

East Islip School District Student Personal Device Policy Update – 2025-2026 School Year

And Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Beginning in the 2025–2026 school year, in compliance with new legislation passed by the New York State Legislature, the East Islip School District will implement a districtwide ban on student use of smartphones and other personal internet-enabled devices during the school day.

This statewide “bell-to-bell” ban on personal internet-enabled devices, includes cell phones, smart watches and tablets. Students in middle and high school must keep their personal devices in their lockers. Elementary students’ devices will be stored in designated classroom locations.

In developing this policy, the district engaged in a collaborative process with input from key stakeholders, including representatives from bargaining units, parents, and students. The goal of this policy is to minimize distractions and support a focused, academically driven learning environment throughout the entire instructional day.

The board adopted the new policy, #5695 Students and Personal Electronic Devices, on July 1, 2025.

Its goal is to reduce distractions, promote learning and support student well-being in the school environment.

You may view the [district’s policy](#) here.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Why is the policy being implemented?

The East Islip School District is implementing the New York State-mandated bell-to-bell ban on student use of cell phones and personal internet-enabled devices during the school day. While this is not a district-initiated policy, we support the regulation in light of growing concerns related to student mental health, focus, and overall well-being.

Extensive research and evidence from schools across the state show that limiting access to personal devices during the instructional day reduces distractions, enhances student engagement, and fosters a more focused, connected, and healthier learning environment.

We recognize that this marks a significant change for students and families. Our goal is to help students be fully present in their learning, develop strong interpersonal skills, build resilience, and protect their emotional wellness.

We appreciate your continued partnership as we work together to support every student's success in East Islip.

What devices are included in the ban?

All personal internet-enabled electronic devices, including cell phones, headphones of any kind and smartwatches, are included. Smartwatches have become just as distracting and often serve the same function as phones.

Where will students be able to store their phones?

Students will be required to keep their internet-enabled devices turned off and stored in lockers during the school day at the middle and high school buildings. At the elementary level, no adjustments are needed, as students have already been following a practice of storing devices in designated classroom locations with the devices turned off. That protocol will remain in place.

Why are students not allowed to store their phones in their backpacks?

While the District had originally planned to have students keep their phones off and away in their backpacks, clarification from both the Office of the Governor and the New York State Education Department (NYSED) indicated that backpacks "... are not an allowable storage solution." Please see these links for more information.

From NYSED: [2025 Distraction-Free Schools: Guidance](#)

From the Office of the Governor: [Distraction-Free Schools: Implementation Resources](#)

What if a student needs to contact a parent during the school day?

Students may use the phone in the main office. We understand concerns around privacy, and our staff will provide support to help students feel comfortable making necessary calls.

What if a parent needs to contact their child during the school day?

Parents can always call the main office. We will ensure that students receive important messages in a timely and discreet manner. The following is a list of each school and the main office phone number:

East Islip High School-631-224-2006

East Islip Middle School-631-224-2008

Ruth C. Kinney Elementary School-631-224-2007

John F. Kennedy Elementary School-631-224-2003

Timber Point Elementary School-631-224-2004

Connetquot Elementary School-631-224-2001

Can students use their phones at lunch?

No. The mandate is bell-to-bell, which includes lunch periods.

Is there any flexibility for emergencies?

No. In case of emergency, the main office and guidance office phones are available. Additionally, the belief that personal devices make emergency situations safer is often inaccurate. During real emergencies, mass personal device use can lead to confusion, spread misinformation, interfere with first responders, and overwhelm communication systems.

What happens if a student violates the policy?

On a first offense, students will be asked to put their phone away. Repeated offenses will be considered not following directions and/or insubordination and subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the 2025-26 Code of Conduct.

What if students don't have anything to do during study halls without their phones?

Study halls are intended for academic work. Students can read, write, complete assignments, or access school-approved content on Chromebooks. If all work is done, they can also request library access.

What about communication for after-school plans, sports, clubs?

Students will have their phones at the end of the day and can coordinate plans then. Additionally, teachers and coaches can communicate via ParentSquare or FinalForms. Families should ensure students are clear on after-school expectations in the morning.

Why can't watches with limited functions be allowed for safety?

Smartwatches, even with limited features, still allow discreet communication and can be used inappropriately. At this time, all smartwatches are included in the ban to ensure consistency and minimize distraction.

What if a student struggles with anxiety or needs a phone for comfort?

We understand that separation from devices may initially be difficult. Staff will be available to support students in the transition. If a student has a documented need, families should work with their child's counselor and the building administrator to explore appropriate accommodations.

Is the school considering exceptions for lunch or study halls?

No. The policy is required by the state to be enforced consistently throughout the instructional day, including study halls and lunch. This clarity helps ensure fairness and effectiveness.

How will the school handle updates about schedule changes for sports or clubs?

ParentSquare and/or FinalForms will continue to be used for communication, and we encourage families to check messages at the end of the day. Staff will work to provide timely and accessible updates. As in the past, students will receive announcements during or at the end of the day regarding schedule changes for sports or clubs.

What if students don't use or know how to use their locker?

Support will be provided at the beginning of the school year to help students learn their locker combinations and build locker-use routines.