June 23, 2025

Dear Salem High School Families,

I hope you are enjoying a restful and restorative summer. I'm writing to inform you of an important change to Salem High School's cell phone and smart device policy for the upcoming school year.

In July 2024, Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin issued <u>Executive Order 33</u>, directing the Virginia Department of Education to develop model policies limiting student access to cell phones in public schools. You can read the related guidance from the Virginia Department of Education here:

## © Cell Phone-Free Education in Virginia K–12 Public Schools

As a result, during the 2025 legislative session, the Virginia General Assembly proposed, and the Governor signed into law, legislation further restricting student use of personal devices during the school day. This new law, <u>SB 738</u>, requires school divisions to adopt and enforce policies that restrict, to the fullest extent possible, student access to cell phones from the first bell to the last.

Beginning with the 2025–2026 school year, Salem City Schools will adopt a division-wide cell phone/smart device policy for all students in grades K–12:

- Elementary School (Grades K–5): Off and in your cubby
- Middle & High School (Grades 6–12): Off and in your locker

To support this policy, Salem High School will provide individual cell phone lockers so that every student has a secure location to store their device during the school day.

We understand that some students may have legitimate medical needs or documented accommodations in their IEPs or 504 Plans that require access to a personal device. These situations will continue to be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with school administration and our student services team.

This policy is grounded in growing national concern and emerging research on the negative impact of smartphone use during the school day. Experts, including social psychologist Jonathan Haidt in *The Anxious Generation*, have documented how smartphone access contributes to academic distraction, increased anxiety, and reduced peer interaction.

## The Anxious Generation

We recognize this change represents a significant shift, and we are committed to supporting students and families through the transition. Additional details, including locker logistics and consequences for noncompliance, will be shared well in advance of the new school year.

As always, thank you for your continued support and partnership in creating the best possible learning environment for all students.

Sincerely,

Curtis Hicks

Superintendent