

BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE CODE C16P: HIGH SCHOOL CELL PHONE PROCEDURES *(Formerly G6RP-HSCP)*

Summary

High school students struggle with high levels of distraction and misuse of smartphones and social media. Furthermore, conflicts, bullying, and harassment issues between students during the school day can often be traced directly or indirectly to phone use during the school day. With that in mind, and in adherence to Vermont state law banning cell phones, smartwatches, earbuds, and other personal electronic devices from arrival to dismissal within public schools, BSD has adopted updated cell phone guidelines for Burlington High School. Effective January 12 of the 2025-2026 academic year, the procedure restricts the presence and use of these devices during the school day. This procedure makes our school community safer, is supported by current research about healthy use of phones, and helps students focus on the reasons we're at school: to learn, to build relationships with others, and to be fully present members of our school community.

Procedures

Cell phones, wireless earphones/earbuds, and smartwatches are not to be used by high school students at any time between the start and end of the school day (from the 9am start bell, until the 3:15pm final bell). This is true during all parts of the school day (class time, advisory, free blocks, passing periods, and lunch), even if a student is not enrolled in classes during any part of the school day. This is also true whether the student is in the building or participating in an off-site school or class activity during the school day (i.e., a field trip, a class walk to another site, etc.).

Cell phones, wireless earphones, and smartwatches are not needed in the classroom and do not support learning. If a student brings a phone to school, it must remain powered off. Students have three options to manage devices brought to school:

- 1) Put the powered-off phone/device in your assigned classroom storage pocket. (Students will be assigned a numbered wall storage pocket in each class; please note that some teachers require this.)
- 2) Keep the powered-off phone/device in a backpack for the entire class.
- 3) Check the powered-off phone/device into the locked phone storage locker in the main office for the day.

If a staff member observes a cell phone/device in use during the school day (in the classroom, hallway, stairwell, bathroom, etc.), the phone will be collected for the remainder of the day. "In use" means the device is powered on and visible (in a hand, on a desk, at a locker, etc.). It will be sent to the office with the owner's name and stored securely in the office phone storage box. The owner or their guardian (**depending on the frequency with which a student has violated the BHS phone procedures**; see below) will need to pick it up after the final bell of their last class of the day, when they will be exiting the school for the remainder of the day.

If a student or family is not comfortable with any of the options above, the student should leave the phone at home. The school and its staff are not responsible for lost or stolen items.

Common Student and Family Questions

What happens if a student is found using a phone during class time multiple times? All collections of phones in the main office will be logged and tracked over time.

- **First collection:** The student will need to retrieve their phone from the main office at the end of their school day.
- **Second collection:** The student will need to retrieve their phone from the main office at the end of their school day, and their parent/guardian will be notified via phone call or email.

- **3+ collection:** The parent/guardian of the student will be contacted and will need to retrieve the phone from the main office at the end of the school day (or at a *later* time/date during school hours) and a family/student/admin conference will be held to develop a phone management contract; the phone will be expected to either remain at home OR be stored in the main office phone locker during the school day for at least two school days. Ongoing challenges with phone use or instances of substantial or repeated conflict around storing or turning over the phone to staff may result in a longer-term agreement between the school and family.

Can students bring or use phones during trips to the restroom, water fountain, etc.? No, students must leave their phone behind in class when excused to use the bathroom, get water, etc. If a staff member sees a phone in use in the hallway, restroom, etc. at any time during the school day, the phone will be collected and stored in a secure phone locker for the remainder of the day.

What about lunch and transitions? Student phone use during lunch and passing time is no longer permitted, in accordance with Vermont state law.

What if there's an emergency/issue and a student and guardian need to reach each other? If a student feels they must contact home, they can tell their teacher that they need to call home, and ask them for a pass to the main office, where they can call on an office landline. We can look up phone numbers if a student can't remember them, and provide students with a quiet space to talk to their parent/guardian if privacy is needed. Parents who need to reach their student can do so quickly by calling the BHS Main Office at (802) 864-8411. Office staff will quickly get families in touch with their students.

Families should understand that while they may have the ability to call or text their student's device, they should not expect a response from their student during the school day. ***Failure to hear back from a student via their personal device during the school day should not be viewed as an emergency or sign of a problem.***

What if a student refuses to turn over their phone when directed by staff? If a student refuses a staff member's reasonable request to store the phone appropriately, the staff member will notify the BHS administration team, so that an administrator or Student Support Team member can support the student in getting the phone to an acceptable location and, if necessary, contact their caregiver. If a student refuses a Student Support Team member's or administrator's request, administration will contact the family and assign the consequence established for 3+ confiscations (see page 1), which will include asking the parent/guardian to come in to pick up the device and remove it from the school. *We strongly encourage students to turn over their phones without argument or debate if found with it in use. This allows us to address the issue straightforwardly and safely secure the device in the main office for the remainder of their school day without further inconvenience to students, staff, or families.*

Can teachers still allow students to use phones for educational purposes? All BHS teachers are expected to respect and enforce the BHS Cell Phone Procedures (and abide by Vermont state law) during class time, but may still allow students to utilize their devices for specific instructional purposes (such as for translation, as a calculator, for filming or photography, etc.). Please note, however, that BHS is a 1:1 school, meaning that all students have Chromebooks that are able to fulfill these same functions. With this in mind, teacher-sanctioned phone use should be rare.

What if a student has a medical condition or an IEP that involves the routine use of a personal device? If a personal device is part of a medical response/management plan or an IEP, it will be permitted. However, if a student with this exception is found abusing access to their personal device, a parent conference or team meeting will be scheduled to examine options and develop a clear agreement about phone use to prevent further misuse.

Clerical Information

BSD Version:	BSD G6RP-HSCP Procedure
Date Adopted:	August 1, 2024, Update January 2026
Legal Reference(s):	N/A Vermont H.480 (Act 72)
Policy Reference:	(C16) Cell Phone Use by Students