



ELLICOTTVILLE

Central School

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August 1, 2025

2025-26 CELL PHONE POLICY & PROCEDURES UPDATE

Dear Ellicottville Central School Families,

I hope this letter finds you enjoying everything Western New York and the greater Ellicottville area has to offer for this summer season! It is hard to believe, but in a month, we will be up and running for what we expect will be an outstanding 2025-2026 school year at Ellicottville Central. As we prepare for the new school year, ECS is implementing updates to our policy on **personal technology use during school hours**. These changes reflect both new legal requirements in New York State and a growing body of research about the impact of digital devices on student well-being and learning.

In June of this year, ECS convened a large and diverse committee consisting of middle and high school students, parents, teachers, staff, and school leaders to thoughtfully discuss how we will comply with New York State Education Law §2803. This new legislation prohibits student use of personal cell phones and internet-enabled devices (such as smartwatches) during instructional hours in public schools. The enclosed policy represents the careful work of that committee and is slated for final adoption by the ECS Board of Education in August.

Background Information

NYS Education Law §2803 was enacted earlier this year to help public schools create safe and focused learning environments. It requires all New York public schools to prohibit student use of personal mobile phones, smartwatches, laptops and similar devices during the school day, unless an exception is granted for documented medical needs, learning accommodations (504 or IEP plans), or urgent caregiver responsibilities.

In support of this law, researchers and psychologists continue to highlight concerns about how smartphones affect adolescent development. In his 2024 book, The Anxious Generation, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt outlines how constant phone use is linked to rising rates of anxiety, depression, and distraction among teens. Haidt advocates for phone-free school days as a key step to restoring focus, improving social interaction, and reducing mental health concerns in students. **ECS embraces the research-based goals of NYS Education Law §2803, and we stand with educators, researchers and parents who wish to rescue our children from the distractions and stresses of a cell-phone based childhood.**

New Policy & Procedures

The enclosed ECS policy outlines clear expectations for students and families. In summary, students will be required to store personal cell phones in school-provided locking cases. Personal cell phones or smartwatches will be locked in cases to begin the day, and unlocked upon dismissal.

This is the type of case ECS will be using, and a link demonstrating use:

<https://vimeo.com/1017168103?fl=pl&fe=sh>



Key features of the ECS Plan include:

- Personal devices (phones, earbuds, smartwatches) may not be used between 8:19 AM and 2:55 PM unless approved by a faculty or staff member.
- Devices must be turned off and stored in provided cases during the school day unless otherwise approved/directed by staff.
- Students may request brief, as-needed use of their device for parent and/or emergency communication, as approved by ECS faculty and staff.
- Long-term exemptions are limited to medical needs, 504/IEP accommodations, and documented caregiver responsibilities. A structured process exists for requesting exemptions, including documentation and review by ECS leadership. Please view appropriate forms and a summary of the ECS process to request an exemption on our school website.

Feel free to take a moment to watch this 8-minute introductory video explaining the case and how we plan to use it at ECS:



If you have trouble viewing this video, have no fear, it is a working summary of what is in this letter and our policy.

We believe this policy is an important step toward supporting student wellness, building stronger peer relationships, and enhancing classroom engagement. We appreciate the support we have already received from our ECS community as we implement this initiative.

If you have questions about the policy or the exception request process, please contact me at eploetz@ecsny.org or (716) 699-2316 x1401. On behalf of the Board of Education and the faculty and staff at ECS, we hope you enjoy the second half of your summer vacation, and we will see you in September!

Sincerely,

Erich Ploetz
Principal
Ellicottville Middle/High School