



17267 Yale Street NW
Elk River, MN
763-595-1213
admin@threeriversmontessori.org

513 Student Cell Phone Policy

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General Statement of Policy for Cellphone

The policy outlined emphasizes the importance of establishing clear and flexible rules around student possession and use of cellphones in school settings. This is in response to the new Minnesota law requiring school districts to adopt such a policy by March 15, 2025. Here's a breakdown of the key points and implications:

1. Authority of the School Board & Administration

- a. The school board has delegated the responsibility of establishing specific rules regarding cell phone use to the superintendent and school district administration.
- b. The rules are expected to be tailored to different school buildings, grade levels, or other relevant criteria.
- c. The school board can set general guidelines but the actual procedures are flexible and can be adjusted by administrators to suit specific needs.

2. Focus on Minimizing Negative Impacts

- a. The primary goals of these rules are to minimize the negative effects of cell phones on student behavior, mental health, and academic performance.
- b. These goals are grounded in the assumption that excessive or inappropriate cell phone use may disrupt students' learning and social well-being.

3. Collaboration with State Associations

- a. In line with the new law, Charter School Administrations, the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association and the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals are tasked with providing best practices to help schools develop effective policies.
- b. Schools will be encouraged to use these resources to create policies

that address the unique needs of their student populations.

4. Cell Phone and other Electronic device Usage Rules

- a. **Student Handbooks:** Cell phone and electronic device usage policies will be provided on a grade-level basis, which means rules can differ by school and grade level. TRM is a K through 6th school, our students will keep all personal electronic devices powered off and kept in their backpack while on school property. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Teacher and Executive Director.
- b. **Prohibited Uses:** Students are prohibited from using cell phones or electronic devices for activities that violate school policies, such as:
 - 1. Cheating
 - 2. Bullying
 - 3. Harassment
 - 4. Malicious behavior
 - 5. Sadistic conduct

These prohibitions ensure that cell phones are not misused to harm others or undermine the educational environment.

5. Search and Seizure of Devices

- a. **Reasonable Suspicion:** If there is reasonable suspicion that a student has used their device inappropriately (e.g., violating school policy or law), the school has the authority to search the device.
- b. **Scope of Search:** Any search must be reasonable and related to the suspected violation.
- c. **Confiscation:** Devices that are used in violation of school policies may be confiscated and could also be handed over to law enforcement if necessary. The district will return confiscated devices according to specific school procedures.

6. Disciplinary Actions

- a. Students who misuse electronic devices may face disciplinary action as outlined in the school district's discipline policy. This could involve warnings, detention, or more severe consequences depending on the nature of the infraction.
- b. **Confiscation and Return of Devices:** Confiscated devices will be handled according to building-specific procedures, which may

involve having devices returned to students after a certain period, or after meeting specific conditions.

7. State Law Requirement

- a. The state law (enacted in 2024) mandates that all school districts adopt a policy on student cell phone use by March 15, 2025. The law is vague and does not specify exact language or provisions, which gives local school districts the flexibility to design policies based on their specific contexts.

Summary:

The policy empowers school administrators to craft cell phone use rules that align with district and state guidelines, while focusing on protecting students' academic success and mental health. These policies must be outlined clearly in student handbooks, and they must prohibit misuse, including harmful behaviors such as bullying and cheating. The ability to search devices based on reasonable suspicion and enforce discipline through confiscation is a critical part of the approach. Schools will have to ensure that their procedures are in line with both the state's new law and best practices recommended by professional associations.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 121A.73