



SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Distraction Free Schools Plan

OUR MISSION: EVERY STUDENT,
ONE COMMUNITY, READY FOR THE FUTURE.



2024 - 2025

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A committee of key-stakeholders was established that was composed of the following members:

8 Sweet Home Educators Association (SHEA) teachers, counselors, TOSA: 50%

3 Parents/ Guardians: 19%

4 Administrators: 25%

1 Board of Education member: 6%

Total 16 committee members

This team met: March 3rd, April 3rd, May 1st,
June 4th and June 9th, 2025

Committee Members

Ali Aljebori, Parent	Camille Coleman, Parent	Dan Hammonds, High School	Cheryl Palmer, Middle School
Danyelle Anthon, BOE Member	Marissa Dauria, MS Principal	Kendra Herbold, Maplemere	Antonio Perry, Elem Principal
Derek Baker, HS Principal	Anuja Geary, Glendale	Dannesha Jones, Parent	Stephen Shepard, Ready
Dean Bavisotto, High School	Kristin Gernatt, Middle School	Jenine Nowakowski, MS	Toyia Wilson District Office

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Student voice was collected to support the plan development during Student Leadership Luncheons which were:

- March 10, 2025: Maplemere
- March 11, 2025: Heritage Heights
- March 17, 2025: Willow Ridge
- March 27, 2025: Glendale
- April 2, 2025: High School
- April 28, 2025: Middle School

Town Hall
High School Auditorium
Tuesday, June 24
@ 7:15 pm
Parents, Students, Staff, All
are welcome to attend!

Members from the committee engaged their students in a review of the plan to gather feedback. There were 174 students from across the district engaged.

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Our task, develop a plan to support the new law:

In May 2025, New York State adopted education Law 2803(2) to restrict student use of internet-enabled devices.

Ed law 2803(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (b) of subdivision one of section 2854 of this chapter, each school district, charter school, and board of cooperative educational services shall adopt a written policy prohibiting the use of internet-enabled devices by students during the school day anywhere on school grounds. Each school district, charter school, and board of cooperative educational services shall consult local stakeholders, including but not limited to the employee organization representing each bargaining unit within the school building, parents/ guardians, and students, in the development of such policy prior to its adoption.

Student use of personal internet-enabled devices is prohibited for the entirety of the school day, this law will take effect during the 2025-2026 school year.

Schools **cannot suspend** a student **solely for using an internet-enabled device** in violation of the policy.

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Definition of Distraction Free School Internet-enabled Devices:

Personal internet-enabled devices -- internet-enabled devices and the associated headphones/ headsets (bluetooth enabled accessories). Personal internet devices includes but is not limited to: smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, laptops, gaming-consoles, Fitbits, Google glasses, VR headsets, MP3 players, iPods, and iPads.

Does NOT include:

- Basic devices that **can't connect to the internet**
- Devices **provided by the school** for learning
- There are exemptions that will be outlined later in the presentation

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Time and locations of the Distraction Free School requirement:

School Day -- The **entire school day**, including all instructional time, plus **homeroom, lunch, recess, study hall, and time between classes.**

School Grounds -- Anywhere on school property — this includes **buildings, playgrounds, athletic fields, and all land** within the school's property lines.

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What are **our expectations** for internet-enabled devices during the distraction free school zone times?

From the time students enter the building at the start of the day until they exit the building at the end of the day:

Our recommendation is that students leave devices at home as much as possible.

- **For elementary students in grades UPK to 5** devices must be turned off and stored in student backpacks.
- **For secondary students in grades 6-12** devices must be turned off and stored in lockers.

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How will **students and families access** communication during the day?

Schools will identify 1-2 locations at the elementary level and 2-3 locations at the secondary level that are suitable for students to use a school phone to call parents/ guardians.

Teachers may give permission to students to use classroom phones to communicate with parents/ guardians at their discretion.

For limited use, parents/ guardians may email messages to be issued to students using each school's attendance office (each school will communicate the process for the use of this option).

We continue to seek out more options for families that could be app based.

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Which **exemptions** apply to internet-enabled devices during the distraction free school zone?

Students may use their personal, internet-enabled devices under the following circumstances:

- Healthcare needs - As required for tracking health conditions or medical purposes as per individual Healthcare Plan (example: Diabetic monitoring) - doctor note required.
- Required by law - if the use of a device is mandated by law - legal documentation required.
- IEP/ 504 Plans - When specified in a student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan - evaluation through the Committee of Special Education (CSE) or 504 process required.
- Exemptions will be documented in the 504, IEP, legal documentation, or medical records; this will be added to Powerschool notifications as a flag.

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Law enforcement experts agree: Cell phones make emergencies **less** safe!

- Most threats are made via cellphone.
- Cell phones during emergencies make it harder for first responders to protect kids.
- The most important thing is that kids' undivided attention is on the adults giving them directions.
- Phone use during a lockdown can make students a target or even trigger a device.
- Our protocols and procedures should be guided by accurate information and tested strategies not anxiety and fear.

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What are the **consequences** for not following the requirements of the Distraction Free School Zone?

First offense: device confiscated, parent/ guardian notified, warning, **device returned to student at the end of the day.**

Second offense: device confiscated, parent/ guardian notified, warning, **device returned to parent/ guardian at the end of the day.**

Third offense: device confiscated, parent/ guardian notified, student must turn in the device at the start of the school day for **5 days** to have it **returned to student at the end of each day.**

Beyond the third offense: device confiscated, parent/ guardian notified, student must turn in the device at the start of the school day for **5 days** to have it **returned to parent/ guardian at the end of each day.**

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Refusal to comply: in-school or out-of-school suspension will be issued depending on the severity of the behavior in connection with the refusal to comply. A student's refusal to comply repeatedly will result in an in-school or out-of-school suspension and the requirement of turning in the device every day at the start of each school day for the remainder of the school year.

This plan will be added to the district code of conduct.

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What will be **managed** by each school site?

The full plan for the Distraction Free Zone must be implemented beginning the school year of 2025-2026. School leaders will be responsible for the implementation and the development of the following systems:

- the identification and use of the 1-2 (elementary) and 2-3 (secondary) locations for students to access a school phone for limited parent/ guardian communication and the system to support the use of parents/ guardians emailing the attendance email address. Principals must communicate this plan to families and staff prior to the start of the school year.
- the process staff must use when a student is in violation of the Distraction Free School Zone policy. This plan must be made available to staff prior to the start of the school year.
- a plan that communicates the students who have violated the policy and the level of consequences that have been issued to students so as to maintain consistency across the school community.

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What is the **cost to Sweet Home**?

Sweet Home will be reimbursed approximately \$13K by New York State to support the implementation of the Distraction Free School Zone. Headphones will be purchased to support instruction and assessment.

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This a partnership between students, families and the district.

It is important that:

- The district make collaborative plans, and continue to monitor, we are required to track the progress and report out on consequences effective September 1, 2025.
- Students work to make the shift for the start of the year.
- Parents/ guardians are urged to express to students the importance of following the Distraction Free School Zone Plan.

As a community of learning, the collaboration between home and school will be critical to the success of the plan's implementation.

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What is our **communication plan**?

The plan is scheduled to be presented during a town-hall (June 24, 2025) and a Board of Education meeting (June 17, 2025). After June 17, the plan will be posted on the district website for public comment, to be voted on by the Board during the August Board meeting. Upon approval by the Board, the plan will be added to the District Code of Conduct.

Along with the leadership luncheons, members from the committee engaged their students in a review of the plan to gather feedback. There were 174 students from across the district engaged.

Feedback from all interactions will be used to develop a FAQ to be communicated in August 2025 along with communications of the plan district wide and at the school level. A detailed communication plan will support summer connections and help provide consistency.

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