

Section 9-11.6. General Statement of Policy; Superintendent to develop regulations.

~~A. The School Board hereby permits the use of portable communication/technology devices by students enrolled in Suffolk Public Schools during the school day. Portable communication/technology devices include, but are not limited to, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, eReaders, smart watches and laptops.~~

~~B. Recognizing that certain electronic devices may not be appropriate for instruction, portable communication/technology devices will only be considered for classroom use if they are mobile and have the capability of browsing the Internet. Whether a device is appropriate to connect to Suffolk Public Schools' network will be made by Suffolk Public Schools' technology department and the decision will be final.~~

~~C. The school superintendent is hereby authorized to develop regulations for further implementation of this policy.~~

— A. Excessive smartphone use among youth is linked to increased anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. A recent Pew Research Center survey found that 72% of high school and 33% of middle school teachers report cell phone distractions as a major problem. Common Sense Media found that 97% of students use their phones during the school day for a median of 43 minutes. Combined with the U.S. Surgeon General's warning about the risks of social media, it is urgent to provide reasonable guardrails for smartphone use in schools. It is the stated policy of the School Board to limit the use of cell phones and other portable communication devices in Suffolk Public Schools consistent with Executive Order 33 by the creation of a cell phone-free education environment.

B. The school superintendent is hereby directed to adopt regulations governing use of cell phones and all other portable communication devices in Suffolk Public Schools. Regulations of the school superintendent must be consistent with but can be more comprehensive than guidance provided by the Virginia Department of Education. (Adopted August 8, 2002; Ordinance Number 02/03-01; Effective: August 8, 2002; Revised June 9, 2016; Ordinance Number 15/16-96; Effective Date: July 1, 2016; Revised/Effective Date: June 9, 2022; Ordinance 20/21-41)

Legal Authority — Virginia Code Section 22.1-78, Executive Order 33, Guidance for Cell Phone-Free Education Pursuant to Executive Order 33 (September 16, 2024).