



| <i>The Classical Academy</i> | <i>Policies and Procedures</i> |
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| Policy Name: | TCA Board Policy Regarding Student Use of Cell Phones |
| Policy Number: | JICJ-TCA-B |
| Original Date: | 05/08/2023 |
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| Category: | Board |
| Author: | Digital Health Committee |
| Approval: | TCA Board of Directors |

The Classical Academy, in adherence to its founding Core Values, strives to foster an educational environment free from distraction. Over the last decade, personal cellular phones have created both opportunities and setbacks within our primary and secondary classrooms. However, the problems that cell phones bring to the learning environment have far outpaced the benefits. Therefore, the TCA Board is taking a strong countercultural stance and is prohibiting their use during the school day, beginning academic year 2023-2024. The Board, with Administration’s input and support, is also taking the unprecedented step of creating several operational guidelines within this policy—a practice that is typically reserved for school administration—recognizing the far reaching and critically important implications of these new requirements.

PHILOSOPHY ON STUDENT USE OF CELL PHONES

During the development of TCA’s Core Values from 2009-2010, the TCA Board, Administration, and Founders were committed to a vision for exemplary citizens that included cautious use of technology in the educational environment. In the spirit of that expectation and because of the rapid proliferation of literature and research regarding the negative effects on the learning environment involving cell phones and associated use of social media, the TCA Board of Directors requests that TCA Administration prohibit student cell phone use during the school day. The Board believes that this will help students 1) Reduce distractions, 2) Build positive and meaningful relationships, 3) Minimize mental health impacts, and 4) Develop positive habits that will help them succeed outside of TCA (e.g., home, sports, post-secondary education, employment, etc.).

Rationale

- TCA’s Core Values state, “TCA seeks to bring its philosophy to life through: limiting use of personal electronic devices...” with the end goal being a more positive and classically-oriented TCA experience.
- While the Board acknowledges that we live in a technology-rich world where cell phones are important communication tools, research and experience have shown that phones are disruptive to the classroom environment and are often misused at school. Furthermore, cell phones can undermine a student’s capacity to think, communicate, build healthy relationships, learn, recall, pay attention, and regulate emotion. This policy seeks to remove a major distraction from our classrooms and schools, so students can learn in a more focused, positive, and supportive environment.
- The Board takes very seriously the responsible and productive use of technology, student safety and wellbeing, and the development of social skills and positive behavior.

Philosophical Expectations

- Promote practices that can be easily enforced while ensuring TCA’s student cell phone policy is straightforward and easy to understand:
 - A cell phone policy that students can understand and comply with, and which is readily assessed and enforced by teachers and staff, will reduce student-teacher disagreements, while minimizing time spent on agreement and enforcement.
 - Interactions between staff, students, and parents at all levels of enforcement should reflect civility and respect consistent with TCA’s Core Values.
- Promote unity among students, build school identity, and promote consistency across TCA campuses:
 - A distinctive that sets our students apart is their membership in the unique community at TCA. One way we promote our culture is by affirming a distinct identity made up of our values, our actions, our shared stories, and our relationships. A student cell phone policy allows our children to fully engage with TCA’s classical, scholarly, values-oriented community.
 - A well-designed student cell phone policy will offer our children a daily “digital respite,” reducing the harmful effects of social media while promoting emotional wellbeing and relationship building. Students will find more opportunities for unity and find their identity together, as TCA students, which can also lead to increased school pride.
- Promote the importance of educating our students in digital etiquette while also recognizing the importance of personal responsibility in conforming to the requirements of the student cell phone policy. As such, the TCA Board strongly supports the school administration in its implementation and enforcement.

Implementation Expectations

Students are allowed to have cell phones at school but will need to secure them (i.e., powered off in their lockers, backpacks, or bags) during the school day. Students shall not access their phones from the start of classes until the student’s day is over (“bell to bell”). This is to include any use in classrooms as an instructional tool. Staff may utilize cellphones when students are not present and in emergency situations. Students are not allowed to use smart watches in elementary, in accordance with current elementary procedure. For secondary students, if a smart watch becomes a distraction (as determined by the school administration), then it can be treated as a cell phone by TCA administration and teachers.

Students should be aware that if a school staff member sees or hears a cell phone during the school day, he/she will take the phone (or request that the student take the phone) to that school’s front office. The phone may be retrieved after school. The disciplinary consequence for non-compliance will be graduated and is articulated in *JICJ-TCA-R TCA Disciplinary Policy Regarding Student Use of Cell Phones*. It is important to note that this approach (“See it, Hear it, Take it”) does not preclude student possession of their phones, except in cases of non-compliance, when phones have been sent to the office.

Any consideration for medical exemptions should follow the processes outlined in *JICJ-TCA-E Medical Exemption Form for Student Use of Cell Phones*.

In Conclusion

A policy of this nature is unprecedented at TCA. Board policies typically provide broad principles that are then applied by administration depending upon their specific school needs. Cell phone use,

however, has become so ubiquitous and disruptive to the student learning environment, the TCA Board has provided their expectations on how this policy should be implemented—with Administration’s input and support (including the range of disciplinary measures considered for violation of the policy, as specified in *JICJ-TCA-R Disciplinary Consequences Regarding Student Use of Cell Phones*).

As TCA administration endeavors to initially apply this policy and the Board reviews associated policy effectiveness and results, formal appeals to *JICJ-TCA-B Student Use of Cell Phones* will be paused for a period of six-months after its implementation. However, as always, community concerns or disputes may be raised at all Board of Directors meetings during Audience Comment.

Policy Revision History

| Date | Revision Details | Revised By |
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| 05/08/2023 | Created new Board Policy. | TCA Digital Health Committee |