

# Distraction-Free Schools

ACSD Board of Education  
Presentation  
August 5, 2025

# New York State Distraction-Free Schools Law

- No unsanctioned use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices (by students) on school grounds in K-12 schools for the entire school day (from “bell to bell”), including classroom time and other settings like lunch and study hall periods.
- Allowing schools to develop their own plans for storing internet-enabled devices.
- Requiring schools to notify parents in writing of the communication methods that are available for contacting their student during school hours.
- Requiring teachers, parents and students to be consulted in developing the policy.
- Requiring schools to annually publish a report detailing the enforcement of the policy they adopted, helping to prevent inequitable discipline.

*This legislation applies to school districts, charter schools, and boards of cooperative services (BOCES). Each educational organization should review existing policies and/or work to update their policies in accordance with the minimum standards established by law by August 1, 2025.*

# Definitions

Internet-enabled devices: Internet-enabled devices include any smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling access to content on the internet, including social media applications.

Internet-enabled devices do not include the following:


- Non-internet enabled devices such as cellular phones or other communication devices not capable of connecting to the internet.
- Internet-enabled devices supplied by the school district that are used for an educational purpose.

School Day: The school day shall mean the entirety of every instructional day during all instructional and non-instructional time. This includes homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time.

School Grounds: The school grounds shall mean in or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the real property boundary line.

# District Policy

School districts must adopt a policy outlining prohibitions during the school day by **August 1, 2025**. The policy must include, prior to adoption, consultation with local stakeholders, including but not limited to parents, students, and employee organizations representing each bargaining unit within the building. In addition, the policy must be posted in a clearly visible and accessible way on the institution's website. It must, upon request, be made accessible in the twelve most commonly spoken non-English languages (based on data through the most recent American Community Survey through the US Census Bureau).





## Community Response Form

*The Amherst Central School District's "Distraction-Free Schools Committee" seeks comments on the Distraction-Free Schools plan to be implemented in the 25-26 school year. We thank the students, parents, and employees who have donated their time in this work. We now want added feedback from those who wish to also provide thoughts. This comment period closes on Friday, June 20, 2025. Read the Plan and FAQs [here](#).*

**Stakeholder  
Comment Period:  
June 13-20, 2025**

**82 Responses**

**77% MS/HS**

**78% Parents**

**70% Positive support of the law**

**Feedback in 3 Areas:**

**Storage**

**Consequences**

**Communication**

***Where did we land?***

# Device Storage

- **All students are encouraged to leave their devices at home.**
  - **Middle and High School** devices must be turned off and stored in a locked locker during the entire school day (from homeroom/homebase bell through dismissal bell).
  - **Elementary** devices must be turned off and stored in student's backpacks placed in cubbies and/or lockers during the school day. At the elementary level, it is strongly recommended that internet-enabled devices be left home.

# Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy will include:

- Authorization by a teacher, principal, or the school district for a specific educational purpose.
- Instances where necessary for the management of a student's healthcare.
- Usage in the event of an emergency. (Ie: family emergency)
- Usage for translation services.
- Usage on a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor, for a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member.
- Or, where required by law.

**Process** is important!



## Violations

School districts, charter schools, and BOCES, as subject to this legislation, shall not suspend a student solely for violating the district's policy regarding internet-enabled devices during the school day. In addition, beginning Sept. 1, 2026, each district, charter school, and BOCES must publish a report on its website summarizing enforcement of the policy during the previous school year. If statistically significant enforcement disparities are identified, the report must include a mitigation action plan. The report must include the following:

- Non-identifiable demographic data of students who have faced disciplinary actions for non-compliance, and
- An analysis of any demographic disparities in enforcement of the policy.



## High & Middle School Violations

- First offense: The device will be confiscated and returned to the student at the end of the day.
- Second offense: The device will be confiscated and will be returned to the student at the end of the day upon parent/guardian request. One detention will be assigned.
- Third offense: The device will be confiscated and will be returned only to the parent/guardian. Two detentions will be assigned.
- Fourth offense: The device will be confiscated and will be returned only to the parent/guardian. This is a violation of the [ACSD Code of Conduct](#) Section 6B. One day of In-School Suspension will be assigned.
- Refusal to comply with a staff member's directive regarding cell phone use constitutes insubordination and/or gross insubordination and will be addressed in accordance with the [ACSD Code of Conduct](#).



## Elementary School Violations

- First offense: Verbal warning to return device to backpack.
- Second offense: The device will be confiscated and will be returned to the student at the end of the day upon parent/guardian request.
- Third offense: The device will be confiscated and will be returned only to the parent/guardian. Student will engage in reflective activity (ie: write/present about the importance of following directions)
- Refusal to comply with a staff member's directive regarding cell phone use constitutes insubordination and or gross insubordination and will be addressed in accordance with the [ACSD Code of Conduct](#).

# Methods for Parents to Contact Students During the School Day

- **Parents/Guardians** may call the school's main office, and the office staff can relay messages to the student or call the student to the office to speak with their parent/guardian.
- **Parents/Guardians** may drop off written notes at the school's main office.
- The school district will notify parents/guardians in writing of the communication protocol at the beginning of each school year and upon enrollment.
- The school district will explore options for secure school messaging applications.
- **Students** may use the phone in the main office, attendance office, nurse's office, Student Services/Counseling Center or in the classroom (with teacher permission) to call a parent/guardian.

# Student & Staff Training

- **Student**

Students will receive training through assemblies and/or classroom lessons. Students will be reminded of the policy regularly and consistently, especially at the start of the school year and after returning from breaks. Posters will be displayed throughout the buildings. Students will be instructed on the use of a combination lock and location of their locker as needed.

- **Educators**

All staff will receive training during professional development days about the policy, enforcement and consequences, how to communicate with parents/guardians and how to model positive behavior with personal electronic devices away during instructional time.

# Family Communication

- Once adopted by the Board of Education in August, Policy #7316 will be available online.
- A Distraction Free Schools webpage has been created on the District's Parents/Students tab with quick links on each building webpage.
- Translations of the policy into the 12 most common non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the state will be available upon request.
- All families, staff and students will receive information about the policy prior to the start of the 2025-26 school year and on an annual basis prior to the start of school. Communication channels will include email, student handbooks, school newsletters, district website, back to school packets, grade level orientation and open houses.
- Upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year, parents/guardians will be notified in writing of the communication methods that are available for contacting their student during school hours.
- A Distraction Free Schools information sheet will be included with Central Registration packets for new families.
- Informational programming for families and students will be conducted at various times in the school year regarding digital responsibility, anxiety/mental health, and behavioral change. (i.e. Screen Sanity workshops offered by the FSC)

# FAQ

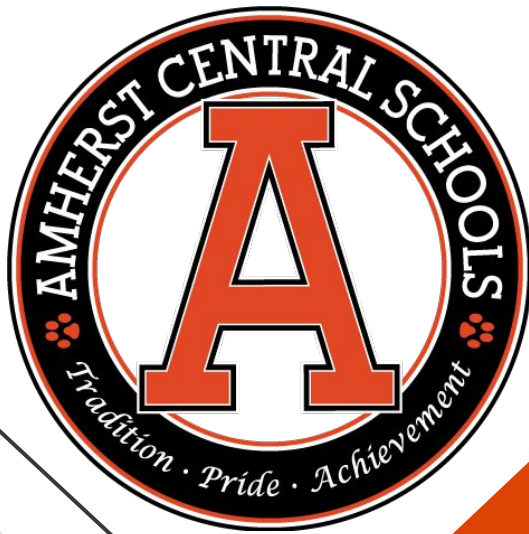
Helpful FAQ to  
address ancillary or  
clarifying questions

# Timeline

Date	Task
May 21, 2025	District wide email send to staff, parents, students in grades 6-11 to solicit committee membership
May 28	Identify committee members: parents, staff, students
June 4	First Committee meets
June 11	Second Committee meets
June 13	Distraction Free School Webpage created, FAQs, draft plan, feedback survey posted
June 13	Feedback Form to Families/All Staff; open June 13-20
June 20	Feedback Form Closes
June 24	Third Committee Meeting to review community feedback; decisions on storage, consequences, parent communication
July 8	Policy draft for Policy Review Committee must be finalized
July 10	Policy Review committee receives draft policy
July 14-17	Admin retreat
July 17	Policy Review Committee meeting
Aug. 1	BOE policy approval
Aug. 5	BOE Presentation

# Administrative Retreat

- **July 17, 2025**
- **BOE Presentation & Website**
- **Team Review**
  - Policy
  - Plan
  - FAQ
- **Timeline**
- **Completion of “Addendum” to Plan for Implementation**
  - Goals: Smooth Transition & Strong Communication
  - Focused Work with our High School



Questions?