

JENKINS MIDDLE SCHOOL

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HOME OF THE JAGUARS

January 16, 2019

Dear Jaguar Nation Families,

I want to make you aware of a new school policy and explain the rationale for such a change. Effective Tuesday, January 22nd, student cell phone access and usage in school from the time they enter until the time they leave will be prohibited. I encourage you to read the "Cell Phone Policy FAQ" document attached to this letter for details and information that explain more about the specifics of this policy. We acknowledge there can be positive uses of cell phones in the classroom. Our experience working with youth has shown us that the cons outweigh the pros when it comes to cell phone usage in the school. We want our students' focus to be on what their job was designed to be when coming to school – being a student. One interesting thing to know is that it was our student leaders who brought this issue up, not staff. Once the issue was brought forward by students, staff began digging deeper into topic.

Our two main priorities are school safety and student achievement. The decision to prohibit the use of cell phones at school will help us with each of these priorities. The social-emotional well-being of our students is an important piece of school safety. Research shows that anxiety, addiction, and social avoidance are all issues that increase when adolescents have access to cell phones. Our goal at school is to set our kids up for success. Look no further than a middle school cafeteria at lunch to see the impact cell phones are having on our kids. The social avoidance behaviors and reliance on a cell phone is counterproductive to our goal of equipping our students for the future. Knowing the negative impact cell phones have on our kids has resulted in our decision to update our schoolwide policy.

Currently, our students have been able to have their phones with them at all times. Many students can't resist the urge to see what is on their phone during instruction instead of giving their undivided attention to the lesson. Research shows that even when a student isn't viewing their phone, they can be distracted by wondering what they are missing on their phone. Add the amount of time teachers spend redirecting students about cell phone use in class and it now becomes a constant battle for who will receive attention, the teacher or the cell phone. Here are just a few of the issues we deal with daily when it comes to student cell phone use:

- ✓ Students texting during class.
- ✓ Parents texting or calling students during class.
- ✓ Students taking pictures or videos of people without permission and posting it on social media.
- ✓ Cyberbullying.
- ✓ Students acting like they are doing research for an assignment but are actually doing something else on their phone.

I want to make sure you know that we completely understand the legitimate reasons for a middle school student to have a cell phone. It makes sense to want to get a text message or phone call from your student when they leave or arrive at a destination to know they are safe. That part doesn't have to change for you under this policy. The best thing to do is make a plan by telling your student to send a text or give you a call right before they come into the building. If you have an emergency message for your student, call the main office at 328-5300. We have student assistants who can deliver messages to classrooms. The other option is to text your student knowing they will see the message at 3:40pm.

I appreciate your support of Jenkins being as distraction-free as possible and protecting our learning environment. Our goal is your student's success. We are confident this change in policy is a giant step in the right direction based on our research, observations, and everyday interactions with students. Thank you for your continued support of the Jaguar Nation school community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darren Joiner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darren Joiner
Principal