

Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School
Policy S37 - Distraction Free Education Act
Adopted: July 16, 2026

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to provide staff, students, and parents with information related to the use of cell phones at Southwest Georgia STEM Charter School. Starting July 1, 2026, state charter schools must restrict student access to personal electronic devices during the school day for pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade - pursuant to Distraction-Free Education Act, State Law OCGA §20-2-324.8 and HB 1009. These practices are for Pre-K through 12th grade students.

I. Personal Electronic Communication Device Defined

For the purposes of this Policy, the term 'Personal electronic communication device' means any portable electronic device capable of transmitting, receiving, or accessing communications, data, or media. Such terms include, but are not limited to, smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, headphones, meta glasses and other devices with functionalities such as wireless communication, internet access, messaging, video recording, gaming, social media access, or data transmission.

II. Personal Electronic Communication Devices

1. Students are not permitted to use cellular phones or other electronic devices not issued by the school during school hours.
2. All personal electronic devices should be turned off upon school arrival and students should store personal electronic devices in the provided storage upon arriving at homeroom. Cell phones may not be kept in clothing pockets. Personal electronic device storage will be provided in each classroom and students may retrieve their devices when the class ends and they travel to their next class.
3. Personal electronic devices must be turned off at all times while in the school building. If a phone rings during class, the teacher will invoke the Cell Phone Use Policy. "Forgetting" to turn off the cell phone is not an excuse.
4. Use of any other electronic device during a test will be considered cheating and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.
5. Students are prohibited from using any electronic device to take photographs or record video at any time on school property. This includes taking photographs or video recordings in restrooms, locker room areas, etc.
6. If a student violates the Cell Phone Use Policy, the teacher or school staff member shall confiscate the cell phone and take it to the office.
7. Parents may contact their child through use of the Main Office Phone - 229.345.3033. Parents should not call or text their child throughout the school day.

First offense - the phone/electronic device is taken away until the end of the day and kept in the front office.

Second offense - the phone/electronic device must be picked up by a parent or guardian.

Third offense - either the student is assigned to ISS for two days or the phone is taken away for ten school days to be kept at the school (parent's choice).

Additional offenses - will result in the student not being allowed to have a cell phone on school property. Furthermore, students who do not adhere to these guidelines will be subject to other disciplinary actions.

Please note:

- * A student is required to hand over the cell phone and all its individual parts, including but not limited to the battery and memory card(s), to a teacher or school staff member when requested. Failure to do so will result in ISS or OSS.

- * The student assumes all risks in bringing such cell phones and other electronic devices onto school property or to school related functions.

- * Any student whose Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or medical plan explicitly mandates the use of a personal electronic device for medical or educational purposes shall be permitted to access the device as necessary to fulfill the requirements of the respective program or plan.

- * The School Leader shall be responsible for monitoring and enforcing this policy and ensuring that students, staff and parents adhere to this policy. The School leader shall conduct periodic audits, as needed based on discipline referrals, of personal electronic device storage and shall regularly review and revise, if necessary, the school's enforcement practices.

SGSC provides a Chromebook for every student in the school. Students will not be allowed to use their own devices (laptops, iPads, Chromebooks, phones, etc.) during the instructional day. Students do not need to bring their own devices to the school - with the exception of Dual Enrollment students to use during designated Dual Enrollment class times with teacher permission.