



# New York State **BELL-TO-BELL** Device Ban Policy AT WAYNE-FINGER LAKES BOCES

New York State's Bell-to-Bell law **prohibits students from using non-school issued internet-enabled devices on school grounds during the entire instructional day.** It is aimed at reducing distractions and protecting students well-being in a learning environment. The law applies to all school districts, charter schools and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) across New York state.

Device use will be restricted for the entire school day - **from the first bell to the last bell** - including in homeroom, study halls, lunch, recess & hallways. It also applies across all school grounds including classrooms and school buildings, athletic fields and playgrounds.

The Bell-to-Bell law restricts the use of all **personal internet-enabled devices.** This includes cellphones, smart watches, tablets, personal laptops and any device capable of accessing the internet independently.

While the NYS policy restricts all personal internet-enabled devices, **exceptions will be allowed** in certain situations such as; health-related needs (glucose monitor apps or other medical devices), emergency situations, translations services for multilingual learners, case-by-case exceptions (determined at the discretion of the W-FL BOCES Administration).





# Bell-to-Bell Policy Timeline & Additional Information

A policy must be in place by **August 1, 2025**. Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES will pilot some device-free days during the month of July.

The policy will define:

- Where cellphones and other internet-enabled devices will be **stored** during the instructional day.
- How **violations** will be addressed.
- **Consequences** for misuse.

Note: Students may not be suspended solely for violating the internet-enabled device policy.

The bell-to-bell policy promotes a **distraction-free learning environment**, providing students with a school day free from digital distractions and constant notifications. It provides students with many academic, social-emotional, instructional and mental health benefits, not to mention the benefits for teachers and instructional staff.

**New York State & Federal Data** on cellphone use indicates that 75% of middle and high school aged students use their phones during class, despite school policies. (2023 NYSED report)

**National trends** report that 95% of teens have access to a cellphone, with 46% saying they are online “almost constantly.” (Pew Research Center)

**School districts** all over the country have implemented similar device bans, leading to an increase in student engagement and reduced disciplinary incidents.

**We thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we work to implement a distraction-free learning environment for all students!**

