school day
 - The device must be stored in a secure location.
 - If the device is not secured after confiscation, and something happens to the device, the school will be held liable for the device.
 - (5th Time) Confiscation and family pick up of the device.
 - We will proactively communicate this cadence to families with a clear understanding that students have 4 chances before we require family pick up
 - Communication with the family must take place with each infraction leading up to this one and must be documented in ICART and IC (PLP tab)
- **Schools are prohibited from issuing a suspension for violation of the general policy. Some uses of cell phones and internet-enabled devices will constitute a separate violation of network policy and be subject to additional consequences.**

Sample Family Communication: Cell Phone Policy

Subject line: New Cell Phone and Electronics Policy for 2025–26

Dear Achievement First Families,

We know that many families want their children to carry a cell phone or other device for safety and communication on the way to and from school. We support that. However, we also know that phones and internet enabled devices are a distraction to students, interrupt instruction, and negatively impact school culture during the school day.

Achievement First has always had a Cell Phone policy (as outlined in our Family Handbook). We are aligning our policy across all regions to align with state regulations around K-12 cell phone and internet enabled device usage during the school day. **This will take effect on the first day of school.** While we have always expected classrooms to be phone-free, this policy formalizes our rules so they are clear, consistent, and transparent for everyone.

What you need to know:

- Students may bring a cell phone or internet enabled device to school with the understanding that the school is not responsible for loss, damage, or theft.
- **Students must store the phones and internet enabled devices in designated areas determined by the school.**
 - **Internet-enabled device(s) include but are not limited to** smartphones, tablets, iPads, smartwatches, laptops, portable music players, or handheld gaming consoles that can connect to the internet and access online content, including social media and other applications, regardless of brand or model.
- **Students may not use or display phones or devices during the school day.**
- Students may use phones and/or devices before they enter the school building and after school only.
- Once in the school building, phones and/or devices must be off and stored in designated areas determined by the school.
- Unauthorized or misuse during the day may result in confiscation, family pick up of the device, and/or additional disciplinary action.

What happens if a student does not follow expectations:

Any unauthorized use of cell phone devices during instructional time or in violation of this policy will result in the following actions:

- (1st Time) Verbal Warning to put the device away in the school designated area.
- (2nd Time) Call to Family
- (3rd Time) Family Meeting
- (4th Time) Confiscation of device and returned to the student at the end of the school day
- (5th Time) Confiscation of the device and family pick up of the device.

If you need to reach your child during the school day, please call the school's main office. Thank you for partnering with us to create a safe, focused, and joyful learning environment for all students. If you have any questions about the policy, please contact your school's principal.