



*Administration Center  
1000 East Broadway, Stratford, CT 06615*

## **P5131.81 Cell Phone Policy / Electronic Devices**

### **Electronic Devices**

#### **Wireless Communication and Electronic Devices (Cell Phones, Smartwatches, Earbuds, Headphones, and More)**

The Stratford Board of Education (Board) is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive learning environment for its students. The Board recognizes that, depending on how they are used, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices can be either a valuable learning tool or a source of disruption in the learning environment. In order to maintain a secure and orderly learning environment, student use and possession of cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices shall be subject to the limitations set forth in this policy.

There is a growing body of evidence that suggests student access to cellular telephones and other electronic communication devices may be detrimental to student emotional wellbeing and academic growth. Therefore, the use of electronic communication devices and other such technology at school is considered a privilege, not a right.

The district strongly encourages students to leave all cellular phones, electronic communication devices, and headphones at home. If students choose to bring these items to school, they must adhere to their school's policies regarding their use. The school is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Students may possess cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices on school property and school-sponsored transportation, providing students adhere to the restrictions contained within this policy. Any unauthorized use of cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices or headphones during the instructional school day or at such times as not authorized by the school Principal or designee is prohibited as it disrupts the instructional program or distracts from the educational environment.

1. ***Elementary and Middle School Students:*** Elementary and middle school students may possess cellular phones and other wireless communication devices—including but not limited to smartwatches, earbuds, headphones, and handheld gaming devices—on school property and school-sponsored transportation. However, all such devices must be powered off and remain completely inaccessible throughout the instructional school day. Students must store these devices in a non-visible, secure location, such as a backpack or locker, ensuring they are not on their person at any time during the school day.

2. ***High School Students:*** High school students may possess cellular phones and other wireless communication devices—including but not limited to smartwatches, earbuds, headphones, and handheld gaming devices on school property and school-sponsored transportation, provided that upon entering any instructional space such cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices are turned off/powered down and placed in the designated secure storage containers. High school students must keep their cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices stored in these secure locations for the entire class period, including study halls, and including when a student temporarily leaves the classroom (for bathroom use, etc.).

Cellular telephones or other wireless communication devices which have the capability to take photographs or videos shall not be used for such purposes while on school property or while a student is engaged in district-sponsored activities unless as expressly authorized in advance by the Principal or designee.

Students are permitted to use their devices in the hallways between classes, and throughout lunch periods. However, their usage must always be appropriate and respectful. As part of this expectation, students are required to follow the district's Responsible Use Policy, ensuring that their device use aligns with school guidelines and fosters a positive learning environment.

The use of cellular telephones or other wireless communication devices in any manner that disrupts the educational environment or violates the rights of others, including the use of the device to take photographs in locker rooms or bathrooms, cheat, or otherwise violate student conduct rules is prohibited. Prohibited conduct specifically includes creating, sending, sharing, viewing, receiving, or possessing an unauthorized and/or indecent visual depiction of oneself or another person.

In the event of an emergency, students should go to the main office to use the office phone or seek assistance from a staff member.

To ensure compliance with the cell phone policy, the school enforces progressive disciplinary measures for violations. Consequences may include warnings, confiscation of the device, parent / legal custodian contact, and additional actions as determined by school administration.

Additionally, the school is not responsible for lost or stolen electronic devices. If a student's device is confiscated, administration may require a legal custodian to retrieve it.

This policy is designed to promote a balanced approach to technology use, supporting both academic success and responsible digital engagement. The cooperation of students, legal custodians, and staff is essential in maintaining these expectations.

## **Unauthorized Use of Devices**

A student's possession, display or use of a cellular telephone and other wireless communication devices on school property contrary to the provisions of this policy shall be viewed as the unauthorized use of the cellular phone or other wireless communication devices when such possession, display or use of such devices results in conduct which includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Interference with or disruption of the instructional or educational environment.
- b. Use which violates academic integrity, such as the reproduction of images of tests, communication of test or examination contents or answers, to provide access to unauthorized school information, or assistance to students in any aspect of their instructional program in a manner that violates school Board policy or the Student Code of Conduct.
- c. The communication of the marks or grades assigned to students resulting from evaluation or the actual contents, or parts thereof, of any evaluation activity being completed by an individual(s).
- d. Use to commit a crime, under federal or state law.
- e. Violation of a student's or other person's reasonable expectation of privacy, by using such devices with photographic capabilities in student locker-rooms, restrooms, any other student changing areas, or the classroom, whether such use occurs during the instructional school day or on school property. Cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices may not be utilized to take "photographs" or "videos" while on school property, while on school-sponsored transportation or while a student is engaged in school-sponsored activities.
- f. Use in a manner that is profane, indecent, obscene, threatening, discriminatory, bullying or harassing language, pictures or gestures. Cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices which have the capability to take "photographs" or "moving pictures" shall not be used for such purposes while on school property, while on school-sponsored transportation or while a student is engaged in school-sponsored activities.

## **Other Acceptable Uses**

Cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices are only permissible in the following circumstances, with **PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL BY PRINCIPAL OR DESIGNEE** using the ["Request for Cellular Phone Use in School"](#) electronic form:

- a. ***Instructional or Educational Purposes.*** There is educational value in utilizing cellular telephones or other wireless communication devices in the classroom when such devices deliver content, and extend, enhance, and/or reinforce a student's learning process related to the student's learning style, the instructional objectives of the class and/or the

learning environment. The appropriateness of in-class use of these devices consistent with the instructional objectives within instructional time will be determined by the classroom teacher with the approval of the building Principal or designee.

- b. ***IEP, 504, or Health Care/Medical Plan.*** Students may use cellular phones, wireless communication devices and other electronic devices during class time when authorized pursuant to an Individual Education Plan (IEP), a Section 504 Accommodation Plan, or a Health Care/Medical Plan with supportive documentation from the student's physician.
- c. ***Health, Safety or Emergency Reasons.*** Exceptions to the restrictions in this policy, in part or in its entirety, may be made for health, safety and emergency reasons by the Principal.
- d. ***School Trips or School-Sponsored Activities.*** The use, display or activation of cellular phones or other wireless communication devices during school trips or school sponsored activities shall be at the discretion of the Principal or designee, but shall not be disruptive to the activity.
- e. ***Other Reasons.*** Other reasons determined appropriate by the Principal.

Unauthorized use of these devices is grounds for confiscation by school officials, including classroom teachers. Repeated unauthorized use of such devices may lead to disciplinary action per the Stratford Public Schools Code of Conduct.

### **Responsibility/Liability**

Any student who chooses to bring a cellular telephone or other wireless communication device to school shall do so at their own risk and shall be personally responsible for the security of their cellular phone or wireless communication device. Neither the school personnel or Board will assume any responsibility or liability for loss, theft, damage or vandalism to a cellular phone or other wireless communication device brought onto school property, or for the unauthorized use of any such device.

- (cf. 5114 – Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)
- (cf. 5131 – Conduct)
- (cf. 5131.8 – Off School Grounds Misconduct)
- (cf. 5131.82 – Restrictions on Publications and Written or Electronic Material)
- (cf. 5131.911 – Bullying)
- (cf. 5131.913 – Cyberbullying)
- (cf. 5144 – Discipline/Punishment)
- (cf. 5145.5 – Sexual Harassment)
- (cf. 5145.51 – Peer Sexual Harassment)

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***Policy Revised and Adopted: Stratford Board of Education – Monday, June 23, 2025***