



## **DHS Cell Phone Policy Update (Phone Caddy) Student / Parent FAQ's**

### **Introduction:**

This year, DHS teachers will be using a hanging “phone caddy” in classrooms. Below are a series of FAQs, grouped into two categories: 1) Rationale; 2) FAQ's by Students / Parents. If you have questions about the following information, please reach out to DHS administration.

### **Rationale:**

1. Why is DHS doing this?

Answer: Results from a survey given to teachers at the end of the 2022-2023 school year showed that overwhelmingly, managing cellphone usage was a significant distraction for students and accounted for loss of instructional time. To alleviate these concerns and increase academic performance, DHS administration has chosen to employ a phone caddy system to eliminate student temptation of using their electronic devices during instructional time. More importantly, this approach aligns with current research around educational best practices, as well as current research on the effects of cell phones on teenagers' academic achievement, social and emotional well-being, and mental health.

2. Why is the phone caddy system necessary school wide?

Answer: As with any change, consistency and fairness are important to ensure successful implementation. A school wide approach will provide consistency of expectations for all students to help build positive habits and eliminate confusion. Additionally, teachers can reference school wide expectations when enforcing the policy in their classrooms. Historically, most classroom teachers did not allow cellphone usage during instructional time so the impact on students' day-to-day experiences should be minimal.

3. Shouldn't teachers be teaching responsible usage instead...

Answer: It is our belief that this system is teaching students to use their devices responsibly to build healthy habits of not having the device present during instructional time. Research has shown that students are unable to avoid the temptation of picking up/checking their devices – simply, it has become an automated behavior.

### **Frequently Asked Questions by Students / Parents:**

1. When and how will students learn of the new policy?

Answer: Parents and students will have learned of the policy through a letter sent home explaining the change. Additionally, students will review the policy expectations with their classroom teachers and during ELT period.

2. How does the phone system work?

Answer: Students will be assigned a numbered slot. They will drop off their phones in their assigned slot when they walk into each class, whether on time or tardy, and pick them up on the way out of class.

3. Will students be responsible to remember their numbered slot in each class?

Answer: Yes, students will be assigned a number by their teacher at the beginning of the semester. Students will then be responsible for remembering their number; however, teachers will keep a rostered list of student names with pocket numbers.

4. What if someone grabs my student's phone by mistake?

Answer: Hopefully, the student will notice and return the phone quickly. If not, teachers can reach out to one of the student's teachers in a later period and ask them to have the student return the device. Unfortunately, there's not a whole lot more we can do, and students will make this mistake on occasion. Many teachers who currently use the phone caddy system will dismiss students in small groups, to help ensure proper retrieval. Parents are strongly encouraged to have students label their phones with their names. But parents who have serious concerns about potential accidents, damage, theft or anything else can always choose not to send their students to school with a phone. If that is not a viable option (for whatever reason), the expectation is that if they do bring the phone to school, it goes in the phone caddy.

5. Can my student keep the phone in their pocket and backpack and still be in compliance with this rule?

Answer: No. The school wide expectation is that students deposit their device into the phone caddy upon entering the classroom. Any exception to this rule will result in inconsistent implementation across the building and consequently lead to the failure of the goal of the policy.

6. How will I be able to reach my student during the day?

Answer: In the same ways you always have, just not during instructional time. Students will still have plenty of access to their phones – before and after school, during passing periods, lunch, and other non-instructional times of day. It is during these times that parents can communicate with their student(s). While we respect parents' and students' need to communicate with each other throughout the school day, we are prioritizing students' capacity to focus in the classroom over instant access through text messaging.

7. How can I contact my student in an emergency or for a truly time-sensitive matter if they're in class and don't have their phone on them?

Answer: Fortunately, genuine emergencies are a rare occurrence. In the event of a crisis, parents and guardians will be informed through text/phone notifications in addition to postings on district social media accounts. [NOTE: It is important to ensure that your contact information on Lumen is up to date to ensure you receive district notifications.] In the event of a true emergency, students should not be using cell phones as it can distract them from being safe and taking action, can lead to misinformation being shared, and can clog cellular phone lines that may be needed by emergency responders.

In the event of a family emergency requiring immediate attention, parents can contact the school office to have their student notified immediately. All classrooms have phones that are used to communicate with the main office. Students will also have their phones during non-instructional times of the day (e.g., passing periods, lunch times, before/after school), so a student has the ability to be in touch via phone with their parent within 45 minutes of any given time during the school day.

8. Is this policy in place during study halls and ELT?

Answer: Yes, students will be expected to adhere to the cellphone policy during any class period.

9. Won't this process take up time at the start and end of class?

Answer: Potentially, yes, there could be minimal loss of instructional time as students adjust to this new policy. However, over time students will learn better habits and the entrance/exit to and from class will be more efficient. In addition, total instructional time and student engagement time should increase due to the past practice of students being pre-occupied with their phones during the class period.

10. Can teachers allow students to use their phones for legitimate educational purposes?

Answer: Yes. Teachers will have the flexibility to allow students phone usage for educational purposes. The purpose of this policy is to eliminate loss of instructional time for students that have not been given permission to use their device and to alleviate issues of enforcement for teachers.

11. What if my student doesn't have a charged Chromebook and therefore would need to use their phone for class instruction?

Answer: As explained in the Student Handbook and reviewed during Chromebook expectations, students should arrive to school with a fully charged device. With that being said, students may find themselves in a situation where their Chromebook is not charged. In these situations, students will be allowed to retrieve a loaner Chromebook charger from the Tech Zone or allowed to charge their device in the classroom.

12. Are there consequences for non-compliant students?

Answer: Yes. For the first violation of this policy, teachers will conference with the student when time permits as well as send a notification home explaining the violation. (warning) The second violation will result in the student being sent to APAD for the remainder of the period as well as the administration confiscating the device for the remainder of the school day (the same policy we have always had) as well as the full subsequent day. This will be a discipline referral.

Each additional violation will result in an additional day of phone confiscation, with the offender being required to meet an administrator in the main office prior to the start of school to turn in their phone.

If receiving discipline for cellphone policy violations, students will be responsible for coming to the office before school to turn in their device – and, at the end of the school day, retrieve it from the office (the same policy we have always had).

In addition, students who attempt to turn in a fake or 'burner' phone to their teacher or administrator will be given a discipline referral violation and consequences as stated above.

13. Can parents or guardians opt students out of the cellphone policy?

Answer: There is no opt-out provision for this policy expectation.

14. What happens if my student's phone breaks or gets stolen?

Answer: DHS administration will follow typical procedures for dealing with personal property damage or theft by a student.

15. What if my student needs to keep the phone on them or handy for medical reasons?

Answer: This sort of situation would be covered by a student's 504 plan or IEP. Students that need possession of their device for medical purposes will be required to keep the device out-of-sight (in their pocket or bookbag) during instructional time unless it is a medical necessity. This must be documented in the IEP or 504 plan.