

Wireless Communication Device Use Procedures

In accordance with **Senate Bill 11** (2025) and guidance from the **New Mexico Public Education Department (PED)**, PAPA has adopted the following policy to limit distractions during instructional time and promote a safe, focused, and respectful learning environment.

Definition of Wireless Communication Devices

For the purposes of this policy, a **wireless communication device** is defined as any **portable electronic device capable of transmitting voice, text, or data**, including but not limited to:

- Cellular phones, smartphones, and smartwatches
- Tablet computers
- Laptop computers
- Gaming devices

Device Use During Instructional Hours

- Students **may not use or display wireless communication devices during class time** or other instructional periods, unless **explicitly permitted** by a teacher or authorized school staff for educational purposes.
- Devices must remain **silenced and out of sight** (e.g., in a backpack or locker) during all instructional hours unless otherwise allowed.

Exemptions

Students may use wireless communication devices during instructional time only in the following situations:

- A **medical necessity** as verified by documentation or a care plan
- An **emergency situation** as determined by school personnel
- When specified in an approved **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** or **Section 504 accommodation**

Use During Non-Instructional Hours

Students may use wireless communication devices **before and after school**, and during **lunch or passing periods**, unless directed otherwise by staff due to behavioral concerns or safety incidents.

Consequences for Unauthorized Use

- Students using a wireless communication device without explicit permission during instructional hours will be required to **secure their device in a locked cell phone pouch** for the remainder of the school day.
- The pouch may be **unlocked only at the front office after dismissal**.
- Refusal to comply with staff direction regarding device use will be addressed under the **school's Behavior Matrix**, including consequences for **defiance and disruption** of the educational process.
- **Tampering with a cell phone pouch** (e.g., attempting to force open or damage it) will result in:
 - Financial responsibility for **the cost of pouch replacement**
 - Additional consequences for **destruction of school property, interference with instruction, and defiance**

Student Privacy

PAPA is committed to protecting student **privacy and confidentiality**. When a student's use of a device is related to a medical need or accommodation, school staff will ensure the situation is managed **discreetly and respectfully**.

Communication With Families

Parents and guardians who need to contact their student during instructional hours should do so by **calling the school office**. Students will be given the opportunity to return the call from a school phone, if appropriate.

Why This Matters: Research-Based Rationale

This policy is rooted in research showing that reducing device usage during school hours improves both academic and social-emotional outcomes for students.

- **Mental Health & Safety:** Excessive screen time and social media use are linked to increased anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying. Reducing device access at school promotes emotional well-being.
- **Improved Focus:** Cell phones and smart devices are major sources of distraction. Even the presence of a phone can reduce attention and memory retention.
- **Academic Gains:** Schools that restrict in-class phone use report higher student engagement and test performance. In New Mexico, schools with similar policies saw an average **5-point increase in student growth percentile scores**.
- **Better Social Interaction:** Limiting device use encourages face-to-face communication, peer relationships, and a stronger school community.

