

# *Dickenson County Public Schools*

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*Haydee L. Robinson, Superintendent*



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Dear Students, Parents, and DCPS Families,

On Monday, November 18, 2024, the Dickenson County School Board approved the Cell Phone-Free policy pursuant to Governor Youngkin's Executive Order #33. This policy will go into effect on Tuesday, January 7, 2025.

For your information: The approved policy is attached.

Please note the following important points of the policy:

- **Cell phone-free education in Virginia's schools** is "bell-to-bell", defined as phones should be turned off and stored in lockers from the first bell at the start of the school day to begin instructional time until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic school day.
- **"Bell-to-bell"** includes lunch and time in between class periods.
- **DCPS has determined** "bell-to-bell" from 8:00 a.m. to school dismissal.

Thank you for your support and consideration as the cell phone-free policy is implemented.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kindest regards,

Haydee L. Robinson,  
Division Superintendent

## **Guidance for Cell Phone-Free Education Pursuant to Executive Order #33**

### **1. Purpose:**

Dickenson County Public Schools will regulate the use of cell phones and other personal electronic communication devices as determined by the Guidance for Cell Phone-Free Education Pursuant to Executive Order 33 specifically:

- Bell-to-bell restriction, including during lunch and time in between class periods.
- Cell Phone-Free Education: Students cannot access cell phones or personal electronic communication devices from their lockers or storage areas during the bell-to-bell school day.
- Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Communication Devices will be stored in lockers during the bell-to-bell school day, not on the “person” or backpacks. They should be turned off or on silent mode and stored in the lockers.

### **2. Definition:**

- **“Bell-to-bell”** school day means from when the first bell rings at the start of the school day to begin instruction time until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic school day. “Bell-to-bell” includes lunch and time in between class periods. Bell-to-Bell for Dickenson County Public Schools is from 8:00 a.m. until school dismissal.
- **“Cell Phone-Free Education”** means eliminating using cell phones and other personal electronic communications devices in public schools.
- **“Cell Phone”** means a personal device capable of making calls, transmitting pictures or videos, or sending or receiving messages electronically. The definition of a cell phone includes a non-smartphone limited to making phone calls or text messages, a smartphone that encompasses the above features, and other future personal electronic communication devices with the abovementioned characteristics.
- **“Instructional time”** means any structured or unstructured learning experiences that occur from when the first bell rings at school until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic school day.
- **“Personal Electronic Communication Device”** means any personal device capable of connecting to a smartphone, the internet, a cellular or Wi-Fi network, or directly connecting to another similar device. Personal electronic communications devices may include wearable devices such as smartwatches, headphones, laptops, tablets, or other future personal electronic communication devices with the abovementioned characteristics. Further clarification: This includes but is not limited to headphones, camera devices, video and audio recording devices, digital recording devices, scanning devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs), MP3 players, iPods, iPads, tablets, computers, radios, pagers, any device that allows the possessor to access the Internet, or any similar device or any accessories to such devices such as earphones, and Bluetooth devices.

**“Stored”** means a cell phone or personal electronic communication device not carried on the student’s person, including not in the student’s pocket.

In Grades PK—4th and Grades 6th—12th, Cell phones will be stored in lockers during the bell-to-bell school day, not on the “person” or backpacks. Cell Phones should be turned off or on silent mode and stored in the lockers. In Grade 5, Cell phones will be stored in cell phone pouches in the classroom due to the unavailability of lockers.

- **“County-owned devices”** refers to all cell phones and other electronic devices provided by Dickenson County Public Schools.
- **The term “misuse”** includes but is not restricted to inappropriate language, harassment, bullying, threats, or when a person in authority instructs the user to cease using the device.

### 3. Student Use of Cell Phones or Other Electronic Signaling Devices:

The Cell Phone-Free Guidance differentiates age-appropriate cell phone restrictions in Virginia’s elementary and secondary public schools.

- Cell phones and personal electronic communication devices will not be used by elementary students within the school building or school grounds during the bell-to-bell school day. Cell phones will be stored in classroom lockers and turned off during this time.
- In **middle school**, students shall not have a cell phone or personal electronic communication device during the bell-to-bell school day. In Grade 5, cell phones will be stored in pouches located in the classroom due to the unavailability of lockers.
- For Grades 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>, cell phones will be stored in lockers and turned off during this time. Educators must use non-social media-based apps to communicate with students regarding activity and athletic scheduling information during school hours. Outside of the bell-to-bell instructional time, cell phones and personal electronic communication devices may be used on a high school campus before or after school
- In **high school**, students shall not have a cell phone or personal electronic communication device during the bell-to-bell school day. The devices must be stored in lockers and off during this time. Educators must use non-social media-based apps to communicate activity and athletic scheduling information with students during school hours. Outside of the bell-to-bell instructional time, cell phones and personal electronic communication devices may be used on a high school campus before or after school

### 4. Expectations for Faculty and Staff:

- a. Staff and faculty are expected to role model the protocols for cell phone-free and personal electronic communication devices in the classroom. Personal cell phones and electronic communication devices may be used for authentication and stored away during the instructional block—and working hours.

### 5. Implementation:

- Administrators and teachers will consistently communicate and enforce this policy across all classes.
- School administrators will support teachers in enforcing the policy and addressing any challenges that may arise.

- This policy will be communicated to students and parents through school handbooks, orientation programs, and other communication channels

## 6. Disciplinary Action

**If a student refuses to place or leave their cell phone in their lockers, this will result in an immediate discipline referral to the office:**

- **1<sup>st</sup> occurrence: Office Referral.** The administrator contacts the parent, and the cell phone or personal electronic device is taken for the rest of the day.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> occurrence: Office Referral.** The administrator contacts the parent, and the parent must pick up the cell phone or personal electronic device from the office at the end of the day.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> occurrence: Office Referral.** The administrator contacts the parent. The student will *not* be allowed to have it on the premises for the remainder of the year.
- **4<sup>th</sup> occurrence:** Referral to Disciplinary Committee

**\*\* PHONES DURING AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:** The Dickenson County Public Schools will allow cell phones and personal electronic communication devices at after-school activities. Any evidence of inappropriate use will result in disciplinary action as stated in Section 6: Disciplinary Action:

## 7. Accommodations:

- Accommodations will be made for students who use a personal electronic device for medical assistance or a medical condition that requires it. The parent/guardian shall provide the school with permission for this student to wear the device and a signed statement from a licensed physician (MD, DO) prescribing its use.
- If a student with a medical condition is given allowances for a cell phone but violates the cell phone policy, consequences will be determined and applicable.
- The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) must include writing and determining accommodations for cell phones and personal electronic communication devices.
- Accommodations for cell phone use or other technology assistance will be made for EL (English Learner) students with a documented language barrier.

## 8. Parental Contact with Students During School Hours:

- The parent can contact the main school office to reach their children during school hours. The office staff will relay any urgent messages to the students.

## 9. Student Use of Cell Phones or Other Electronic Signaling Devices:

Personal electronic devices may not be used to cause any disruption in the educational process or for unethical or illegal purposes. Prohibited uses include, but are not limited to,

- Cheating on assignments and tests,
- Harassing or bullying others,

- Taking or distributing unauthorized photographs or recordings of other people
- Personal electronic devices may not be used to access any obscene, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate material via any electronic communication.
- Livestreaming or social media posting during the school day is not allowed.

Dickenson County Public Schools will not be responsible or liable for the theft, loss, data loss, damage, destruction, misuse, or vandalism of any student's electronic device brought onto school property.