

Garrett County Public Schools Announces a New Practice for Cell Phone Use at Northern and Southern Garrett High Schools

In today's world, society stays connected via cell phones. To that end, students may now access their cell phones during non-instructional time during the school day (before and after school, between classes, and at lunch) provided their use does not cause a disruption or does not make them late for class. Students may not use camera or recording devices on school property without explicit permission from staff. *Personal devices must be connected to the GCPS network – the use of cellular data on personal devices is strictly forbidden.* This is detailed in Garrett County Policy and Procedure JIK, which can be found on the school system's website. Student use of cell phones for instructional purposes during class time is at the sole discretion of the individual classroom teacher.

Garrett County Public Schools views using instructional technology as one way of supporting our mission to teach the skills, knowledge and behaviors students will need as responsible citizens in the 21st century global community. Students learn collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking in a variety of ways throughout the school day. In an effort to be proactive with today's growing social and interactive technology trends, it is our hope that this new practice will increase awareness and training while putting into practice social and professional etiquette relating to electronic devices. However, teachers will always retain the right to govern cell phone use. Students in possession of a cell phone must comply with Garrett County's Acceptable Use of Technology Policy.

While this connectivity is standard in the modern age, cell phone usage has been an ongoing problem on school campuses across the country. The inappropriate use of cell phones during instructional time in an academic setting can be detrimental to the learning environment when such use takes valuable time away from instruction, distracts students, and creates disciplinary problems. Furthermore, phones are stolen, loaned to other students, may be lost or broken, and have made crisis situations worse. Cell phones should not be used in any manner that will cause disruption to the educational/classroom environment. Students who use cell phones during instructional time without explicit permission from their teacher, and/or students who do not respond to teacher directions regarding cell phones, will be considered insubordinate. Students bring their phones to the school at their own risk. GCPS will not be responsible for stolen or broken cell phones. Their security is the sole responsibility of the student. Garrett County Public Schools will not be responsible for loss, damage, or theft of any electronic device brought to school.

To ensure pupil safety, students should continue to use the school office phone for any health or other emergency situation. If a parent contacts a student via cell phone during instructional time, the consequences regarding cell phone use will still apply. Please counsel your child to check for messages outside of academic periods. We recommend that parents discuss this change in practice and corresponding policy with their child in order to avoid problems. While most students have cell phones, it is not their right to use them whenever they choose. Parents, please support this policy.

More information related to this change will be shared at each high school. Should you have questions about this policy please contact your school principal.