



**SOMERS
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Forward in Excellence

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SMS Distraction Free Schools Policy and Practices 2026 - 2027

As Somers Central School District and Somers Middle School prepare for the 2026–2027 school year, the district will continue implementing its cell phone policy to support a more focused and distraction-free learning environment. The policy, which aligns with New York State Education Law Section 2803, restricts the use of internet-enabled personal electronic devices during the school day across all grade levels. Adopted by the SCSD Board of Education at its July 17, 2025 meeting as [Policy 5695: Students and Personal Electronic Devices](#), the policy remains in effect for the upcoming school year.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are you doing this?

This is twofold. In addition to complying with New York State law, we are committed to fostering a school environment that promotes student well-being, focus, and engagement in learning. Schools that have implemented a phone-free policy have reported:

- Improved academic performance – Increased focus, comprehension, and participation in class.
- Healthier peer interactions – More meaningful face-to-face conversations, reduced social conflicts, and fewer disciplinary issues.
- Reduced stress and anxiety – Fewer distractions from social media and online drama.
- A safer school environment – Decreased cyberbullying and reduced incidents related to phone misuse.

What are the rules regarding cell phones?

Immediately upon entering the building, beginning at **7:45 AM**, students must power off their cell phones and smart watches and store them in their backpack or locker. Devices must remain powered off and stored until dismissal at **3:07 PM**. This requirement applies during passing time, lunch, and any classes held outside the building. During this time, students may not carry, use, or display their cell phones or smart watches.

What happens in an emergency?

Law enforcement advises that, during an emergency, it is essential for students to remain focused, present, and attentive to staff for instructions rather than using their cell phones. Because student devices will be secured in lockers—not locked pouches—it may not be safe or appropriate for students to enter hallways or access their lockers to retrieve their phones during an emergency. Staff will provide direction and communicate with emergency responders and families as appropriate until it is safe to access personal belongings.

How will I receive information in a safety or weather event?

Families should rely on information directly from the school or district office. Currently, SCSD protocols include the frequent use of phone, email, text and ParentSquare notification for sharing information and updates with families.

Can students use cell phones before and after school or on school buses?

Personal electronic devices, including cell phones and smart watches, may be used before school while outside the building and while riding district transportation to school. Immediately upon entering the building (beginning at 7:45 a.m.), students must power off their devices and store them in their backpack or locker. Devices must remain powered off and stored for the entire school day. Following dismissal at 3:07 p.m., students may use their devices after leaving the building or while riding any district transportation home.

Can I use my own laptop/tablet?

Students in Grade 6 may not use personal laptops or tablets for instructional purposes. All Grade 6 students are issued a district-owned, internet-enabled device for use throughout the school year. Students in Grades 7 and 8 are also issued a district-owned device. However, families may apply for a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) waiver through the Technology Help Desk if they wish for their child to use an approved personal laptop for instructional purposes. Approval must be granted before a personal device may be used at school.

Use of either a district-issued device or an approved personal device is subject to the district's [Acceptable Use Policy](#). Students are expected to comply with all applicable technology guidelines and expectations.

How can students and families communicate during the school day?

To help students remain fully engaged and present during class, communication between students and families during the school day should be limited to urgent or emergency situations. When necessary, students may contact their families using school email or by requesting to use the phone in the main office. Families who need to reach their child during the school day should contact the main office at **914-277-3399**, and office staff will relay urgent messages or arrange for communication as appropriate.

Will teachers and staff be using cell phones during the school day?

Teachers and staff members will model "phones away" so they can focus on teaching and learning by being fully present.

What happens if a student violates the policy?

The school's device policy will be enforced consistently. Consequences for violations are as follows:

- **First violation:** Warning. The device will be held in the main office and may be picked up by the student at dismissal.
- **Second violation:** The device will be held in the main office and must be picked up by a parent or guardian.
- **Third violation:** The device will be held in the main office and must be picked up by a parent or guardian. The student will also receive a lunch detention.
- **Fourth and subsequent violations:** The device will be held in the main office, and progressive disciplinary consequences will be implemented in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct.

What happens if a student uses a phone inappropriately (cyberbullying, harassment, etc.)?

This hasn't changed from previous years and depends on student behavior. All behaviors will be addressed in accordance with our District and School Code of Conduct.