



WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Student Personal Electronic Device Guidelines - Beginning 2026-27 School Year

Western School District families,

Beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, all Michigan public schools will be required to implement student wireless device restrictions during instructional time under new state legislation passed earlier this year.

As we prepared for this transition at Western School District, we knew this conversation was about much more than simply “taking phones away.” Our district worked closely with building administrators and school leadership teams to develop expectations that are age-appropriate, realistic, and aligned to the unique needs of our students and schools.

Our goal is to create learning environments where students are:

- More focused
- More engaged
- More connected to the people around them
- Less distracted by devices and social pressures throughout the school day

While the state law establishes the requirement, districts still have flexibility in how expectations are implemented locally.

After careful discussion and planning, Western’s approach was designed to balance:

- Student learning and engagement
- Age-appropriate independence
- School safety and emergency procedures
- Family communication concerns
- Consistent expectations across grade levels

That is why many of the expectations will remain consistent across the district, while still allowing for slight differences as students grow older and demonstrate increased independence and responsibility:

- ❖ Elementary students are encouraged to leave personal devices at home. If brought to school, devices must remain turned off and stored during the entire school day, including on the bus to and from school.
- ❖ Middle school students will store devices in lockers during the school day and may briefly check phones at their lockers between classes. Phones will not be permitted during lunch to help reduce social distractions and increase student interaction.
- ❖ High school students will store devices in lockers during the school day, may briefly check phones at their lockers between classes, and will also have access to devices during lunch.



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We also recognize that many parents understandably worry about communication during emergencies. Student safety remains our top priority. State law additionally requires schools to update emergency procedures related to device use, and our district will continue working closely with safety officials and first responders to ensure strong communication systems and clear emergency protocols are in place.

Most importantly, this work is not just about restriction. It is about intentionally creating school environments where attention, presence, engagement, and human connection are the norm.

Please review the attached graphic for a detailed breakdown of grade-level expectations and the “why” behind these changes.

For additional information and future updates, please visit our Parent Quick Links page:
[Western School District Parent Quick Links](#)

We appreciate the partnership and support of our families as we continue preparing students for success both inside and outside the classroom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Smajda', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Mike Smajda
Superintendent



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WESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENT DEVICE EXPECTATIONS 2026-27 SCHOOL YEAR



OUR GOAL: Create learning environments where students are...
FOCUSED, ENGAGED, and CONNECTED to each other and their learning.

WHY THIS CHANGE?



Implemented in alignment with Michigan wireless communication devices legislation beginning 2026-27.

STATE LAW REQUIREMENT

Michigan law requires schools to restrict smart devices during instructional time.



BETTER LEARNING

- Increased focus
- Stronger academic engagement



HEALTHIER SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

- Fewer distractions and conflicts
- More face-to-face interaction

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE BY GRADE LEVEL

K-5 (ELEMENTARY)



NO PERSONAL DEVICES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

- Personal devices should remain at home
- If brought to school, devices are to be turned off and stored in backpacks and/or lockers at all times



WHY? Supports focus, routine, and social development

6-8 (MIDDLE SCHOOL)



DEVICES STORED IN LOCKERS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

- Not carried during the school day
- Students may briefly check their phones at their lockers in between classes during passing time only
- Not allowed during lunch



WHY? Builds responsibility while reducing distraction and peer pressure

9-12 (HIGH SCHOOL)



DEVICES STORED IN LOCKERS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

- Not carried during the school day
- Students may briefly check their phones at their lockers in between classes during passing time only
- Students may use their phones during lunch



WHY? Balances independence with focused learning expectations



KEY EXPECTATION FOR GRADES 6-12 LOCKER-BASED USE ONLY



Phones may be checked only while standing at your locker.



Students must be within arm's reach of their locker.



No walking through hallways while using phones.



Tardy policies apply if students are late to class.

QUICK CHECK = OKAY | HALLWAY USE, DELAYS OR TARDIES = NOT OKAY

WHAT ABOUT EMERGENCIES?



We understand this concern

- Our schools have clear emergency communication systems
- During emergencies, the school communicates directly with families
- First responders guide all actions
- Personal phones can create confusion or interfere with safety protocols.

STAYING CONNECTED



- Parents and guardians can contact the school office anytime



- Important messages will be delivered promptly to students



- Students may contact home through the school office when needed



THE BIG PICTURE

This is about:

- Protecting learning time
- Reducing stress and social pressure
- Helping students be present and better prepared for their next grade level or life after high school

Less distraction = more engagement
More engagement = stronger academic outcomes and relationships