

# Great Oaks Academy

## Student Use of Cellular Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices Policy No. 512

### I. Purpose

Great Oaks Academy is committed to protecting the learning environment from disruption and protecting students from harmful exposure or unvirtuous conduct. This policy is to establish a phone-free policy from first bell to last bell (all-day) in order to maximize the benefits for students, teachers, staff and administrators.

### II. Definitions: The Academy defines cell phones and personal electronic devices in the following ways.

- A. Cell phones (both phones that connect to the internet and non-internet connected cell phones that send and receive text message and make phone calls)
- B. Personal electronics devices such as tablets and video games
- C. AirPods, earbuds, Bluetooth connected headphones
- D. Smartwatches, fitness trackers and other accessories that connect to the internet

### III. General Statement of Policy.

- A. Great Oaks Academy is committed to providing a safe, distraction free academic environment which allows students to thrive within a classical pedagogy. We hold high expectations for student behavior, academic integrity, and this extends to student use of technology on school grounds.
- B. Given this, cell phones and all personal electronic devices are prohibited in the school.
- C. The policy will be strictly enforced by all administration and staff school-wide.

### IV. Standards: Cell phones and smart devices are prohibited on school grounds during all school hours because:

- A. Respect for Virtuous Culture: Students shall not bring any electronic or “smart” device that could potentially disrupt or detract from the educational environment.
  - 1. Cell phones not only disrupt academic learning, but socialization as well. The use of cell phones during lunch, passing periods and free time prevents students from engaging with their peers and creating a sense of community.
  - 2. Cell phones create an additional burden on teachers who have to police cell phone use in their classroom when the policy isn’t building wide. Removing phones from the person eliminates the urge to check notifications, scroll social media, communicate via text, watch videos and engage in other distractions.
  - 3. Access to cell phones any time during the school day allows students to organize fights, record others, cyberbully, focus on social media interactions and share inappropriate content.
- B. Respect for Privacy Rights:
  - 1. A cell-phone free policy also eliminates privacy violations that occur in the building, including locker rooms and restrooms where privacy is of utmost importance. Examples of such violations include emailing, texting, posting to the internet or via social media and device applications, or otherwise electronically transmitting

recordings, images, or videos of other individuals (e.g., staff, students) without their expressed consent, or in locker rooms, dressing rooms, health offices, and restrooms, or where individuals have every expectation of privacy.

2. This policy prevents devices from being used for inappropriate, unethical, or illegal purposes, including but not limited to, transmission or viewing of inappropriate or pornographic material, violations of others' privacy rights, cheating, harassing, or bullying behavior. Accessing inappropriate material in school, on a school bus, or at a school activity will result in disciplinary action, even if such access is accidental.

C. Assuring Academic Integrity:

1. This requirement helps to prevent any suspicion of or temptation towards academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating on tests or academic work or violating copyright policy). Students shall follow all testing requirements and policies set forth by the school, state, and/or test manufacturer. Students who violate or who are suspected of violating these requirements and policies will be subject to the school's discipline policies and/or academic consequences outlined by the testing body (e.g., MDE's rules for MCA tests).

- D. Compliance with Other Great Oaks Academy Policies: This policy supports other Great Oaks Academy policies, including those regarding student privacy, copyright, cheating, plagiarism, civility, student code of conduct, electronic technologies use, and harassment. If a violation occurs involving more than one Great Oaks Academy policy, consequences for each policy may apply.

V. Parent/Guardian/Student Communication

- A. If parent/guardian/student needs to communicate during the school day, a phone will be available in the main office (or other designated area by the school). In addition, every classroom has a phone that is accessible for teachers to use to communicate.
- B. For safety reasons, families must notify the office directly of any changes in a student's pickup plans.
- C. Note: If it is an emergency your student will be notified immediately.

VI. Exceptions:

- A. The Academy shall require documentation to support exemptions. The exception is specific to the need only and still prohibits the use for any other purposes.
- B. If a student has a medical necessity, as determined by a healthcare professional, requiring the use of a cell phone to manage their condition, the cell phone must be used exclusively for this purpose. Such usage will be reviewed on a case by-case basis and addressed with school administration, the school's health or mental health staff, and/or a student's special services (IEP/504/ML) team. Staff must be notified if students have a special use allowance.

VII. Violations. Students who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary actions as defined by the school's discipline policies.

- A. Consequences for Violations: No warnings given prior to enforcement of the consequences.
  - 1. 1st Offense: Cell phone is taken to the office and the student can pick it up from the office at the end of the school day.
  - 2. 2nd Offense: Cell phone is taken to the office and the student's parent or guardian is required to pick it up from the office at the end of the school day. A copy of the cell phone policy can be provided to the family upon the return of the cell phone.
  - 3. 3rd Offense: Cell phone is taken and kept until a parent meeting is scheduled and a plan is agreed upon on how to proceed for the rest of the school year.
- B. Multiple violations and/or illegal or unethical use of a personal electronic device may result in a parent notification and/or device retrieval, a behavior contract, multi-day suspension or expulsion. A severe infraction, including but not limited to creating, transmitting, or viewing inappropriate or pornographic material, violating of others' privacy rights, cheating, or harassing or bullying behavior using an electronic device, may result in immediate suspension and/or expulsion from school and/or prosecution.

#### VIII. Policy Dissemination.

This policy shall be included in a Student/Parent Handbook, posted to the Great Oaks Academy website, and be otherwise distributed upon request.