

DISTRACTION-FREE EDUCATION PROCEDURE (COMPLIANCE WITH HB 340)

1. Purpose

In alignment with Georgia House Bill 340, the "Distraction-Free Education Act," this procedure aims to minimize distractions caused by personal electronic devices during school hours, enhancing the educational environment for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all students in grades Kindergarten through 12th Grade ("K-12") within the Meriwether County School System, including during the school day and at school-sponsored events during the school day.

3. Definitions

- **Personal Electronic Devices:** Includes, but is not limited to, smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, headphones, earbuds, Meta glasses, smart glasses, wearable technology, gaming devices, and any other personal communication, entertainment, recording, or internet-enabled device not assigned by the school for instructional purposes. This definition also includes any device capable of sending, receiving, accessing, storing, or transmitting communications, data, images, audio, or video.
- **School Day:** The time from the beginning of the first instructional period to the end of the last instructional period. This time includes assemblies and other school related activities occurring during this time.
- **Access:** The act of using, displaying, or having in his or her possession a personal electronic device turned on during the school day.

4. Procedure Overview

Students in grades K–12 are not permitted to access personal electronic devices during the school day. Devices must be turned off and securely stored as provided in this procedure upon arrival and may only be accessed after the school day ends.

5. Implementation Procedures

5.1 Storage of Devices

- Students must turn off all personal electronic devices upon entering the school building.
- All personal electronic devices, including but not limited to cell phones, smartwatches, Meta glasses, tablets, earbuds, headphones, and any other device capable of communication, recording, internet access, or entertainment, are not permitted for student use during the school day. These devices must be placed in a magnetic cell phone pouch upon arrival. The pouch will remain secured and stored in a designated location until the end of the school day.
- If headphones or earbuds are brought to school, they must remain stored throughout the school day. Each student's headphones or earbuds will be placed in an individual bag labeled with the student's name and stored in a designated storage tub until dismissal.
- Teachers and staff will verify device storage during the first instructional period.

5.2 Exceptions

The following are recognized exceptions to this procedure:

- Students with documented medical needs requiring the use of a device and then only to the extent necessary to satisfy the documented medical needs.
- Students with an IEP or 504 Plan that permits device use and then only to the extent necessary to fulfill the terms of the plan or program.
- Emergency situations as determined by school administration.

5.3 Communication During the School Day

Parents/guardians who need to reach their child during the school day should contact the front office. Emergency communication with the parents/guardians will be facilitated through the school's emergency management systems. Students needing to contact parents may use a school phone with staff permission.

5.4 Off-Site Events or Activities

- Off-site events and activities refer to any school-sponsored instructionally related experiences that take place away from the regular school campus. These include, but are not limited to, field trips, athletic competitions, club events, performances, and extended travel opportunities (e.g., overnight or out-of-state trips such as a trip to New York).
- Device use (e.g., cell phones, tablets, smartwatches) will be limited to appropriate times as determined by the teacher, coach, or event supervisor.
- During instructional activities, performances, or team preparation, students may be asked to silence or turn off personal devices to maintain focus.
- Inappropriate use of devices may result in confiscation for the duration of the event and follow-up disciplinary action as per school policy.

5.5 Response to Violations

Violations of this procedure will be handled as follows:

- First Offense: Verbal warning and parent notification.
- Second Offense: Confiscation of the device for the rest of the school day; parent contact required for return.
- Subsequent Offenses: Progressive discipline, such as detention, parent conferences, or other actions per the student code of conduct.

6. Responsibilities

Students: Must follow the procedure by properly storing and not accessing personal electronic devices during the school day.

- Parents/Guardians: Should support the school by reinforcing this procedure at home and using appropriate channels to communicate with their child.
- Teachers/Staff: Will monitor compliance, document violations, and support students in understanding the expectations.
- School Administration: Will oversee implementation, provide guidance on exceptions, and ensure consistent enforcement of the procedure.

7. Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually to ensure ongoing compliance with Georgia law and to evaluate its effectiveness. Adjustments may be made based on feedback from staff, students, and parents.