



Distraction-Free School Policy

Capital Prep Charter Schools NY is committed to fostering a rigorous, engaging, and safe learning environment that prioritizes academic excellence and student well-being. In accordance with New York State Education Law §2803(2) and the state's *"More Learning, Less Scrolling"* initiative, the following policy establishes clear guidelines for limiting the use of personal internet-enabled devices during the school day. This policy is designed to reduce distractions, promote in-person interaction, safeguard student mental health, and ensure equitable access to learning.

Policy Statement

Effective August 1, 2025, all personal internet-enabled devices, including but not limited to smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, wireless headphones, and portable gaming systems, are prohibited from use by students during the instructional day. This ban applies from the time students arrive on campus until the conclusion of the school day, encompassing all academic periods, lunch, recess, homeroom, study halls, and transitions between classes.

Students must check in their devices upon entry each day to be locked and secured in storage cases managed by the school. Students are encouraged to leave personal devices at home whenever possible. School-issued devices may be used only for approved academic purposes under the supervision of school personnel.

Exemptions

This policy allows for exemptions in limited and specific circumstances. These include instances where a student requires a device for documented medical needs, as part of an approved Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan, when authorized by school staff for a specific educational purpose, during an emergency situation, upon approval of a school psychologist, social worker or counselor with respect to a student responsible for the care of a family member or as mandated by legal or court orders. In such cases, documentation must be submitted to the Principal or Director of Operations, and use of the device will be monitored and supported according to student-specific plans.

Students who need devices for language translation or other academic accommodations may be granted use privileges under school-approved protocols.

Storage and Security

To ensure secure storage of personal devices, the school will lock and secure personal devices in storage cases managed by the school. Staff will be trained in device management procedures to ensure consistent enforcement across all classrooms and school spaces.

Communication Protocols

Students may access designated school phones to contact parents or guardians during the school day in the event of an emergency or urgent need. Likewise, families can contact the school's main office if they need to communicate with a student during school hours. Emergency communication plans will be clearly outlined and regularly practiced to ensure student safety during drills and real events.

Disciplinary Procedures and Equity

Violations of this policy will be addressed through the school's Code of Conduct. Students who repeatedly fail to follow the policy may be subject to progressive disciplinary measures, such as temporary confiscation of the device, parent conferences, or loss of privileges. However, no student will be suspended solely for a violation of the device ban.

To ensure equity in enforcement, the school will monitor data related to policy violations disaggregated by student demographics. This data will be reviewed regularly by school leadership to ensure consistent and unbiased application of the policy.

Community Engagement and Review

This policy was developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including students, families, educators, board of trustees and school leaders. Opportunities for feedback were provided through community meetings, student forums, and staff engagement sessions.

Implementation and Publication

The finalized Distraction-Free Schools Policy will be communicated to students and families prior to the beginning of the school year and published on the school website and in the student and family handbook by August 1, 2025. Staff will receive training on implementation protocols, and students will be introduced to the policy during class sessions. Resources will be provided to support a smooth transition to a distraction-free learning environment.

Reporting & Transparency

Beginning on September 1, 2026, Capital Prep Charter Schools NY will publish an annual report on our website that includes:

- Non-identifiable demographic data of students disciplined under this policy
- Analysis of any demographic enforcement disparities
- A mitigation plan if statistically significant demographic enforcement disparities are identified