

Policy

X Monitored
X Mandated
X Other Reasons

CELL PHONE AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY

Students

The Elizabeth Public Schools is committed to fostering a school environment that prioritizes engaged learning, supports the development of social skills and promotes the overall well-being of our students. To achieve this, during the school day, bell-to-bell, students are restricted from unauthorized access to and use of their personal devices. The instructional day includes, but is not limited to, lunch break, class changes, and any other structured or non-structured instructional activity that occurs during the normal school day.

Definition of Personal Electronic Devices:

Personal electronic devices (“devices” as used herein) are defined as any electronic device utilized to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular telephone signals, or to capture or play images or video. These include, but are not limited to, smartphones, mobile phones, headphones, earbuds, smartwatches, wearables, tablets, laptops, and gaming devices.

The District reserves the right to classify additional devices as personal electronic devices.

Because of the threat to privacy and the integrity of individual students and staff members and the educational program, the use of a camera function or other recording function of a cell phone and other electronic devices is strictly prohibited on school premises or at school activities. The use of cell phones and other electronic devices is prohibited in restrooms, locker rooms and shower facilities.

Permitted Use

While students may bring a personal device to school, the device must be silenced, turned off, and stored in the storage option determined by the school administration. Implementation of this policy varies by grade level, as further described below.

Cell phones and other electronic devices may be used before the instructional school day and after the official dismissal at the end of the instructional school day provided such use does not create a distraction or disruption.

Cell phones and other electronic devices are not to be used by students participating in before-school or after-school activities unless approved by the staff member in charge.

Parent-Student Communication During School Day

Students needing to contact a parent/guardian during the school day may do so by using the phone in the Main Office, or by accessing their cell phone in the Main Office with administrator approval. Parent/guardian and emergency contact numbers should be kept current.

Parents/guardians needing to reach their student during the school day can contact the Main Office. The school will ensure urgent messages are promptly relayed.

Externally Monitored GPS Tracking Devices with and without Recording Technology

Externally monitored tracking devices given to or placed on students or on the students' property for the purpose of monitoring and/or recording a student's location and or activities during the school day shall be permitted.-When such devices are determined to be a necessary component of the student's individualized educational program (IEP), the teacher shall be notified, and the device used in accordance with the student's IEP.

Policy Implementation

Grade-Level Policies

Elementary School (K-5)

Policy: Students are not permitted to bring cell phones or devices to school.

If Brought to School: Cell phones and devices must be checked in the classroom upon arrival and stored securely for the duration of the school day. They will be returned to students at the end of the day. Parents will receive a notification via Class Dojo or School Messenger (PowerSchool) from the school requesting that personal devices be left at home.

Students may continue to use their district-issued email accounts to communicate with their parents as appropriate.

Elementary School (6-8) and High School (9-12):

Policy: Students are not permitted access to their cell phones or other devices at school during school hours. Students are encouraged to leave devices at home. Cell phones and devices must be checked in the classroom upon arrival and stored securely for the duration of the school day. Students will re-gain access to their device at the end of each school day.

Students may continue to use their district-issued email accounts to communicate with their parents as appropriate.

Accommodations

If a student has a disability or medical condition that requires a cell phone, or other device, the accommodation will be noted in the student's IEP, 504 Plan, or health plan. The special education supervisor or health coordinator will notify appropriate staff of the necessary accommodations. Students who receive an exception to this policy should participate alongside all other students and not be separated unless in accordance with their plan.

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Students with outside responsibilities, such as after-school jobs or caregiving, should make all plans prior to the school day. If there is a need for a student to access their cell phone during the school day, they may do so in the front office or other designated location, and only with the permission of a school administrator.

Families should make arrangements with their child that don't rely upon their child having access to a cell phone or device during school hours.

The district shall not be liable for damage, loss or theft of any personally owned electronic device.

School events:

Students may not use cell phones or other devices at school-sponsored events.

Staff use of personal devices:

School staff are strongly discouraged from using cell phones or personal devices in front of students, except for essential educational purposes (e.g. Microsoft Authenticator, Raptor Alert, Outlook, Class Dojo).

The District reserves the right to modify the acceptable use list for essential educational purposes.

The Policy shall be distributed to students, families, educators and staff at a minimum annually. The Policy will be included in the student code of conduct and student handbook and listed on school and district websites. The Policy shall be developed and distributed in formats and languages that are accessible and reflective of the school community and distributed through multiple communication modes—such as letters, emails, social media, orientation sessions, and meetings—to ensure that the breadth of the school community has reasonable opportunity to learn about, comment on, and comply with the Policy.

Emergency Use

The District shall also make exceptions for student medical and/or family emergency needs in accordance with this Policy. Cell phone and other electronic communication devices may be

used at any time in the event of an emergency. An emergency is defined as any event in which there is imminent danger of bodily injury or loss of life or damage to property.

As part of the school emergency planning, schools will have in place a comprehensive communications plan utilizing school-provided communication tools, such as school phones, when students and families need to communicate with each other during the school day. The school's emergency plans will include a crisis response team that will support students, manage communication, and aid decision-making. The plan will be maintained with the most up-to-date contact information to expedite communication during catastrophic events—such as natural disasters or security threats—and when contacting families for routine issues as well as during family emergencies. Students and families will be informed of the plan in the student handbook, on the school website, and when information is being provided on the Policy.

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Personal Electronic Devices (continued)

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References:	N.J.S.A. 18A:6-10	Dismissal and reduction in compensation of Persons under tenure in a public school system
	N.J.S.A. 18A:11-1	General mandatory powers and duties
	N.J.S.A. 18A:27-4	Power of boards of education to make rules governing employment of teacher, etc.
	N.J.S.A. 18A:54-20	Powers of board (county vocational schools)
Possible Cross References		4119.26/4219.26 Electronic Communication by School Staff