



Pacific Charter Institute

Student Use of Smartphones – Smartphone (Cell Phone) Policy

BP 5131

Adopted: June 8, 2026

Pacific Charter Institute (“PCI” or the “Charter School”) is committed to fostering learning environments that promote student focus, academic achievement, and social-emotional well-being. In accordance with California Education Code § 48901.7, as amended by Assembly Bill 3216 (the Phone-Free Schools Act, signed September 23, 2024), the Charter School hereby adopts the following policy governing the use of smartphones by students enrolled at PCI schools. This policy applies to all PCI schools operating under a classroom-based (CB) model and all non-classroom-based independent study (IS) schools.

Research demonstrates that unrestricted smartphone use in school settings is associated with decreased academic engagement, disrupted instruction, and elevated rates of anxiety and depression among youth. The following policies have been adopted by the Charter School Board for implementation at the Charter School:

1. This policy applies to all students enrolled at PCI schools while they are: (a) on any PCI school campus or property; (b) under the supervision and control of a PCI employee, including during off-campus school-sponsored activities and events; or (c) participating in scheduled synchronous instruction or on-site learning sessions (for IS schools, as further provided in paragraph 6 of this policy).
2. Students shall not use smartphones during school hours while at a schoolsite or under the supervision and control of a Charter School employee. “Use” includes making or receiving calls or texts, accessing the internet, using social media or applications, recording photographs or video, or consuming audio or visual media. Smartphones must be stored away, powered off or silenced, out of sight in a backpack, bag, or designated storage location, unless a specific exception under paragraph 5 of this policy applies.
3. This policy restricts student *use* of smartphones; it does not prohibit student *possession* of a smartphone on school property. This policy does not restrict or prohibit the use of school-issued devices used for educational purposes under staff supervision, nor does it authorize Charter School personnel to monitor, collect, or otherwise access any information related to a student’s online activities on a personal device, in accordance with Education Code § 48901.7(c).
4. Each Charter School site shall develop site-level administrative procedures consistent with this policy. Site procedures must specify: (a) the physical storage solution to be used during school hours; (b) the daily procedures for students to store and retrieve their devices; (c)



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the process for requesting an exception under paragraph 5; and (d) the consequence sequence for violations, consistent with paragraph 8 of this policy. Site procedures shall be communicated to students and families prior to the effective date each school year.

5. In accordance with Education Code § 48901.7(b), no student shall be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone under the following circumstances:
 - Emergency health or safety: A student may use a smartphone to communicate during an active health or safety emergency, as determined by Charter School staff.
 - Documented medical or health need: A student whose licensed healthcare provider has documented a medical or health condition requiring smartphone use (e.g., glucose monitoring, medication management, mental health safety plan) shall have an individualized health plan developed by the site administrator, in coordination with the school nurse. Documentation must be updated annually and communicated to all relevant staff.
 - IEP or Section 504 accommodation: Any accommodation in a student's current Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan that requires smartphone use for a specific documented purpose supersedes the general restrictions of this policy for that purpose. Enforcement of this policy shall not conflict with the Charter School's obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The special education team shall be consulted prior to any formal consequence for a student with a disability.
 - School-authorized instructional use: A certificated teacher may authorize temporary smartphone use for a specific instructional activity during a defined class period. Such authorization is limited in scope and time and does not constitute general permission.
 - School-directed communication: A student may use a smartphone when explicitly directed to do so by a PCI staff member (e.g., to contact a parent regarding illness or a logistical matter).

6. The following provisions apply to students enrolled in non-classroom-based independent study (IS) programs at PCI:
 - On-site visits: IS students present at any PCI facility for any purpose, including weekly check-ins, instructional support, testing, or enrichment, are subject to the same smartphone storage and use restrictions as classroom-based students for the duration of their time on campus.
 - Synchronous virtual instruction: During scheduled synchronous instruction or one-on-one sessions with a certificated teacher, students shall refrain from smartphone use that creates visible distractions or disrupts the instructional session. Teachers conducting virtual sessions retain authority to redirect smartphone behavior and to document noncompliance.



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- Home-based independent work: This policy does not regulate smartphone use during a student’s independent, asynchronous work time at home. PCI recognizes that IS families bear primary responsibility for managing device use during home instructional time and will provide guidance and resources to families regarding evidence-based smartphone practices.
 - Family Agreement: Each IS school shall incorporate the expectations of this policy into the annual “Student/Parent Handbook”, referencing this policy by number (BP 5131.8). The agreement shall communicate on-site and virtual session expectations and invite families to document accommodation needs at enrollment or at any point during the school year.
7. Families or students seeking an exception under paragraph 5 for medical or health needs must submit a written request to the site administrator, accompanied by documentation from a licensed healthcare provider specifying the nature of the need, the device use required, and the duration of the need. The site administrator, in consultation with the school nurse, or designee, shall respond in writing within ten (10) school days. Approved exceptions shall be documented in the student’s file and communicated to relevant staff, and shall be subject to annual review. For exceptions arising from an IEP or Section 504 Plan, no additional request is required; the relevant plan provision controls.
 8. The Charter School shall address violations of this policy through the progressive disciplinary process established in the PCI Student Code of Conduct. Consequences shall be applied consistently and shall not include permanent confiscation of a student’s personal device. Any temporary holding of a device shall be secure, and the device shall be returned no later than the end of the school day.

For purposes of applying the Code of Conduct’s progressive discipline sequence to smartphone violations, the following guidance applies:

- **Warning and re-engagement support:** Verbal redirect by staff; device stored for the remainder of the class period, or time student is at resource center; parent or guardian notification via the school’s standard communication process.
- **1st Infraction Notice:** Device held at the office, or other area determined by staff, until end of day or class period, or meetings/classes at resource center; student retrieval at dismissal, or end of meeting/class at resource center; 1st Infraction Notice issued consistent with Code of Conduct procedures.



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- **2nd Infraction Notice:** Parent/student conference required; Behavior Plan may be developed; 2nd Infraction Notice issued. Conference shall address smartphone expectations and individualized strategies for compliance.
 - **3rd Infraction Notice:** Final written warning issued; possible temporary surrender of device during school hours for a defined period, documented in the updated Behavior Plan, when appropriate. Continued noncompliance may result in further disciplinary action consistent with BP 5144.1.

A student who refuses to comply with a staff direction under this policy, or who uses a smartphone to record, harass, or intimidate another person, shall be referred to the site administrator. Such conduct may constitute a basis for suspension under Education Code § 48900 and shall be addressed consistent with BP 5144.1.

IS schools shall apply this framework to violations occurring during on-site visits or synchronous virtual instruction sessions, as described in paragraph 6.

9. Stakeholder Participation and Provisional Adoption. Education Code § 48901.7(a) requires that this policy be developed with significant stakeholder participation from students, parents or guardians, and educators to ensure the policy is responsive to community needs. Due to end-of-year calendar constraints and the proximity of the July 1, 2026 statutory compliance deadline to the last Board meeting of the 2025–26 school year, this policy is adopted on a provisional basis effective July 1, 2026, without prior completion of a formal stakeholder engagement process.

The Charter School Board commits to completing the following stakeholder engagement process during Fall 2026:

- Parents and guardians: A network-wide ParentSquare survey and plain-language policy summary distributed at all sites; IS families notified through the Learning Agreement communication process. Target: August–September 2026.
- Students (classroom-based & independent study): A brief survey at each CB school, with grade-band input for 5th-8th. Target: September 2026.
- Certificated staff: A brief survey (teacher and school administrators) from all PCI schools. Target: September 2026.

The Director of Education Services shall compile a Stakeholder Engagement Summary and present findings to the Board at its first meeting of the 2026–27 school year. At that time, the Board shall review the amendments and survey results.



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The Board's June 8, 2026 minutes shall reflect: (a) the *provisional adoption* rationale; (b) the July 1, 2026 compliance deadline; and (c) the Board's formal commitment to the Fall 2026 engagement plan described above. This record, together with the Fall 2026 engagement documentation, constitutes PCI's good-faith compliance position under Education Code § 48901.7(a).

10. This policy shall be reviewed and updated at least once every five (5) years in accordance with Education Code § 48901.7(a). The first mandatory review shall occur no later than the first Board meeting of the 2026–27 school year following completion of the Fall 2026 stakeholder engagement process described in paragraph 9. The mandatory five-year review shall occur no later than July 1, 2031. Each review shall include updated stakeholder input and a review of current research on smartphone use and student well-being.
11. This policy shall be coordinated with the following PCI Board Policies, applicable law, and local guidance: Student Conduct; BP 5144.1 (Pupil Suspension and Expulsion); BP 6163.4 (Student Use of Technology); BP 0001 (Independent Study); Education Code § 48900 (grounds for suspension); Education Code § 48985 (parent notification and translation); and applicable provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.
12. PCI shall comply with Education Code sections 51745 through 51749.3 (as applicable to IS programs) and Education Code § 48901.7, as amended by AB 3216, and all State Board of Education regulations adopted thereunder.
13. The Director of Education Services or designee may establish administrative regulations to implement this policy in accordance with the law.