

SWEET HOME CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

DISTRACTION FREE SCHOOL ZONE

Expectations and Frequently Asked Questions



sweethomeschools.org

Sweet Home Distraction Free School Zone Expectations 2025-2026

(Cell Phone or Mobile Device Plan)

Why is Sweet Home implementing a Distraction Free School Zone?	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 <u>using</u> an internet-enabled device in violation of the policy.
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. <i>Does NOT include:</i> • Basic devices that can't connect to the internet • Devices provided by the school for learning • Please see the exemption section for situations that are considered exempt.

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.
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 cubby/using coat hooks in the hall. • For secondary students in grades 6-12 devices must be turned off and stored in lockers.
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): Glendale Elementary: glendaleattendance@sweethomeschools.org Heritage Heights Elementary: heritageattendance@sweethomeschools.org Maplemere Elementary: maplemereattendance@sweethomeschools.org

	Willow Ridge Elementary: willowridgeattendance@sweethomeschools.org Middle School: msattendance@sweethomeschools.org High School: hsattendance@sweethomeschools.org Ready Academy: ReadyAttendance@sweethomeschools.org
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. • Students who serve as caregivers - Students can be granted caregiver status as an exemption by a school psychologist, social worker, or counselor. Evidence of the caregiver status must be provided to the school psychologist, social worker, or counselor and approved by the Principal. • Exemptions will be documented in the 504, IEP, legal documentation, medical records or caregiver status information; this will be added to Powerschool notifications as a flag.
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. 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.
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.
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.
What is the responsibility of parents/ guardians?	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.
Who developed this plan?	There were several opportunities to engage with stakeholders to develop this plan. Dr. Ginestre, the Superintendent of Schools, holds leadership luncheons with students at each school. During these gatherings, student voices were collected to support the plan development. The student leadership sessions 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 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% <i>Total 16 committee members.</i> This team met: March 3rd, April 3rd, May 1st, June 4th and June 9th, 2025. 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.
What is the communication	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

plan?	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. A detailed communication plan will support summer connections and help provide consistency.
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