

SUBJECT: STUDENT USE OF PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY

The Board of Education seeks to maintain a safe and secure environment for students and staff. In alignment with New York State's Distraction-Free Schools Law (Education Law §2803), the use of internet-enabled personal technology devices, such as cell phones and smart watches, is prohibited for all students during the instructional day, including during non-instructional time such as lunch, hallway transitions, and study halls. This law is intended to reduce distractions and support a focused, engaged learning environment across all grade levels.

Definitions

- a) **"Internet-enabled devices"** shall mean and include any smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling the user to access content on the internet, including social media applications. This does not include non-internet-enabled devices (e.g., basic cellular phones not capable of internet connection) or internet-enabled devices supplied by the school district, charter school, or board of cooperative educational services that are used for an educational purpose.
- b) **"School day"** shall mean the entirety of every instructional day as required by subdivision seven of section thirty-six hundred four of this chapter during all instructional time and non-instructional time, including but not limited to homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time.
- c) **"School grounds"** shall mean in or on or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a district elementary, intermediate, junior high, vocational, or high school, a charter school, or a board of cooperative educational services facility. This policy does not cover school buses while they are on their route and not located on school grounds.

Stakeholder Consultation

This policy was developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including parent representatives, students, and employee bargaining units, as required by New York State Education Law §2803.

Device Storage Requirements

- a) **Grades Pre-K–5:** All personal technology, including smart watches, must be powered off and stored in a building/administrator-directed location throughout the school day. Devices may not be accessed during instructional time unless explicitly authorized for a specific educational purpose by a staff member.
- b) **Grades 6–12:** All personal technology, including smart watches, must be powered off and stored in a building/administrator-directed location (such as student lockers, secure pouches/storage, or other approved areas) upon arrival at school. Devices may not be carried or accessed during the instructional day unless authorized by school staff for educational purposes.

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Authorized Use for Instructional Purposes

Personal technology use by students is permitted during the school day for instructional purposes and/or in approved locations only. Teachers will indicate when and if classroom use is acceptable. Students are expected to act responsibly and thoughtfully when using technology resources. Instructional purposes include, but are not limited to:

- a) Approved classroom learning activities
- b) Research and inquiry
- c) College and career exploration
- d) Communication with experts
- e) Homework and collaborative projects
- f) Other teacher-directed or staff-approved uses

Use of devices for translation, emergency purposes, or to manage healthcare needs is permitted. Device use that is part of a student's IEP or 504 Plan is also permitted, and the policy may not prohibit such use. Additionally, on a case-by-case basis, use may be authorized for a student who is routinely responsible for the care and well-being of a family member, upon review and determination by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor, or where otherwise required by law.

Non-Instructional Uses

The use of non-school-issued internet-enabled devices is prohibited for the entirety of the instructional day, including during non-instructional periods such as homeroom, lunch, recess, study hall, and passing time, when students are on school grounds. Appropriate use of personal technology is allowed only before school, after school, or during designated times and areas as determined by building administration, provided such use occurs outside of the defined "school day" and is in compliance with the Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and Code of Conduct. Devices must be kept in silent mode to avoid disturbing others.

Parent/Guardian Communication

The District will provide families with written information at the beginning of each school year and upon student enrollment, detailing the procedures for communicating with students during the school day when personal electronic devices are not accessible. In such situations, parents and guardians are expected to contact the main office of their child's school directly via phone or email. A complete directory of main office contact information can be found on the District website at www.opschools.org, by navigating to the individual school pages under the "Schools" section.

Privacy Zones

The Board expressly prohibits the use of personal technology in areas where privacy is expected, including but not limited to:

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- a) Locker rooms
- b) Restrooms
- c) Health Offices
- d) Any other designated privacy areas

Use of devices for unauthorized audio or video recording is strictly prohibited unless directly connected to a class assignment and explicitly approved by a teacher and/or building administrator.

Prohibition During State Assessments

All students are prohibited from bringing or accessing personal electronic devices in classrooms or other locations where New York State assessments are being administered. Test proctors and school officials have the right to collect prohibited devices before the start of the test and retain them during testing periods, including breaks. Exceptions will be made only for:

- a) Devices specified in a student's IEP or 504 Plan
- b) Students with documented medical needs who require access to a device. Students who refuse to relinquish a device will not be permitted to participate in the assessment.

Disciplinary Guidelines

Students who fail to comply with the device storage requirements or usage expectations may be subject to progressive disciplinary consequences as outlined in the Code of Conduct. However, in accordance with Education Law §2803, students shall not be suspended solely for unauthorized use of personal technology devices.

Annual Enforcement Report

No later than September 1, 2026, and each September 1st thereafter, the District will publish an annual report on its website detailing enforcement of this policy within the District in the prior school year. This report will include non-identifiable demographic data of students who have faced disciplinary action for non-compliance and an analysis of any demographic disparities in the enforcement of the policy. If a statistically significant disparate enforcement impact is identified, such report shall include a mitigation action plan.

Liability

The District will not be liable for the loss, damage, misuse, or theft of any personal technology brought to school. The District reserves the right to monitor, inspect, and/or confiscate personal technology when administration has reasonable suspicion to believe that a violation of school policy or criminal law has occurred.

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Students

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Policy Publication and Translation

This policy will be adopted and published in a clearly visible and accessible location on the District's website no later than August 1, 2025, and by August 1 of each school year thereafter. Translations of such policy into any of the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the state, based on the data in the most recent American community survey published by the United States Census Bureau, shall be provided upon request by a person in parental relation to a student.

Permission and Compliance

Students will not be permitted to use personal technology devices in school or at school functions until they have:

- a) Reviewed the AUP, Code of Conduct, and technology guidelines; and
- b) Signed the Student Use of Personal Technology Permission Form with their parent/guardian

The District reserves the right to restrict student use of both District-owned and personal technology on school property or at school-sponsored events, at the discretion of the administration.

NOTE: Refer also to Policies #7315 — Student Acceptable Use Policy
 #7550 — Dignity for All Students
 #8271 — Internet Safety/Content Filtering Policy

Education Law Section 2803

Adopted: 9/12/2017
Revised: 7/22/2025