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FARRAGUTPRESS WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2025 • 1C

“ALL-DAY AWAY”

Knox County Schools adopts new policy for personal wireless devices

Knox County School families will experience a number of changes during the 2025-25 school year, from calendar adjustments to academic appointments. But perhaps the most notable change that students and parents should be aware of is a stricter cell phone policy for all grade levels.

The policy, which was approved by the Board of Education last month, prohibits the use of all wireless communication devices during the school day’s entirety.

“Starting this academic year, Knox County Schools will restrict student access from bell-to-bell to personal wireless devices—like smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, and smart glasses,” explained Betsy Henderson, Knox County Board of Education Representative for District 6.

Although the school district’s previous policy allowed students to use their devices between classes and during lunch, Henderson said that is no longer the case. They can, however, be used in the event of “a true emergency.”

“Students can bring their devices, but they must be powered off and stored in a backpack or purse,” she said, noting other important exceptions, such as if a student has a medical condition or if the device’s use is part of an IEP, 504 plan or an Individual Learning Plan.

The “all-day away” policy was mainly enacted to bring the school district into alignment with a new state law that went into effect July 1, prohibiting the use of wireless communication devices during instructional time.

Lauren Morgan, Board of Education Representative for District 5, which includes Farragut schools, said the policy essentially helps ensure consistency across Knox County by “providing administrators with a more structured and straightforward framework to use as they enforce it.”

“While I did not vote for this policy, I do feel that this policy will give consistency across the district,” she said, adding that she proposed a policy option that would allow high school students to have access to their devices during lunch and class breaks. “Most elementary and middle school students won’t notice a difference with cell phones, but high school students will certainly feel the impact, as they are accustomed to having phone access throughout the day.”

Though it will take some getting used to for these older students, Morgan said the policy will likely foster a learning environment with fewer distractions.

“It will also encourage students to engage with their peers and hopefully help minimize cyberbullying,” she said.

See ALL-DAY AWAY on Page 3C



Evelyn Unthank

Purchase certain items tax free July 25-27

Tennessee’s traditional sales tax holiday on clothing, school supplies and computers begins at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, July 25, 2025, and ends at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, July 27, 2025.

See TAX FREE on Page 2C

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Thank you to JCPenney for supplying clothing for our photo shoot. Brands represented include:



Pictured above, from left to right: Adalyn Sellars, Leeaira Seiber, Connor Austin, Bentley Qualkenbush, Ivy Grace Edwards, Emmaline Unthank, Evelyn Unthank, Beau Scott, Lynlee Seiber, Nolan Seiber, Bennett Matthews and Lydia Enger

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Owners
Krista and
Matthew McGrath



Far left:
Lydia Enger, left,
and Emmaline
Unthank

Left:
Bentley
Qualkenbush

Below left:
Connor Austin



Tax Free

From page 1C

During this time clothing, school supplies and computers may be purchased tax-free. Certain restrictions apply. Items sold online are also eligible. Items must be purchased for personal use, not for business or trade.

CLOTHING

Exempt:

- General apparel that costs \$100 or less per item, such as shirts, pants, socks, shoes, dresses, etc.

Not exempt:

- Apparel items priced at more than \$100
- Items sold together, such as shoes, cannot be split up to stay beneath the \$100 maximum
- Items such as jewelry, handbags, or sports and recreational equipment

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Exempt:

- School and art supplies with a purchase price of \$100 or less per item, such as binders, backpacks,

crayons, paper, pens, pencils, and rulers, and art supplies such as glazes, clay, paints, drawing pads, and artist paintbrushes

Not exempt:

- School and art supplies individually priced at more than \$100
- Items that are normally sold together cannot be split up to stay beneath the \$100 maximum

COMPUTERS

Exempt:

- Computers for personal use with a purchase price of \$1,500 or less
- Laptop computers, if priced at \$1,500 or less, also qualify as well as tablet computers

Not exempt:

- Storage media, like flash drives and compact discs
- Individually purchased software
- Printer supplies
- Household appliances

For more information on the Tennessee sales tax holiday, visit www.tn.gov/revenue/taxes/sales-and-use-tax/sales-tax-holiday/sth-traditional.html



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Knox County Board of Education

All-Day Away
From page 1C

Henderson, a strong supporter of the policy change, agrees.

“This change was driven by both local needs in our community and a new Tennessee state law, but the heart of the matter is what we were already hearing from teachers, principals and parents: cellphones were becoming a huge distraction from learning,” she said. “Research backs this up—smart-phones are linked to lower academic performance, reduced attention spans, increased anxiety and social isolation.”

In fact, according to Henderson, a recent Pew Research Center study found that 72% of high school teachers view cell phones as a major disruption.

“As a mom, I’ve watched how digital distraction chips away at real learning and connection, and this policy puts learning and student well-being first,” she said. “We took needed action because we believe students deserve a learning environment that’s focused, respectful and safe.”

Henderson also emphasized that the policy isn’t about being “anti-technology.”

“Knox County is investing in tech that supports learning, like Chrome-books and classroom tools, but smart-phones, especially social media apps,

pull our kids’ attention in a hundred different directions,” she said. “This is about breaking the cycle.”

Students who violate the policy will be subject to disciplinary action. While enforcement will be school-based, Morgan said that violations may result in device confiscations.

“The enforcement of the policy will ultimately be up to the teachers and administrators in each school,” she said. “Per the policy, when violations occur, wireless communication devices will be taken up by the school and returned to the student and/or guardian at the end of the day.”

In addition to the new cellphone policy, Henderson said that the Knox County Board of Education is always exploring ways to better “support healthy, engaged and successful students.”

“As a district, one of our main priorities is being laser-focused on raising academic achievement—especially in literacy and math—and expanding career pathways in high school,” she said. “Parents will see continued efforts to support school safety and student mental health. We’re also working to ensure every classroom has the tools and support needed for excellent teaching.”

~ Rachel Totten

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HOW STUDENT-ATHLETES CAN PERFECT THE SPORTS AND STUDIES BALANCING ACT

Sports remain a popular extracurricular activity among modern students. Nearly six million students in the United States participated in high school sports during the 2021-2022 school year, according to an analysis of National Federation of State High School Associations data. In 2024, approximately 540,000 student-athletes participated in National Collegiate Athletic Association sports across the United States.

Balancing the demands of academics and athletics is a challenge for student-athletes. Student-athletes must juggle attending practices, traveling to games, spending time in the classroom, homework and other assignments. Being a successful student-athlete requires discipline, and the following tips can help student-athletes balance studies and sports.

Embrace organization

Being organized requires knowing what is required of you and when. It's important to set up a way to keep track of your schedule and your obligations in sports and in the classroom. Invest in a planner that works for you, wheth-

er it's digital on a phone or computer or a notebook paper planner. Consider color-coding items so they stand out and you'll be able to scan easily.

Establish a schedule

A routine will keep you on track. Identify your responsibilities and when you will be handling them. Some are non-negotiable. Classes, for example, are in session at certain times every day. Practices may be consistent times, but games may vary. When patterns of free time become known, they can be filled in with study and homework sessions and downtime.

Be flexible

There are times when peak season for sports may coincide with exam and assignment deadlines. This time will not last forever, and being flexible and changing things on the fly may be necessary.

Establish your priorities

Many studies show just how important sports and physical activity can be for students. However, if sports ultimately and consistently are impeding students' ability to do well in the



Top left: Leeaira Seiber, left, and Lynlee Seiber
Above: Nolan Seiber, left, and Bennett Matthews

classroom, a reassessment of priorities may be necessary. Sports may have to take a backseat to academics until grades are back on track. Remember, you are a student first and then an athlete. In fact, most schools have some sort of minimum grade requirement for athletes, so a pause in sports may be mandated by school administrators.

Keep lines of communication open

It's important to speak with professors and coaches so you have the best chances of success. Communicate if

there are any scheduling conflicts and discuss with teachers if there are opportunities to make up any missed work or keep up with studies, if necessary.

Study with others

Many student-athletes will be in the same boat. Pool your resources to study together and support one another, both in athletics and academics.

Student-athletes will have to embrace time management and other skills to juggle the responsibilities of their sports and studies.

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From left: Ivy Grace Edwards, Adalyn Sellars and Beau Scott

CALM FIRST-DAY-OF-SCHOOL JITTERS

Starting school for the first time or simply returning to campus after another summer break can lead to mixed feelings. Kids may be excited to see their friends every day, but that comes at the price of the end of lazy summer days.

The first day of school is on the horizon, and parents may discover their children seem a bit despondent that vacation is coming to a close. Such feelings may stem from more than the end of summer vacation. Some students may be nervous about going to school. New faces, new experiences and new teachers can lead to a little anxiety. Here are some ways to tame the nerves.

- **Do a trial run.** Before school starts, do a test run to the drop-off location, bus stop or pick up whomever will be carpooling together. Getting into that routine can help reduce nervousness.
- **Participate in meet-and-greets.** Some schools offer certain events designed to introduce students even before classes begin. Schools may host ice cream socials or picnic lunches on school grounds, particularly for younger grades. These events give children an opportunity to get to know their classmates before the first school bell rings.
- **Take a school tour.** If a student is about to start in a new school or will be attending school for the first time,

families will want to see if they can get tours of the school and facilities. Just one glance inside can be enough to familiarize students with the lay of the land, which might make things less scary on the first day.

- **Check the class list.** Some schools do not provide a list of all students in particular classes, but increasingly those that rely on programs like Google Classroom or Canvas may enable students to see who will be in their class. Children also can use social apps like Instagram and Snapchat to locate school-associated groups to find other students. Parents and their children can brainstorm how to deal with other students who may have been difficult in the past, while also perusing lists for friendly faces.
- **Practice conversation skills.** Many modern kids have their eyes locked on devices. They may be a little rusty with ice breakers and initiating conversation. Role playing at home can give kids some ideas of how to forge new relationships in the classroom.
- **Recognize and take concerns seriously.** Parents and other caregivers can be receptive to conversation with children regarding their concerns about starting school. Talking about feelings can help kids tame their nervousness, especially when adults take them seriously.



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Knox County Schools Calendar 2025-2026

August

Thursday, July 31
First Day for Teachers
(School Based In-Service Day)
Friday, August 1
Systemwide In-Service Day (PreK-12)
Monday, August 4
Administrative Day (Teacher Work Day)
Tuesday, August 5
Systemwide In-Service Day (½ Day School-based); Administrative Day (½ Day Teacher Work Day); 6th and 9th Grade Orientation
Wednesday, August 6
Administrative Day (Teacher Work Day)
Thursday, August 7
First Day for Students (½ Day)

September

Monday, September 1
Labor Day Holiday (Knox County Schools Closed)
Friday, September 5
End 4½-weeks Grading Period
Wednesday, September 17
Constitution Day (Knox County Schools Open), Half-Day for Students

October

Monday, October 6 -
Fall Break
Friday, October 10
End First 9-weeks Grading Period
Tuesday, October 14

November

Tuesday, November 4
Systemwide In-Service Day (PreK-12) (Student Holiday)
Thursday, November 13
End 4½-weeks Grading Period
Wednesday, November 19
Half-Day for Students
Wednesday, November 26 -
Thanksgiving Holidays (Knox County Schools Closed)
Friday, November 28

December

Friday, December 19
Half-Day for Students; End Second 9-weeks Grading Period; End First Semester Winter Break
Monday, December 22 -
Friday, January 2

January

Friday, January 2
Systemwide In-service Day (½ Day School-based; Administrative Day (½ Day Teacher Work Day)
Monday, January 5
First Day for Students after Winter Break (Full Day)
Monday, January 19
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Knox County Schools Closed)
Wednesday, January 28
Half-Day for Students

February

Thursday, February 5
End 4½-weeks Grading Period
Monday, February 16
Systemwide In-Service Day (PreK-12) (Student Holiday)

March

Monday, March 9 -
Friday, March 13
Spring Break
Tuesday, March 17
End Third 9-weeks Grading Period
Wednesday, March 25
Half-Day for Students

April

Friday, April 3
Holiday (Knox County Schools Closed)
Monday, April 20
End 4½-weeks Grading Period

May

Tuesday, May 5
Systemwide In-Service Day (School-based)
Thursday, May 21
Last Day for Students (½ Day); End Fourth 9-weeks Grading Period; End Second Semester
Friday, May 22
Administrative Day (Teacher Work Day) - Last Day for Teachers

180 Instructional Days*
4 Administrative Days
2 Unscheduled In-Service Days
1 Unscheduled Parent-Teacher Contact Hours Day
6 Scheduled In-Service Days
10 Vacation Days

*In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3004 - 177 student instructional days plus 3 days accumulated under daily 7-hour schedule.
Note: This calendar allows cancellation of up to 8 instructional days due to inclement weather or serious outbreaks of illness before any make up days will be required.

knoxschools.org

Clip & Save
Check the Knox County Schools site for the earliest news on school closings due to weather.



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