

Liberty Middle School

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools

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James Hunter, Principal

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Dear Liberty Families,

We would like to inform you about some changes we are implementing at Liberty Middle School this fall. We are excited about these changes, and look forward to your support. Currently we are in the midst of a technology revolution; something that has changed our society dramatically. The ongoing challenge is figuring out how to use technology to enhance aspects of our lives, not overtake or diminish them. To that end, cell phones in the middle school setting have become increasingly problematic and we are working to find a way to keep them from overtaking the education of all students.

Liberty staff members are dedicated to creating and enforcing policies that will benefit our student's academic needs, their social and emotional needs and, most importantly, their safety. As a result we have had many conversations about cell phone use, student performance and social emotional health. In the past few years, many studies have concluded that cellphones are having a negative impact on students, even if the phones are turned off. In one study done by the University of Chicago, it stated, *"Participants turned off their phones. While they performed memory tasks, some could keep their phone with them and some had to put it in the other room. Those who had the phone with them did significantly worse. The attention and energy it takes to not check a phone seems to cause 'brain drain'."* In another [study](#) *"research has indicated that simply the presence of a cell phone and what it might represent (i.e., social connections, broader social network, etc.) can be similarly distracting and have negative consequences in a social interaction."*

It is hard to ignore these recent studies, and that is why we are becoming an **"Away for the Day"** school. Cell phones are not only a distraction, but they limit students' ability to problem solve, plan ahead, think critically and socially interact. These are skills that are vital for student success. Based on the research and from our own experience during the past few years, we highly recommend that you wait as long as you can to provide your child with a smartphone. We recognize that cell phones are pervasive in our current culture and that many middle school students have these devices. That is why here at Liberty we will be providing a space where cell phones are limited as much as possible to better help all students reach their academic and social goals.

Please review these new policies with your middle schooler, as well as the consequences. It will be helpful for them to be aware of the changes, as we will start implementing them on our first day back. We will also do our part here at school making sure these are communicated clearly and continue to educate students about the reasons and expectations for the policy change.

We have provided the new policies as well as multiple links to research, resources and checklists to help you understand our changes. They may also help you to make informed decisions for your family

surrounding technology. We look forward to keeping you up to date on important issues surrounding this topic.

Thank you for taking an active role in your child's education!

James Hunter & Tim Authier

Liberty Middle School's Cell Phone Policy:

LMS recognizes the importance of communication and collaboration, and provides devices for students to be productive in the classroom. To keep the focus on academics and to reduce unnecessary distractions, the school will be enforcing the following:

- Cell phones and all mobile devices shall be TURNED OFF from 8:04 - 2:59.
- Cell phones and all mobile devices shall be kept in a student's locker – not in clothing pockets or in pencil cases.
- Cell phones and all mobile devices are not allowed to be used in locker rooms or restrooms at any time.
- Cell phones may be used in a classroom when directed by the teacher and for academic purposes only.
- If a student needs to make an emergency call during the day, they are to come to the office.

Consequences and Family Communication:

Students using phones or electronic devices without authorization:

- First offense: Student will be asked to surrender his/her phone to the teacher and can pick up the phone from the office at the end of the day.
- Second offense: Student will be asked to surrender his/her phone to the teacher and can pick up the phone from the office at the end of the day, and the student will serve a lunch detention the following day.
- Third offense: There will be a meeting with administration to create a personal electronics plan/contract.

We ask that families and students use the main office when communicating messages from home or school.

Some Research and Support Materials - Cellphones & Kids

Here are a few resources for you to check out as you decide what is best for your student and cell phone usage. The research is on-going and more information is produced over time! Here are a few articles to help you understand and to share with your student.

School Resource - <https://www.awayfortheday.org/>

Parent Resource - <https://betterscreentime.com/is-my-teen-ready-for-a-cell-phone/>

Parent Checklist - <https://kidsnclicks.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/10-questions.pdf>

Student Checklist -

<https://kidsnclicks.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/am-i-ready-for-a-smartphone.pdf>

Student Checklist -

<https://attachments.convertkitcdn.com/56220/36d14502-d96f-4e3e-aa0f-ce912e8e5dde/BetterScreenTime.selfEvaluation.png>