

IMPORTANT UPDATE: Cell Phone Policy Change Effective January 5, 2026

Thursday, December 18, 2025

Dear Ottawa Hills Junior/Senior High School Families,

We want to make you aware of an important update to cell phone expectations for when students return next semester. Ohio Governor Mike DeWine signed House Bill (HB) 250, which mandates that all schools in Ohio establish a policy that minimizes student cell phone use during the school day. In the past, we have allowed students to use cell phones in between classes and at lunch. Following clarification and recommendations from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, Ottawa Hills Jr./Sr. High School is adjusting our policy to stay in compliance with the spirit of HB 250.

Effective January 5, 2026, all students will be required to have their phones powered off and away from the first bell of the day until the last bell of the day (with the exception of the lunch period due to our open campus lunch).

Please review this adjusted policy that includes the expectations of student use of cell phones and other devices, and the consequences of inappropriate use.

Policy Highlights

- **Duration:** The prohibition applies to the entire instructional day, defined as the first bell to the final bell. This includes class time, science labs, language labs, study halls, passing periods, and field trips.
- **Storage:** Students must power off devices and store them in a secure, inaccessible location (locker, closed backpack or purse) throughout the instructional day. Phones may not be kept on a student's person (e.g., in a pants or coat pocket).
- **Medical & Educational Exceptions:** This policy does not prohibit device use documented in an IEP, 504 Plan, or for a health concern supported by a physician's written statement submitted to the school board.
- **Lunchtime Exception:** Due to our open lunch policy, cell phone use will be permitted 11:10 a.m. to 12:05 p.m. Students must power down devices immediately upon hearing a warning bell at noon. Note: While permitted, we strongly encourage students to use this time to socialize face-to-face and minimize screen time. The lunchtime exception is intended to prevent students leaving campus for lunch simply to use their phone.

To ensure consistency, the following steps will be taken for policy violations:

1. **First Violation:** Parent/guardian contacted. Device confiscated until the end of the day (student pickup). 60-minute after-school detention.

2. Second Violation: Parent/guardian contacted. Device confiscated until parent/guardian pickup. Two (2) 1-hour after-school detentions.
3. Third Violation: Parent/guardian contacted. Half-day Saturday School.
4. Fourth Violation: Parent/guardian contacted. Full-day Saturday School and the student must store their phone in the main office daily.

How You Can Support Your Student

We ask for your partnership in implementing this policy to ensure a safe and focused learning environment:

- Plan Ahead: Please discuss after-school plans, appointments, and logistics with your student before the school day begins.
- Emergency Contact: If you have an emergency and need to reach your child, please call the school office directly. We will ensure the message is delivered.
- Review: Please sit down with your student to review these new expectations and the consequences of non-compliance.

Click [here](#) to read the full policy and consider the following when discussing the policy with your student.

- Proactively talking with your student about after school plans, lunch planning, appointments, or activities in advance of arrival to school.
- Reminding your student how they can reach family during school hours, and how you can reach them in case of an emergency through the school office.
- Emphasizing the importance of adhering to school rules regarding the cellphone policy to ensure consistency in expectations between home and school.
- Visiting <http://education.ohio.gov/cellphones> for more information and resources about cell phone use for your family.

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation as we work to strengthen our focus on learning and mental well-being.

Sincerely,

Ben McMurray, Principal

Ottawa Hills Junior/Senior High School