

District Cell Phone & Personal Electronic Device Guidelines

“Bell to Bell”: No Phones in School

NYS Cell Phone Guidelines for Schools

In accordance with New York State Education Law, beginning August 1, 2025, all school districts are required to adopt a process that restricts the use of internet-enabled devices, including cell phones, during the entire school day on school grounds.

This process must:

- Prohibit the use of such devices throughout the school day.
- Provide a method for parents/guardians to contact students during school hours.
- Allow for exceptions in cases where device use is necessary for healthcare needs or educational purposes, as outlined by the school.

Purpose:

The primary purpose of prohibiting personal electronic devices in school is to create a focused and productive learning environment while ensuring student safety and minimizing distractions. Prohibiting personal electronic devices in school is aimed at maintaining a controlled and supportive learning environment where students are encouraged to focus on their education and personal development.

1. Minimizing Distractions:

- Personal electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, and gaming consoles can distract students from class activities, discussions, and learning. Prohibiting the use helps ensure that students stay focused on their studies rather than on texting, social media, or entertainment apps during school hours.

2. Promoting Academic Integrity:

- Devices like smartphones and tablets can provide access to unapproved information during tests, leading to cheating or academic dishonesty. By restricting devices, schools aim to uphold fairness and integrity in assessments.

3. Encouraging Face-to-Face Interactions:

- Limiting the use of personal devices encourages students to interact directly with each other, fostering stronger social skills and more meaningful relationships. This also helps in improving communication skills and teamwork.

4. Protecting Student Privacy:

- With ready access to Smartphones and cameras, students can easily take photos, videos, or record audio, sometimes without permission. This can lead to privacy violations, cyberbullying, or the sharing of inappropriate content. Restrictions help safeguard both students' and teachers' privacy.

5. Reducing Cyberbullying and Social Media Pressure:

- Students may use their personal devices to engage in harmful social media behaviors. Prohibiting devices helps reduce these risks and promotes a safer school environment.

6. Fostering Time Management and Focus:

- Devices often come with the temptation to check notifications, play games, or browse the internet. Prohibiting personal devices helps students manage their time better, encouraging them to focus on their academic tasks and develop stronger concentration skills.

7. Enhancing Learning Environment

- Schools aim to cultivate an environment that promotes direct engagement with the instruction and course content. The presence of personal electronic devices can divert students' attention from lessons, which can interfere with their ability to learn and retain the course content, while reducing active participation in class.

8. Promoting a Healthy Relationship with Technology:

- Excessive screen time and over-reliance on devices can affect students' physical and mental health. Banning personal devices in schools encourages healthier habits, including more time spent engaging in physical activities, reading, and socializing without the constant presence of screens.

Research and Articles:

The effects of smartphone addiction on learning: A meta-analysis

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2451958821000622>

This comprehensive study analyzed 44 research papers involving nearly 148,000 students across 16 countries. It found that excessive phone use significantly hampers learning and academic performance, with increased phone use correlating to decreased cognitive abilities essential for academic success.

Problematic smartphone use and academic achievement: A systematic review and meta-analysis

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38669081/>

This systematic literature review consolidates findings from various studies, reinforcing the negative correlation between excessive smartphone use and academic achievement among students.

A Summary of potential mental health side effects based on the aforementioned research can be found below:

Negative Mental Health Effects:

1. Increased Anxiety and Stress

- Constant notifications, messages, and pressure to respond quickly can heighten anxiety.
- Fear of missing out (FOMO) on social media can be distracting and emotionally draining.

2. Reduced Attention Span

- Frequent phone use can fragment focus, making it harder to concentrate in class.
- Multitasking between apps and lessons decreases academic performance and increases frustration.

3. Cyberbullying

- Having constant access to social apps during school can increase vulnerability to online bullying.
- Victims of cyberbullying may experience depression, isolation, and lowered self-esteem.

4. Social Comparison

- Exposure to idealized images and lifestyles on social media can lead to feelings of inadequacy.
- Likes and comments can turn into a measure of self-value.

5. Distraction & Decreased Academic Focus

- Notifications and social media browsing can interfere with learning and concentration in class.
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Procedural Electronic Device Guidelines:

Devices Must Be Off and Stored: Students are expected to turn off and securely store their personal devices in their lockers or book bags upon arrival to school. The devices should not be visible or in use during the school day. This includes academic classes, study halls, cafeteria, auditorium, gymnasiums, library and hallways during passing periods.

Emergency Communication: We recognize that there may be times when a student needs to communicate with a parent or guardian. Should this occur, students can request to use a school phone in the classroom or through the main office to contact their family. Families are also welcome to contact the main office directly if there is an emergency.

Parent/Guardian-Student Communication: Parents or guardians can email the student's district email, or can call the office to relay a message to a student or to have the student call the family member.

Exceptions for Medical or Educational Purposes: In cases where a student requires a device for medical reasons or as part of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan, exceptions will be made. Documentation from a medical provider will be required for such accommodations. The documentation must be approved by the building administration and/or the Committee on Special Education.

Enforcement and Consequences: Students who do not comply with this process will have their device confiscated and may face disciplinary action in accordance with the District Code of Conduct. Devices will be returned to students at the end of the school day, and repeated violations may result in further consequences.

Corrective Action Plan

- First Offense - 5 days of confiscation (drop off at the main office)
- Second Offense - 10 days of confiscation (drop off at the main office)
- Third Offense - 15 days of confiscation (parent meeting to retrieve phone)
- Fourth Offense - Internal School Suspension/Out of School Suspension

****Failure to comply beyond the fourth offense will result in further disciplinary action****

The school district is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of any cell phones or electronic devices that are brought to school.

Prohibited Personal Electronic Devices

- **Cell Phones**
- **Smartwatches**
 - Exceptions- Smartwatches may be used as time pieces and for tracking steps. Messaging or accessing the Internet is prohibited. Smart watches should be put into airplane mode to eliminate notifications and communication. If access to a smartwatch causes a distraction or disruption or is used for communication, students will face corrective action (see above).
- **Laptops**
 - Exceptions - Laptops (non-issued school Chromebooks) may be used for academic purposes with permission from both school administration and the Information Technology Department.. If access to a laptop causes a distraction or disruption, students will face corrective action.
- **Portable Gaming Consoles** - Devices like *Nintendo Switch*, *PlayStation Portable (PSP)*, and *PlayStation Vita* are not permitted during school hours.
- **MP3 Players/Portable Music Devices**
- **Bluetooth/Wired Earbuds/Headphones**