



Distraction-Free Schools Policy

Utopian Academy for the Arts is committed to providing a safe, focused, and distraction-free learning environment where students can fully engage in instruction and build meaningful relationships with their peers and teachers. HB 340, the Georgia Distraction-Free Education Act was enacted in response to concerns about the **impact of personal devices on student focus, academic performance, and mental health**. Research and expert opinions suggest that excessive use of cell phones and social media can lead to cognitive distractions, increased anxiety, and reduced face-to-face interactions.

HB 340 aims to:

- Improve student focus and engagement in learning activities
- Reduce exposure to cyberbullying and social media during school hours
- Support mental wellness and healthier developmental habits
- Foster meaningful interactions and a positive learning environment

Policy Rule

In accordance with the Georgia Distraction-Free Education Act (HB 340) and House Bill 1009, the Utopian Academy for the Arts Network prohibits student access to personal electronic devices during the instructional school day. HB 340 requires students in Kindergarten through Grade 8 to refrain from accessing personal electronic devices from the first bell to the last bell including all breaks, transitions, and assemblies. (See exceptions below.) House Bill 1009 extends similar requirements to students in Grades 9–12 according to the implementation timeline established by Georgia law.

A personal electronic device (PED) is defined as any privately owned device capable of texting, internet access, recording audio/video, or accessing social media. This includes, but is not limited to:

Cell phones and smartphones, Smart watches, Tablets and iPads, Earbuds and headphones

Gaming devices, and Smart glasses. School-issued instructional technology devices used for educational purposes are not considered personal electronic devices under this policy.

Student Expectations

During the instructional school day, students may not use, access, activate, or display personal electronic devices unless specifically authorized by school administration or required by an approved Individualized Education Program (IEP), Section 504 Plan, Individual Health Plan, or documented medical accommodation. Students will be asked to store their devices during homeroom in the storage method as defined by their local school. Students who participate in off-campus events and/or activities like daily transportation, field trips, athletic events, and extracurricular events will be required to secure their device upon arrival with the homeroom teacher or store their devices during transportation and field trips then retrieve the device or be free to utilize the device upon completion of the event or activity.



Students who bring a personal electronic device to school must follow each campus' established procedures for checking in and securely storing their device until dismissal. Devices may only be accessed after students have been officially dismissed from school or as otherwise authorized by school administration.

School Expectations

UAFA is mandated to develop and implement appropriate monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with policies and procedures established pursuant to this regulation which may include, but need not be limited to, assigning designated school personnel to oversee implementation and adherence to such policies and procedures, conducting periodic audits of personal electronic device storage, and regularly reviewing enforcement practices with scholars and parents.

Parent Communication

Parents or guardians who need to communicate with their child during the school day should contact the school's main office. School staff will assist with delivering messages or facilitating communication when necessary.

During emergencies, the school will communicate with families using approved communication platforms, including phone calls, email, text messaging, school websites, social media, and other parent notification systems.

Policy Violations

Students who violate this policy are subject to progressive disciplinary consequences in accordance with the Utopian Academy Student Code of Conduct. Consequences may include:

- Confiscation of the device
- Parent/guardian notification
- Detention or other disciplinary interventions
- Administrative referral for repeated violations
- Additional disciplinary action for refusal to comply with staff directions or acts of insubordination

Repeated violations may result in increased disciplinary consequences consistent with the Student Code of Conduct.

Commitment to a Distraction-Free Learning Environment

The Utopian Academy for the Arts Network believes that limiting personal electronic device use during the school day promotes increased academic engagement, stronger student relationships, improved school safety, and a positive learning environment for all students.