

BOARD AGENDA ITEM
November 24, 2015

SUBJECT:

Changes to Policy JICJ – *Paging Devices, Cell Phones, and Other Personal Electronic Devices* – **First Reading**

BACKGROUND:

The School District's policy relating to cell phone and electronic devices has not been updated since August of 2009. During the update to the Code of Student Conduct in the spring of 2015, based upon several principal requests and the results of a SurveyMonkey, the prohibition against personal possession during the school day was lifted, and certain other consequences for violation of the cell phone (and/or other electronic device) policy were updated in order to make them more consistent with current practices and to reduce administrative time for investigating minor violations.

Since there is a separate policy on this same subject, the present amendments and modifications are simply to make the policy statements consistent with the Code of Conduct statements.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATION:

The changes made during the update to the Code of Conduct were initiated by discussion with numerous principals who indicated too much time was being spent in disciplinary matters for what they considered to be inconsequential violations of the current "no possession" policy. As described in the background information above, it is believed that the amendments to the Code of Conduct and the recommended amendments to the policy to bring it in line with those present conduct code statements will save in administrative time and is more consistent with programmatic changes which have been piloted in various schools, regarding the utilization of personal devices.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve on first reading the attached changes and amendments to Policy JICJ in order to bring them in line with the current statements in the Code of Conduct.

ATTACHMENT:

Policy JICJ with proposed amendments

PREPARED BY:

William H. Burkhalter, Jr.

PAGING DEVICES, CELL PHONES AND OTHER PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Code **JICJ** Issued **8/09** 12/2015

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for any possession/use by students of paging devices, cell phones and other personal electronic devices in school.

Definitions for purposes of this policy

- A *paging device* is defined in South Carolina law as a telecommunications device, to include a mobile telephone (cell phone) that emits an audible signal, vibrates, displays a message or otherwise summons or delivers a communication to the possessor.
- A *cell phone*, while included in the general definition of a paging device, also includes any digital or analog portable communication device or multi-function device that has two-way communication capability (whether aural, visual or a combination thereof) and operates through a cellular telecommunication system, a global satellite system or an AM or FM two-way radio system.
- A *personal electronic device* includes any digital or analog portable electronic device that can capture, store or transfer visual images such as a personal data assistant (PDA), Blackberry, i-phone or similar smart phone, laptop computer or mini-computer, with or without wireless (WiFi) or cellular interface capability, and digital (or film-type) camera, but does not include a calculator or device utilized strictly for computational purposes.
- A *violation* is the ~~personal possession~~ activation on school grounds during the school day of any paging device, ~~or cell phone, or any other personal electronic device, except as authorized by this policy,~~ or the possession of any other personal electronic device in violation of this policy.

The Aiken County Board of Education ~~has allowed~~ possession (but not use) of personal telecommunications devices by students in order to reflect societal trends and a relaxation in state law. However, the board of education finds that the activation and/or use of personal communication devices by students during the school day, as facilitated by, but in violation of the possession-only policy, has ~~had~~ an adverse effect on classroom instruction, student punctuality, test security, personal student privacy, the ability of school officials to maintain discipline, generally, and ~~to maintaining~~ order during times of emergency. Therefore this policy is intended to set forth the specific circumstances under which a student may bring and personally possess a paging device, ~~and/or cell phone, and/or other electronic communications device~~ onto school grounds and to establish clearly the consequences for violations.

- Middle and high school students may ~~bring possess~~ possess a paging device, ~~or cell phone, or other electronic communications device~~ on school grounds provided that such device is ~~left in an automobile or stored immediately upon coming into the school building in the student's locker or other place provided and designated by the principal for secure storage, not activated and/or utilized for any function unless specifically authorized as part of an instructional directive by a teacher or other classroom supervisor, such as with "bring your own device" type instructional utilization.~~ This rule applies during the school day hours and at off-campus activities during the school day hours. Cell phones ~~will not~~ may be activated during school bus rides to and from school unless specifically ~~authorized~~ prohibited by the driver for ~~special circumstances~~ for safety reasons such as excessive noise or disruption.

PAGE 2 - JICJ - POSSESSION/USE OF PAGING DEVICES, CELL PHONES AND OTHER PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

- Elementary school students may not bring a paging device, ~~or~~ cell phone, or other electronic device to school unless part of an instructional directive or under a bring your own device type program. (A principal may approve an occasional exception to this general prohibition by prior written permission.)
- ~~No other personal electronic device will be brought upon school premises (unless with the prior permission of the teacher or a school administrator).~~
- Cell phones or paging devices are permitted at school events during non-school hours.
- A first unauthorized activation with no related infraction will result in a device otherwise permitted under this policy being taken by the school administrator for the remainder of the day and a warning being issued. ~~and The parent/legal guardian and~~ student must sign a "Condition for Return" acknowledgement and agreement before being able to bring the cell phone, ~~or pager, or electronic device~~ back on the school campus.
- A second ~~violation~~ unauthorized activation with no related infraction will result in a minimum three-day in-school suspension (or its suspension equivalent) and a one-month (20 school-day) loss of the privilege for ten school days and further warning.
- A third ~~violation~~ unauthorized activation with no related infraction will result in ~~an out-of-school suspension and~~ loss of the privilege for the remainder of the school year, and at least one day of suspension (ISS or OSS).
- ~~A fourth violation will result in an expulsion recommendation.~~
- Should any ~~active violation~~ unauthorized activation also involve other violations of the code of student conduct (such as cheating, invasions of personal privacy, etc.), more serious disciplinary consequences may be imposed as appropriate to the gravity of the violation (up to an expulsion recommendation for serious associated violations), but in no event with less than a minimum of three days OSS.
- A student needing a paging device or cell phone for a documented temporary or permanent medical need or accommodation or for volunteer service on a fire or emergency services team (for 18 year-old students or younger students who are interns in such programs and demonstrate that possession of such device is necessary to fulfilling his/her program requirements) may be exempted from the prohibition of this policy as approved in writing by the principal.
- All cell phones, pagers, and personal electronic devices permitted under this policy are brought at the risk of the possessor/owner thereof and the District cannot be liable for the loss, destruction, or theft of the device.

Adopted 5/22/07; revised 8/11/09; revised 12/08/15

Legal references:

A. S.C. Code of laws, 1976, as amended:

1. Section 59-63-280 - Possession of paging devices by public school students; mobile telephones included; adoption of policies.