

July 29, 2025

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you are having an enjoyable summer. I am writing with an important update regarding our new bell-to-bell smartphone restriction policy, which prioritizes student safety and ensures all students are present and engaged in their learning.

Policy Overview

In compliance with Governor Hochul's mandate, the Board of Education adopted Policy #5695 on July 23, 2025, prohibiting smartphone and internet-enabled device use during the entire school day for grades K-12. This policy acknowledges the critical importance of maintaining a safe, focused learning environment where students can be fully present for their education.

The Research Behind This Decision

Recent research by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt demonstrates that smartphones, social media, and overprotective parenting have led to a "rewiring" of childhood and a dramatic rise in mental illness. His findings show that rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide have more than doubled among young people as childhood has shifted from "play-based" to "phone-based."

Smartphones and social media platforms undermine essential developmental processes children need to become healthy, competent adults, including free play, face-to-face social interaction, and gradual independence. The research strongly supports **creating phone-free schools** as a critical solution to restore healthier childhood development patterns.

Implementation by Grade Level

- **Elementary (FECC, HES, OES):** Devices must be turned off and stored in backpacks
- **Middle School (WMS):** Devices must be turned off and stored in lockers
- **High School (HHS):** Devices must be turned off and stored in backpacks or lockers (students may take devices when leaving for lunch but must store them immediately upon return)

Staying Connected

We understand that staying in touch with your child during the day is important. To support communication while following the policy, parents and guardians may contact their children through the following methods:

- At the elementary level: calling the school office.
- At the middle school level: calling the school office.
- At the high school level: calling the school office or by using the District-provided email address.

This policy ensures our students are fully present for learning while maintaining the safety and well-being that are our top priorities. Thank you for supporting this important step toward creating a healthier, more engaged learning environment.

The complete policy is available [HERE](#)

Wishing you a safe and restful remainder of summer.

With Hewlett-Woodmere Pride,

Dr. Dina M. Anzalone
Superintendent