



DISTRACTION FREE SCHOOLS POLICY

In accordance with New York State Law, Bridge Prep is implementing a Distraction Free Schools Policy regarding the use of internet-enabled electronic devices—including cell phones—in school. This change supports the state's intent to create distraction free schools and aims to ensure a safe and focused learning environment at Bridge Prep.

Beginning in the 2025–26 school year, students will not be able to use personal internet-enabled electronic devices on school grounds during the school day absent an approved exception. This includes, but is not limited to, cell phones. A personal internet-enabled device is any electronic device not issued by Bridge Prep or by the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) that can connect to the internet, allowing the user to access content online. Examples of these personal devices include:

- **Communication Devices**, such as cell phones, smartphones, and smartwatches.
- **Computing Devices**, such as laptops, tablets, and iPads.
- **Portable music and entertainment systems**, such as MP3 players and game consoles.

The policy does not restrict the use of school-issued devices, such as laptops and Chromebooks, for their intended purpose. Students will continue to be able to use their Bridge Prep or NYCPS issued devices for classwork and other in-school assignments.

This policy applies from "bell to bell," which means students are not permitted to use their personal devices throughout the entire school day. The "school day" covers all instructional and non-instructional time, including all class periods, lunch, recess, and time outside of the classroom in hallways and bathrooms. The policy does not explicitly cover afterschool activities. "School grounds" means in, on, or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained on the school's campus.

While students are permitted to bring their devices to school, they must be stored during the **entire** school day. This means that students will not be able to store their devices at the start of each class period, as the regulation requires these devices to be stored throughout the entirety of the school day. As backpacks alone are not considered a sufficient storage option, all devices will be collected by classroom teachers when students arrive to their classroom each day and will be placed in a secure cell phone storage pouch, which will be stored in the Main Office for the duration of the school day. Students who arrive late to school, will be asked to turn in their devices upon their arrival, in the main office for storage. At the end of the school day, collected devices will be provided back to classroom teachers for distribution to individual students.

Should a parent want to contact their child(ren) during an emergency, they should contact the Main Office directly at 718-274-3437. In the event of an emergency involving your child, and once the school has been informed of the specific nature of the emergency, your child will be permitted to use their personal device to contact you. Additionally, schools will have procedures in place, such as access to a school phone line, to ensure students are able to make emergency calls when needed. We encourage all parents and guardians to familiarize themselves with their school's emergency contact protocols and ensure they have the most up-to-date contact information on file.

Exceptions to this policy allow for devices to be used:



- **For educational purposes**, as directed by teachers and authorized by the school's leadership.
- **By students with medical conditions** that require the use of electronic devices to monitor them, such as glucose monitors for diabetes. In this case, parents should inform the school and provide any necessary documentation to ensure proper authorization and usage.
- **For translation services**, to assist students who need language support not currently provided by their school.
- **If required by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.**
- **By student caregivers**, on a case-by-case basis. The Assistant Principal of Operations of their designee will review and determine if exceptions may be granted for a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member.
- **In individual emergency situations**, when the parent has notified school leadership of the specific nature of the emergency.
- **Where otherwise required by the law.** This includes situations where federal, state, or local laws mandate the use of such devices for specific purposes.

If a student uses their device without permission during the school day, they may be subject to progressive discipline in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct. This means that the school will use a series of escalating interventions and consequences to address the behavior based on the nature and frequency of the violation. Students who violate this policy may even have their unauthorized devices confiscated. In that event, affected families will be informed by the school's leadership that the device has been confiscated and will be returned at the end of the school day. Additional policy violations will result in confiscation and the school will work with the student's parent/guardian to come to the school and pick up the device.

It is important to note that students cannot be suspended solely for accessing personal internet-enabled electronic devices in violation of school policy—however, repeated refusal to surrender or store a personal device may result in a suspension. Further, the school will not deduct from students grades for violating the cell phone policy in class.

If a student reports an electronic device is stolen or damaged at school, the school will: notify the family; file an incident report; notify the New York City Police Department (NYPD) if theft or other criminal activity is suspected; and investigate the allegations and take appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the School's Code of Conduct.