

Cell Phones and Paging Devices

A “paging device” is a telecommunications device that emits an audible signal, vibrates, displays a message, or otherwise summons or delivers a communication to the possessor. *Education Code 37.082* (PDAs and palm pilots with the capability of receiving messages and cellular phones are included in this definition. The term “cell phone” will be used for the remainder of this topic since it is the more commonly used device.)

Elementary students shall not possess a cell phone during the instructional day (8:00 am to 4:00 pm), while riding to/from school on District transportation, or while participating in a school-sponsored extracurricular activity on or off school property. For example, an elementary student performing at a PTA meeting or on a field trip to the zoo may not be in possession of a cell phone; however, an elementary student could possess a cell phone at an event open to the public (in which the student is not performing) such as at a carnival or a sporting event. [See “Noncompliance” (later in this topic) regarding consequences that apply to elementary students who are in possession of a cell phone at school.]

In response to parental safety concerns, **Katy ISD will allow junior high and high school students to possess cell phones (including PDAs, palm pilots, and blackberries) with certain restrictions.** While most students are respectful of the rules related to cell phones in the school setting, campus administrators still report many problems associated with the misuse of cell phones. These problems will continue to rise as technology advances and the devices get smaller. Administrators report that cell phones ring during class causing disruptions, students are distracted from instruction because they are sending/receiving text messages, and the devices are used to cheat on tests and other classroom work. Students are also using cell phone technology to take inappropriate photos/videos, scan tests and other classroom work, etc.

In order to allow cell phones on campus during the school day, **the following guidelines will be required of secondary students who choose to bring these devices to school:**

- **Cell phones must be turned off and must not be visible during the instructional day and/or at any time on District transportation.** An exception will be made if a high school student is in attendance in the capacity of an active member of a volunteer firefighting organization or a volunteer emergency medical service organization. A cell phone that rings or vibrates IS NOT turned off. If a parent needs to get a message to their child, a cell phone turned off can still receive voicemail messages that can be retrieved after school hours. Cell phones should not be used to keep track of the time because cell phones must be off and not visible (i.e. cell phones become visible when pulled out of a purse or backpack). Cell phones should be completely out of sight (including cell phone holders).
- **Students must keep cell phones in a purse, backpack, or locker -- the cell phones may not be on a student's person.**
- **Instructional day defined.** For cell phone purposes, the instructional day is as follows:
 - Junior High -- 7:00 am to 2:40 pm
 - High School -- 7:25 am to 2:40 pm**unless** the student is in afterschool classroom activities (such as tutorials, fine arts rehearsals, athletic practices/competitions, club meetings, etc.) or detentions when the length of the instructional day is extended until the end of these programs. These timeframe restrictions apply to school-related meetings/practices before school and to high school students on work release as well.
- **Afterschool use.** When attending afterschool activities, cell phones must be in the “silent” mode inside the venue of an afterschool activity held indoors (i.e. basketball game, choir or band concert, carnival, etc.). Students must go into a foyer or outside prior to using a cell phone at an indoor afterschool event.
- **Responsibility.** If a student brings a cell phone to school, it is the student's responsibility to keep the item secure. The school will not be responsible for cell phones that are damaged, lost or stolen; however, as with other personal property brought to school, administrators will conduct investigations as time permits, in an effort to recover lost/stolen items or to determine the person(s) responsible for damages, and will assess discipline as appropriate.
- **School Emergencies and Safety Restrictions.** Ensuring that school officials, law enforcement officers and other emergency agencies will have adequate means of communication during an emergency is of utmost importance to the safety of all students. Therefore, students are asked to not turn cell phones on to make phone

calls or send/receive text messages during an emergency situation that occurs at school until the crisis stage is over unless they are instructed to do so by a staff member or an emergency responder. Students will participate in emergency drills to prepare for these situations. (Parents are asked to refrain from making calls to the school since there are only a few phone lines into the school, and these phone lines are strategic in communicating with emergency responders. In addition, parents are asked to refrain from calling cell phones or sending text messages to keep the airwave frequencies open for emergency responders. As soon as feasible, school personnel will allow students to make phone calls to parents.)

- **Noncompliance.** The following will occur when a student is not in compliance with the guidelines:
 - The cell phone will be confiscated.
 - The student who violates the cell phone guidelines will be assessed a disciplinary consequence at Level II for first and second offense(s) and at Level III for third and subsequent offense(s) as outlined in the *Discipline Management Plan and Student Code of Conduct*. (Note: **Participation in many extracurricular organizations is impacted by Level II and Level III offenses**, as well as semester exam exemptions at the high school level. Please review organizational guidelines and understand the ramifications that may occur due to noncompliance.)
 - The parent or guardian of the student will be allowed to reclaim the confiscated paging device, from the campus where the confiscation occurred, by paying an administrative fee of fifteen dollars [(\$15) by cash or money order] as allowed by *Texas Education Code 37.082*. Fees collected will be designated for use toward summer school scholarships.
- **Unclaimed Cell Phones.** If a cell phone is not reclaimed by the parent/guardian within 30 days of the date of notification or the end of the school year (whichever is later), notice will be given to the company whose name and address or telephone number appears on the cell phone indicating that the device will be disposed of as allowed by State law.

An employee who discovers a student in possession of a cell phone/paging device in violation of this policy shall confiscate the cell phone/paging device and report the violation to the principal or his/her designee.

Under no circumstances should cell phones be used to take pictures in any school facility. This is especially important because of privacy issues related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the federal law that protects student privacy. Confiscated cell phones that have the capacity to take photographs will have photos reviewed in the presence of the student prior to being claimed by a parent/guardian to ensure that no photos were taken during the school day that violate FERPA laws or school rules. Students will be required to delete school-related photos that were not taken at an event open to the public. Additionally, police will be contacted if an administrator has reason to believe that a photo might be a violation of law.