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NIU VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL
310 Halemaumau Street
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March 7, 2025

Subject: Student Cell Phone & Personal Electronic Device Policy Updates - Effective Qtr. 4

Aloha Students & Families,

Starting the fourth quarter on March 24, 2025, students will not be allowed to use their cell phones and personal electronic devices on campus from 7:30 a.m. until the end of the instructional day. Students will be expected to power down their cell phones and personal electronic devices and to have phones and devices stored in their backpacks. **Students will still be allowed to use their cell phones after school.**

We want our students to be ready to learn. We are concerned for our students' mental health and the impact excessive cell phone use has on their well being. Additionally, the use of cell phones and other electronic devices in the morning contributes to the overstimulation of our students' developing brains and erases opportunities for face to face social interactions.

We are committed to promoting positive environments for our students before school. To this end, we will open up the following spaces for our students at 7:30 a.m.:

- Courts for basketball and other outdoor activities
- Innovation Learning Center (ILC) for students to have a quiet space
- Cafeteria while currently open, will now be supplied with games and other activities

Upon arriving at school, students will be expected to be in designated morning/lunch recess areas and can also be in classrooms where teachers are providing supervision. Our field, however, will not be open before school. At 7:30 a.m. our school's PA system will play a "Power Down Your Device, Power Up Your Brain!" tune as an audible reminder to students to put their phones and devices away.

Understandably, this school policy change is a huge undertaking and while we anticipate implementation challenges, it is imperative that we take action now. Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document attached to this letter for more information. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me via phone at (808) 307-6800 or via email at jeffrey.shitaoka@k12.hi.us. Thank you for your support.

Kind regards,

Jeffrey Shitaoka
Principal

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Student Cell Phone & Personal Electronic Device Policy Updates (rev. 3/7/25)
Niu Valley Middle School

1. What are the Cell Phone & Personal Electronic Device Policy Changes all about?
Effective the start of the fourth quarter, March 24, 2025, all students will not be allowed to use cell phones and personal electronic devices **before school starting at 7:30 a.m.** on our campus. All students will be expected to **power down** their cell phones and personal electronic devices and to have **phones and devices stored in their backpacks**. There will be no changes to the cell phone policy and personal electronic device policy for during school and after school.

	Before School	During School	After School
New Policy Effective Quarter 4	**Not allowed from 7:30 a.m.**	**Not allowed**	**Allowed**
Current Policy	**Allowed**	**Not allowed**	**Allowed**

2. Why is the school implementing this program?
We want our students to be ready to learn. We are concerned for our students' mental health and the impact excessive cell phone use has on their well being. Additionally, the use of cell phones and other electronic devices in the morning contributes to the overstimulation of our students' developing brains and erases opportunities for face to face social interactions. A growing body of research is pointing to detrimental effects of technologies on our children's development. We are committed to promoting positive environments where students are ready to learn from the start of school. We need your support to make this happen.

3. Why is the slogan "Power Down Your Device, Power Up Your Brain!" being used?
We are messaging our updated policy changes to our stakeholders with an easy to remember slogan.

4. Why is the program starting in the 4th quarter? Why not wait until next school year?
We feel there is an urgency to take action now to support our students' well being.

5. How is this program going to help my child?
Less screen time means more time for our students to develop interpersonal skills offline and to give our young adolescents' brains a break from their cell phones and devices. Let's say your child arrives at our school at 7:30 a.m. With this program your child's screen time is reduced by 30 minutes per day, 2.5 hours less screen time a week and 10 hours of less screen time a month.

6. Can my child use their cell phone after school on campus?
Yes. The after school part of our school's cell phone policy remains unchanged. We recognize the importance of students having access to cell phones to communicate with family members after school.

7. What can students do before school starts and where should they go?
When students arrive at school, they need to report to certain designated areas:

- In classrooms where teachers are supervising students
- Lunch/recess areas (minus the field)
- Cafeteria
- Courts
- Innovation Learning Center (ILC) for quiet activities

8. What if I need to reach my child before the end of the school day?

As is the current procedure, call our school's office at (808) 307-6800 and our office staff will notify your child to call you back with our office phone.

9. What happens if my child does not follow the new rules?

For the first week of the 4th quarter, the week of March 24, 2025, students will be given verbal warnings to power down their cell phones and devices and to put them away in their backpacks. Effective the second week of the quarter starting March 31, 2025 we will have the following guidelines:

- **First infraction:** If you have your phone before school or during the school day and a faculty or staff member sees you with your cell phone, walk over to them and give them your phone so that it can be held until the end of the school day in the main office. Students are responsible for coming to the main office after school to retrieve their phone. Parents/guardians will be called by our office staff to inform them of the first infraction.
- **Second infraction:** Parents/guardians will be called by our office staff and will be expected to pick up the phone from school during the school's normal office hours.
- **Third infraction and further infractions:** Parents/guardians will be called by the student's grade level Vice Principal or office staff and will be expected to pick up the phone from school during the school's normal office hours.

10. What about smartwatches (e.g. Apple Watches or similar type of watches)?

Smartwatches should be placed in Schooltime Mode or equivalent for all students during school. We ask for parents/guardians to refrain from texting/calling their children during school hours.

11. What can parents/guardians do to support this program?

Remind your child prior to arriving on campus to follow the new procedures. We know that not all families may agree with our updated policy, but we ask for your support. Consider reviewing resources listed at the end of this document and continue to talk with your children about your expectations of cell phone and device usage. Here's some suggestions from the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health (2023).

- Create a family media plan.
- Create tech-free zones and encourage children to foster in-person friendships.
- Model responsible social media behavior.
- Teach kids about technology and empower them to be responsible online participants at the appropriate age.
- Report cyberbullying and online abuse and exploitation.

12. Resources and Research Findings on Adolescent use of Social Media & Impact on Mental Health & Educational Impact

Select Resources:

- American Academy of Pediatrics National Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health website
- American Psychological Association's Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence
- Common Sense Media's Cell Phones & Devices: A Guide for Parents & Caregivers
- U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health

Select Research Findings:

- U.S. adolescents aged 12–15 who spent more than three hours per day on social media faced double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes including symptoms of depression and anxiety. (Journal of the American Medical Association)
- Half of U.S. teens report feeling “anxious” when they don’t have their phones near them. (The Pew Research Center)
- Correlative findings suggest that since 2012 following the mass marketing of cell phones, the share of U.S. adolescents reporting high levels of loneliness has doubled. Nearly 30% of U.S. teen girls report having major depression – a 145% increase from 2012. Over 13% of U.S. teen boys report having major depression – a 161% increase from 2012. (Journal of Abnormal Psychology)
- Students who spend less than one hour of “leisure” time on digital devices a day at school scored 50 points higher in math than students who spend more than five hours a day on their device. (Programme for International Student Assessment)