

Katy Independent School District
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, cellular phones, and related accessories (including but not limited to wires, headphones, and ear clips) are included in this definition. Any electronic device that has cell phone features will be treated as a cell phone. 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, during tutorials or detention, 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.]

Junior high and high school students are allowed 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. Problems include: 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.** A cell phone that is capable of sending text messages, 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 and text 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 must be completely out of sight (including cell phone holders and accessories). 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.
- **Instructional day defined.** For cell phone purposes, the instructional day is as follows:
 - Junior High — 7:00 am to 2:35 pm
 - High School — 7:30 am to 2:35 pm**unless** the student is in afterschool classroom activities (such as tutorials, fine arts rehearsals, athletic practices/competitions, club meetings, etc.) or detentions in which case the length of the instructional day is extended until the end of these programs. For high school students, the warning bell in the morning will serve as a signal to alert students that it is time to begin turning off cell phones and storing the phones and their accessories so that they are no longer visible by the time the tardy bell rings at 7:30. These timeframe restrictions apply to school-related meetings/practices before school and to high school students on work release as well.
- **Locker rooms and restroom areas.** The use of cell phones in locker rooms and restroom areas at any time while at school or at a school-related or school-sponsored event is strictly prohibited.
- **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, theater arts production, 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 such as a fine arts event and other types of assembly in which common courtesy dictates that talking is prohibited.
- **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.)
- **State or Major Assessments.** Violation of the cell phone guidelines during the administration of any state or major course assessment (TAKS, TAKS-I, TAKS-M, and TELPAS; AP, end-of-course, or semester exam) may result in an invalid assessment and/or will be regarded as cheating. The student's test will be invalidated with appropriate disciplinary action assessed.
- **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.)
 - Failure to relinquish a cell phone when asked to do so will result in additional disciplinary consequences for noncompliance as well as confiscation of the device for a period of time up to the remainder of the year.
 - 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 is expected to 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. If an administrator suspects that a cell phone may contain photos taken at school or inappropriate photos, the photos will be reviewed in the presence of the student prior to being claimed by a parent/guardian. 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.

Likewise, if an administrator suspects that a cell phone was used in violation of these guidelines and/or for cheating, the administrator may review the call history and/or text messages in the presence of the student prior to the cell phone being claimed by a parent/guardian.