



School Year 2019/2020

## Mt. Royal Elementary/Middle School Cell Phone Policy

While cell phones make certain aspects of life easier, we have seen an increase of problems and disruptions associated with students use of phones and apps, particularly related to teasing, harrassment and threats. Students are growing up with devices in their hands and have to learn how to use them respectfully and responsibly for good. These problems have had a tremendously negative impact on many students. Whether your child has been harmed or not, it is a problem that we want to actively address as we believe safety is not just a physical measure, but also a social and emotional measure as well. Quite often, use of technology devices in a irresponsible way can cause fear, depression or anxiety and we have to work together and think about ways to help our students feel comfortable, safe and not distracted from their number one priority: learning.

As a response, we have adopted a strict cell phone policy which will begin immediately. Our goal is to keep it simple to ensure that all responses to misuse of technology result in a benefit to the students experience at school.

- All technology devices (cell phones, tablets, gaming devices, headphones/earbuds, smart watches) can be carried, but they should not be seen or heard. Mt. Royal is not responsible for replacnig devices or facilitating payment for devices that are damaged, lost or stolen.
- If any of these items are seen or heard, they will be confiscated, held in a secure location and returned at the end of the school day.
- If home contact is needed, parents can call the school at 410-396-0864 or contact your child's teacher to get in touch with your child. Students will be permitted to use a school phone or a teacher's cell phone (with teacher permission) to call a parent when necessary. This means, that at no point and time should students be texting anyone, inlcuding parents. Please call the school if you have a message for your child.
- Students are subject to disciplinary actions as outlined by the Code of Conduct if they engage in harrassment, bullying or threats using technology devices, regardless if they are off school grounds when doing so.
- If you suspect your child is being targeted, take screenshots and share any evidence with an administrator so the matter can be resolved.

Please review these poicies carefully with your child. Mt. Royal staff appreciates your support and we welcome any and all questions and feedback in regards to the policies listed above.

We teach our students that we are always learning. Learning about the impact of smart phones on child development is a new frontier for many of us as we did not grow up with smart phones in our hands. I urge you to consider if your child needs to carry a smartphone/device. I encourage you to learn more about a movement called "Wait Until 8th" - <https://www.waituntil8th.org/>. This national movement recognizes that many students are not quite ready to use devices responsibly. I agree with the movement; I witness students distracted from their learning constantly because they are pre-occupied by a device in an unhealthy manner,. If your child has devices, consider just having phone capabilities and not have a data plan. If your student has a data plan, think about how to monitor their use of the device and schedule appropriate times for them to use it. While I do believe that students should be aware of how to use modern devices, there is a time and place for responsible use. I believe that our students' experience at school would improve without devices as a distraction, just as many of us experienced our elementary and middle school years.

I appreciate everyone's support and cooperation with our new policy. More importantly, I hope this policy causes everyone to rethink the way our students use devices and it leads to conversations with your child about the impact of technology and social media is having on them. Even if you believe your child is responsible with their device, what is being shared on devices distracts and emotionally impacts all of our students. We will continue to pursue creating a school environment in which devices are not a distraction and we face less problems associated technology. Thank you for your partnership in supporting your child in making our community and world a better place.

Sincerely,

Steve Skeen, Principal