

## RVCSD Cell Phone Policy

**Required**

Local

Notice

### STUDENTS AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

*Beginning August 1, 2025, Education Law §2803 requires each school district and BOCES to adopt a policy restricting the use of “internet-enabled devices” during the entire school day on school grounds. Such devices are defined as “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.” However, two categories of devices are excluded: (1) those which are **not** capable of connecting to the internet or enabling the user to access content on the internet are excluded from this definition (e.g., voice and text-only cell phones), and (2) those which are supplied by the district/BOCES used for educational purposes.*

While the law is limited to internet-enabled devices, we choose to expand this policy to address other personal electronic devices, or use of devices during other school activities, due to the capacity for distraction to the learning environment.

The Board of Education recognizes that students may have personal electronic devices that can perform different functions. Such devices include “internet-enabled devices” defined as: any smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, glasses or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling the user to access content on the internet, including social media applications, but **do not** include any such device supplied by the district for educational purposes.

Other **personal electronic devices** includes devices which are not capable of connecting to the internet and access content on the internet.[Fitness trackers, wireless headphones and earbuds, e-readers, voice recorders, cameras and music devices.] These devices can create significant distraction to the school environment, negatively impact student mental health, contribute to disciplinary infractions, and reduce student engagement. Additionally, in an emergency, the use of personal electronic devices can distract students from following the directions of staff or emergency responders, contribute to the spread of misinformation, create congestion in the emergency response system, and interfere with the district’s emergency response protocols.

The district is not responsible for stolen, lost or damaged personal electronic devices brought to school.

### Communication with Parents/Persons in Parental Relation

*The district’s policy must include one or more methods for parents/persons in parental relation to contact their children during the school day, and provide for written communication of these methods at the beginning of the school year and upon enrollment.*

During the school day, to minimize distractions, parents (which, for purposes of this policy, includes persons in parental relation) may contact their children by calling the school’s offices.

Students may contact their parents by using a school's office phone located in the main or designated school's offices. The district will notify parents in writing of the communication protocol at the beginning of each school year and upon enrollment.

During the school day, **parents/guardians may contact students** by calling the **main office** of their school building.

- o No calls will be transferred into classrooms; instead, students will be called down to the main office to contact their parent/guardian.
- o Students will **not** be permitted to use personal devices to call or message home during the school day.
- o If a student needs to contact a parent or guardian, a phone will be available in designated offices for student use.
- o Emergencies will be handled through administration with immediate communication with families.

### **Device Access and Storage**

*Districts must include in the policy the methods for on-site storage of student devices during the school day. When determining the storage options for your district, keep in mind that the legislative intent is to restrict access by students to devices for non-permitted reasons. It is our understanding that only using backpacks/bags would not be sufficient for this law.*

As required by Education Law §2803, this policy prohibits student use of internet-enabled devices during the school day (including all classes, homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time) on school grounds (any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the boundary of a school or district or BOCES facility), unless under an exception (e.g., IEP/Section 504 or as permitted below).

#### **Elementary Schools (Grades K–3)**

1. Devices Discouraged: Students are strongly discouraged from bringing internet-enabled personal electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, glasses) to school.
2. If a Device Is Brought: It must be silenced and stored immediately upon arrival.
3. Storage Method: Classroom teacher's locked cabinet, designated storage boxes or student lockers.
4. Student Access: Devices may not be accessed until dismissal unless a documented exception is on file (e.g., healthcare need, IEP/504 Plan).

#### **Intermediate School (Grades 4–6)**

1. Devices Discouraged: Students are strongly discouraged from bringing internet-enabled personal electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, glasses) to school.
2. If a Device Is Brought: It must be silenced and stored immediately upon arrival.
3. Storage Method: Classroom teacher's locked cabinet, designated storage boxes or student lockers.
4. Access: Devices may not be accessed until dismissal unless a documented exception is on file (e.g., healthcare need, IEP/504 Plan).

#### **Junior High School (Grades 7–8)**

1. Devices Discouraged: Students are strongly discouraged from bringing internet-enabled personal electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, glasses) to school.
2. If a Device Is Brought: It must be silenced and stored immediately upon arrival.
3. Storage Method: internet-enabled personal electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, glasses) will be locked in student lockers with personal lock combinations.
4. Student Access: Devices may not be accessed until dismissal unless a documented exception is on file (e.g., healthcare need, IEP/504 Plan).

### **High School (Grades 9–12)**

1. Devices Discouraged: Students are strongly discouraged from bringing internet-enabled personal electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, glasses) to school.
2. If a Device Is Brought: It must be silenced and stored immediately upon arrival.
3. Storage Options: Individual storage pouches
  - o The Yondr system provides a consistent, school-wide solution that meets the requirements of the mandate while allowing students to keep their device on them, secured and inaccessible throughout the school day. Students will lock and unlock their pouches at designated stations on arrivals and dismissals.
4. Student Access: Devices may not be accessed during class periods, transitions, or lunch unless a documented exception is on file (e.g., healthcare need, IEP/504 Plan).

\*\*Students who destroy or damage device pouches or storage areas to access phones or personal technology, may be subject to behavioral supports/responses in accordance with the District Code of Conduct and parents/guardians will be held financially responsible for the cost of reimbursement for the device pouch or storage area.

**The district is not responsible** for lost, stolen, or damaged devices.

Administrators and staff may also restrict the use of electronic devices during school events and activities held outside of the school day and/or off school grounds.

### **Exceptions for Specific Purposes**

Use of internet-enabled devices must be permitted where included in a student's Individualized Education Program, Section 504 plan, or where required by law. Additionally, the district permits the use of internet-enabled devices in the event of an emergency, and under the following circumstances:

1. Where necessary to manage a student's healthcare (e.g., diabetes, asthma, medication, etc.);
2. For translation services; and/or
3. For students who are routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member (on a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor).

Parents may request an exception for their children to use internet-enabled devices during the school day as listed above. Requests must be made to the Building Principal, and for healthcare exceptions, must include documentation from an appropriate healthcare professional.

The district provides students with one-to-one devices; therefore, personal electronic devices are not permitted for educational purposes.

Students may also be permitted to use their internet-enabled devices during the school day on school grounds for specific educational purposes, if the following criteria are met:

- The student has registered the device with the district, in accordance with district procedures.
- With administrative approval, the teacher has authorized the use of specific devices for a particular activity, after which the device must be stowed per this policy.
- The student uses the device to access the Internet or authorized applications through the district's network, under the terms of policy 4526, Computer Use in Instruction.

Under any of these exceptions, devices may only be used for the purposes outlined in the exception, and the device must be silenced and put away when not in use, to the extent compatible with the reason for the exception.

### **Enforcement, Consequences and Reporting**

As other districts have seen, consistent administrative support and enforcement is key for students to comply with a "bell-to-bell" policy. *The law prohibits suspension of students if the sole grounds is that the student accessed an internet-enabled device in violation of this policy.*

Personal electronic devices (e.g., smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, glasses) that are not stored properly or are used without permission will be confiscated and held in the school office. The following offenses will be added to our Student Code of Conduct:

**1<sup>st</sup> Offense**, Student's device will be confiscated. It stays in the school office until the end of the day, at which time a parent or guardian must come to retrieve the device (**1A, 1B** Teacher / Student / Parent Response).

**2<sup>nd</sup> Offense**, Student's device will be confiscated. It stays in the school office until the end of the day, at which time a parent or guardian must come to retrieve the device. Students may receive a consequence of a second infraction (**2A, 2B** Administrative Referral).

**3<sup>rd</sup> Offense**, Student's device will be confiscated. It stays in the school office until the end of the day, at which time a parent or guardian must come to retrieve the device. Students may receive a consequence of a third infraction. Repeat offenders will have a parent conference with administration. (**2A, 2B** Administrative Referral).

**4<sup>th</sup> Offense and beyond**, Student's device will be confiscated. It stays in the school office until the end of the day, at which time a parent or guardian must come to retrieve the device. Students shall receive a consequence of a fourth infraction. Repeat offenders will have a parent conference with administration. (**2A, 2B** Administrative Referral).

Students who destroy or damage device pouches or storage areas to access phones or personal technology, may be subject to behavioral supports/responses in accordance with the District Code of Conduct and parents/guardians will be held financially responsible for the cost of reimbursement for the device pouch or storage area.

**The district is not responsible** for lost, stolen, or damaged devices.

Enforcement of this policy is chiefly the responsibility of building administrative staff; however, all designated employees are expected to assist in enforcement. Students will be reminded of this policy regularly and consistently, especially at the start of the school year and after returning from breaks.

The district will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the district but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. For students with exceptions under this policy, the district will examine alternative ways to achieve the purpose of the exception, including different storage or access provisions.

Administrators will also discuss the aims of this policy with students and their parents, the benefits of a distraction-free environment, the reasons the student had difficulty following this policy, and how the district can help the student contribute to a distraction-free environment.

The district may not impose suspension from school if the sole grounds for the suspension is that the student accessed an internet-enabled device as prohibited by this policy. **However, the district may utilize consequences under the district's Code of Conduct, including detention, in-school suspension, and exclusion from extracurricular activities.** The district may also utilize assignments on the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, smartphones in school, or other relevant topics.

Some uses of personal electronic devices may constitute a violation of the school district Code of Conduct or other district policies, and in some instances, the law. The district will cooperate with law enforcement officials as appropriate.

Beginning September 1, 2026 and annually thereafter, the district will publish an annual report on its website detailing the enforcement of this policy over the past year, including non-identifiable demographic information of students who have faced disciplinary action for non-compliance with this policy, and an analysis of any demographic disparities in enforcement of this policy. If a statistically significant disparate enforcement impact is identified, the report will include a plan to mitigate such disparate enforcement.

### **Electronic Devices and Testing**

*Electronic devices are not permitted during the administration of state assessments pursuant to NYSED guidance.*

To ensure the integrity of testing, in accordance with state guidelines, students may not bring cell phones or other electronic devices into classrooms or other exam locations during state

assessments. Teachers may grant specific permission for electronic device usage during tests other than state assessments.

Test proctors, monitors and school officials have the right to collect cell phones and other prohibited electronic devices prior to the start of the test and to hold them for the duration of the test taking time. Admission to the test will be prohibited to any student who has a cell phone or other electronic device in their possession and does not relinquish it.

Students with Individualized Education Plans, Section 504 Plans, or documentation from medical practitioners specifically requiring use of electronic devices may do so as specified.

### **Policy Distribution and Translation**

*NOTE: The following paragraph, while not required to be included in the policy, reflects §2803(6). The NY State Department of Labor lists the current 12 most common non-English languages at this website: <https://dol.ny.gov/faq-language-access-non-english-speaking-new-yorkers>. As of 2025, these languages are: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Urdu, and Yiddish.*

As required by law, the district will post this policy in a clearly visible and accessible location on its website. Upon request by a student or parent, the district will translate this policy into any of the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the state, as identified by the most recent American community survey published by the U.S. Census bureau.

The district will also include this information, or a plain language summary, in student/family handbooks.

Cross-ref: 4526, Computer Use in Instruction  
4526.1, Internet Safety  
5300, Code of Conduct

Ref: Education Law §2803  
*Price v. New York City Board of Education*, 51 A.D.3d 277, lv. to appeal denied, 11 N.Y.3d 702 (2008) (District may ban possession of cell phones on school property)  
NYSED, *Prohibition of Cell Phones and Electronic Devices in New York State Assessments*, [www.nysed.gov/educator-integrity/prohibition-cell-phones-and-electronic-devices-new-york-state-assessments](http://www.nysed.gov/educator-integrity/prohibition-cell-phones-and-electronic-devices-new-york-state-assessments)

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