

August 2, 2019

Greetings Mark Twain Middle School Community,

I want to let you know about an important school policy change taking place starting this school year. All personal electronic devices are to be “Off and Away for the Day.” This is a change from previous years when teachers set individual policies within their classrooms and students were permitted to use cell phones and personal electronic devices before classes started. Under this new policy, students observed using a device will have that device confiscated by a teacher, grade-level administrator or safety and security personnel. The device can be picked up by the student’s parent/legal guardian from 2:30 – 4:45 pm in Twain’s B-Wing office.

As a technology forward school, Twain wants to promote appropriate digital citizenship. Our school staff has overwhelmingly agreed that this consistent schoolwide policy will help students be more present and engaged in their learning. The intent is to support students in their academic success by removing a major distraction and promoting face to face social interaction and connection. Twain staff have observed that a cell phone on a desk, even when in use as a research tool, still provides too tempting a distraction. When it dings or buzzes, the minds of even the most conscientious student wanders. Studies tell us that it can take a brain up to ten minutes to reengage after responding to cell phone distractions. Phones are not only distractions for their owners but also are distracting for teachers and classmates. Students we interviewed as a part of this process, confirmed these assertions, albeit begrudgingly.

For new students, this is likely not a change from your elementary school policy. Parents, please help to promote this policy by reminding your students to turn their phones off when they enter the building and place them in their lockers during the school day. If you need to contact your student, please call Twain at (703) 313-3700 and ask to speak with your student’s counselor or grade level administrator. The attached contract will need to be signed and returned as part of the Tiger Fest forms.

If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Charles Miller  
Principal

Attachment: Electronic Device Contract