

CELL PHONE AND WEARABLE TECHNOLOGY POLICY

approved June 25, 2025

Introduction

At Dallas International School (DIS), our primary goal is to ensure that students are fully immersed in their learning experiences, free from the distractions that these devices can often bring. Research has consistently shown that limiting the use of mobile devices in school environments can significantly enhance students' focus, social interactions, and academic performance. A recent report by UNESCO (2023) concludes that restricting the use of cell phones on campus is in the interest of student learning and well-being. Similarly, experts from Harvard University have noted that "limiting cell phone use can help mitigate distractions and promote better academic outcomes" (Boudreau, 2022).

We believe that school should be a place where students develop essential social skills, build meaningful connections, and engage deeply with their studies. By reducing reliance on digital devices, we aim to decrease opportunities for cyberbullying, encourage the healthy use of technology, and help students disconnect from their screens so that they can reconnect with the world around them. As highlighted by Boston University, "students learn more effectively when they are fully engaged in their surroundings without the interference of mobile devices" (Most, 2023).

The implementation of this policy reflects our commitment to fostering a focused, respectful, and academically rigorous environment. By setting clear expectations for the use of cell phones and wearable technology, we aim to support the overall well-being of our students and ensure that they make the most of their educational experience at DIS.

Guidelines

Valuables and Technology

Valuables, including cell phones, smartwatches, and wireless earbuds, should be left at home. DIS is not responsible for the loss of these devices if they are brought to campus. Our goal is to encourage students to engage fully with the DIS experience, which cannot be achieved through constant engagement with a screen. By limiting the presence of these devices, we foster an environment where students can "disconnect to reconnect," emphasizing face-to-face interactions and reducing the potential for cyberbullying.

Churchill Campus (EC-4th)

Students are not permitted to have cell phones, smartwatches, or wireless earbuds on campus. This policy is in place to promote in-person interactions and minimize distractions, ensuring that the youngest members of our community are focused on their learning and social development.

Waterview Campus (5th-12th)

While the use of cell phones and wearable technology is not banned on the Waterview Campus, it is significantly restricted:

- **Disconnect to Reconnect Zones.** The second, third, and fourth floors of the Waterview Campus are designated as permanent Disconnect to Reconnect Zones. Students are not permitted to use cell phones, smartwatches, or wireless earbuds (see exception below for wireless earbuds) on these floors at any time during the day, including before and after school. This policy is grounded in research that shows how reducing screen time during the school day can enhance focus and academic performance. As Rice University experts note, students who refrain from using their phones during school “tend to perform better academically and report higher levels of happiness” (Mittal, 2023).
- **5th-11th Grades.** While on campus, students are not permitted to use cell phones, smartwatches, or wireless earbuds (see exception below for wireless earbuds) before or during the school day. However, they may use these devices after school while waiting for pick-up in the multi-purpose room (MPR). This restriction supports the development of essential social skills and ensures that students are fully present during instructional time.
- **12th Grade.** Students are permitted to use cell phones and wireless earbuds during the school day, but their use is strictly limited to the Senior Sky Lounge on the fifth floor. This privilege is based on the understanding that senior students are preparing for the independence and responsibilities of adulthood and are therefore given a bit more flexibility in managing their technology use.

Wireless Earbuds for Academic Purposes

Wireless earbuds may be used in class strictly for academic purposes and only at the discretion and/or direction of the teacher. Outside of these specific academic uses and supervision, wireless earbuds must be put away in accordance with the broader Cell Phone and Wearable Technology Policy.

School Shuttle

The school shuttle is a Disconnect to Reconnect Zone. Students are not permitted to use cell phones, earbuds, or laptops while traveling on the shuttle. This rule is designed to ensure that travel time is used for reflection, social interaction, or relaxation, rather than screen time. Students traveling from Waterview to Churchill may use laptops on the Churchill Campus, but only for academic purposes, reinforcing the importance of using technology in a focused and intentional manner.

Adult Usage

For adults, phones should generally not be used when students are present, particularly during instructional periods and while on duty, unless the phone is being used to take photos or conduct an instructional activity. This guideline helps model appropriate behavior for students and maintains a consistent environment where the focus is on learning and personal interaction.

Use of Technology During Assessments

The use or even the mere access to cell phones or other wearable technology, such as smartwatches and earbuds, during formal assessments is strictly prohibited under DIS's Academic Integrity Policy. Examination boards, including the International Baccalaureate (IB) and the French Ministry of Education, consider the presence of such devices during exams to be a major violation of their academic integrity standards. Students found with these devices during formal assessments risk failing those assessments and facing further disciplinary actions.

Similarly, during in-class assessments at DIS, the use of any cell phones, smartwatches, or earbuds is not permitted. Students found to be using these devices during an assessment will be subject to the consequences outlined in the Academic Integrity Policy, which may include receiving a zero for the assessment and further disciplinary measures.

Procedures for Contacting Students

If a parent or guardian needs to contact a student during the school day, they should do so by calling the school reception. Likewise, if students need to contact a parent or guardian during the day, they should go to the school reception. This procedure minimizes disruptions and ensures that communication is handled in an orderly and controlled manner.

Consequences for Policy Violations

To uphold the integrity of our Cell Phone and Wearable Technology Policy, violations will result in specific consequences designed to reinforce the importance of adhering to the guidelines set forth. These consequences are intended not only to deter inappropriate use but also to encourage responsible and mindful behavior in our community.

- **1st offense.** The device will be confiscated. The student must pick it up from the Dean of Students, and an infraction will be recorded.
- **2nd offense.** The device will be confiscated. A parent or guardian must pick it up from the Dean of Students, and an infraction will be recorded.
- **3rd and subsequent offenses.** The device will be confiscated. A parent or guardian must pick it up from the Dean of Students, and an infraction will be recorded. Additionally, a device collection fee will be applied in increments of \$10 for each new violation.

Procedure for Device Confiscation

As a reminder, valuables, including cell phones, smartwatches, and wireless earbuds, should not be brought to school. While Dallas International School will strive to ensure the safety and security of any confiscated devices, the school will not be held responsible for any damage to or loss of these devices once they have been confiscated. The following procedures outline the steps to be taken when a device is confiscated, ensuring consistency and clarity in handling violations of the policy.

Churchill Campus (EC-4th)

- Contact the Deputy Head of Primary who will confiscate the device.
- The Deputy Head of Primary will leave the device at reception for collection by a parent or guardian.

Waterview Campus (5th-12th)

- The employee who observes the violation must confiscate the device.
- If the violation occurs in a classroom, the teacher will place the device in a bag, label it with the student's name, and inform reception. The Dean of Students will be notified, and the device will be collected; alternatively, the teacher may leave it at reception.
- The employee who confiscates the device must record the infraction.

Permitted Devices

AirTags and similar devices that do not allow for two-way communication are permitted. However, all other forms of wearable technology that facilitate communication or access to social media are subject to the restrictions outlined in this policy.

Policy Review and Publication

This policy is reviewed regularly through collaborative planning, and final versions for publication are sent to and formally approved by the DIS Executive Leadership Team. The latest version of this policy is made available to the DIS community through the MyDIS platform.

References

- Boudreau, E. (2022, August 10). Weighing the costs and benefits of cellphones in schools. *Harvard Graduate School of Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/news/22/08/weighing-costs-and-benefits-cellphones-schools>
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- Most, D. (2023, December 8). Why schools should ban cell phones in the classroom—and why parents have to help. *Boston University Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.bu.edu/articles/2023/why-schools-should-ban-cell-phones-in-the-classroom/>
- UNESCO. (2023). Technology in education: A tool on whose terms? Paris: Author.