

Uplift Education
Scholar Cell Phones and Personal Communication Devices Policy
Board Approval Date: August 26, 2025
Policy Effective Date: September 1, 2025

Purpose. Uplift Education is committed to creating safe, focused, and respectful learning environments for all scholars. In alignment with [House Bill 1481](#), recently passed by the Texas Legislature (June 2025), which prohibits the use of, and encourages secure storage solutions for, “Personal Communication Devices” during the school day, Uplift Education is implementing this developmentally appropriate policy that reflects both legal requirements, current research, and educational best practices.

Policy Requirement. The governing body of Uplift Education is required to adopt, implement, and ensure its schools comply with a written policy prohibiting a student from using a “Personal Communication Device” while on school property during the school day. The policy must establish disciplinary measures to be imposed for violation of the prohibition and may provide for confiscation of the “Personal Communication Device”.

Definition and Prohibition of “Personal Communication Device”. A “Personal Communication Device” is defined as a “telephone, cell phone such as a smartphone or flip phone, tablet, smartwatch, radio device, paging device, or any other electronic device capable of telecommunication or digital communication.” These devices are prohibited from use by scholars during the school day unless one of the exceptions below exists. A family that needs to reach their scholar during the school day must contact the front office of their scholar’s school.

Exceptions. A “Personal Communication Device” is authorized for use:

- By a scholar when necessary to implement an individualized education program created under federal IDEA law, a plan created under Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. Section 794), or a similar program or plan;
- By a scholar with a documented need based on a directive from a qualified physician; or
- By a scholar when necessary to comply with a health or safety requirement imposed by law or as part of the district's or school's safety protocols.

Why This Policy Matters. Research has consistently shown that limiting cell phone use during school hours leads to increased academic engagement, improved classroom behavior, and stronger social interactions. A recent study found that banning cell phones during school hours improved focus and reduced distractions in 75% of participating schools (The Guardian, July 2025). Additionally, a study by the University of Connecticut and the University of Oslo found that schools with cell phone bans experienced reduced bullying and increased academic performance, particularly among female students (Government Technology, May 2024). The National Center for Education Statistics also reports that over 50% of school leaders cite cell phone use as a significant barrier to academic performance and student wellbeing (NCES, February 2025).

Expectations and Disciplinary Measures.

Division (Grade Levels)	Expectations	Consequences
Primary Division (Grades K–5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholars may not use or display phones, smartwatches, or similar devices during the school day. Devices must be powered off and kept in backpacks unless explicit permission is given by school staff. Smartwatches may not be used for communication or non-instructional purposes during the day. 	1st Offense: Verbal reminder and parent notification
		2nd Offense: Device held in front office until end of day; parent contacted
		3rd Offense: Conference with family and implementation of a device check-in plan
Secondary Schools (Grades 6–12) with “Lock and Store” Opportunities Select Uplift Education secondary campuses using storage units (i.e., pouches or lockers) will implement a phone-free learning environment throughout the day.	“Lock and Store” Protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each scholar will follow expectations set by the school to properly lock and store his/her cell phone. Upon arrival, scholars must power off their devices and secure them. If issued, pouches must remain closed and stored in backpacks throughout the school day. If assigned to a locker or charging station, cell phones will be locked and stored for the day. At dismissal, scholars will unlock their pouches at designated stations to retrieve their devices OR unlock their cell phone locker or charging stations to retrieve their devices. 	Consequences for Visible Devices or Pouch Tampering
		1st Offense: Device confiscated, parent notified, incident documented; device returned to parent/guardian
		2nd Offense: Device confiscated, parent notified, incident documented, and scholar assigned a detention
		3rd Offense: Device confiscated, parent meeting scheduled, incident documented, supportive measures (i.e., LIFT Center or device turned into an administrator or the office upon arriving at school) are applied.
		4th Offense: Device confiscated, parent notified, incident documented and 1-3 days of In-School Suspension is assigned, coupled with a reflection activity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a scholar needs to leave campus during the day, he or she must unlock his/her pouch at the front office and relock it upon return. Damaged or tampered with pouches must be reported immediately. Intentional damage may result in disciplinary action. 	5th Offense or More: Device confiscated, incident documented and treated as a level 3 infraction (Out of School Suspension may apply); parent meeting required upon return to school
Secondary Schools (Grades 6–12) without “Lock and Store” Opportunities Uplift Education secondary campuses not using “lock and store” units will implement a fully phone-free environment throughout the school day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devices are not permitted to be used, visible, or powered on at any time during the school day, including lunch, transitions, or any other non-instructional periods. No device use is allowed in restrooms, testing environments, or during emergency drills. 	Consequences for Violations:
		1st Offense: Device confiscated, parent notified, incident documented; device returned to parent/guardian
		2nd Offense: Device confiscated, incident documented and returned at end of day to parent; detention issued to scholar
		3rd Offense: Device confiscated, parent pickup required, discussed supportive measures (i.e., LIFT Center or device turned into an administrator or the office upon arriving at school) are applied
		4th Offense: Loss of device privileges on campus for a defined period and potential In-School Suspension (ISS)
		5th Offense or More: Further consequences may include extended ISS, Out-of-School Suspension (OSS), and a phone-use agreement

Scholar and Family Responsibility for, and Assumption of Risk of, a “Personal Communication Device”. Allowing scholars to have cell phones or other “Personal Communication Devices” at school during the school day is a privilege and not a legal right. Whether to possess a “Personal Communication Device” at school during the school day is a voluntary choice made by, and is the responsibility of, a scholar and the scholar’s family. If a scholar is in possession of a “Personal Communication Device” during the school day, the scholar and the scholar’s family assume any and all risk related to the “Personal Communication Device,” including but not limited to, damage of any kind, theft, and loss. This responsibility and assumption of risk by the scholar and the scholar’s family exists regardless of why the damage, theft, or loss occurred, when it occurred, or who was in possession of the “Personal Communication Device” when it occurred. To be clear, Uplift Education is not, and shall not be, financially responsible for a “Personal Communication Device” that is damaged, stolen, or lost, regardless of whether the “Personal Communication Device” had been confiscated by the scholar’s school or was in the possession of the scholar’s school for any other reason.

If a scholar and the scholar’s family does not want to be financially responsible for, and assume the risk of, such things as damage, theft or loss to a “Personal Communication Device,” Uplift

Education strongly encourages the scholar and the scholar's family to not permit the scholar to be in possession of the "Personal Communication Device" during the school day.

CEO Delegation and Administrative Regulations. To the extent permitted by law, the governing body of Uplift Education delegates to the CEO the authority to make decisions with respect to this policy on its behalf. Likewise, the Board authorizes the CEO to issue administrative regulations, or the like, necessary to implement this policy.