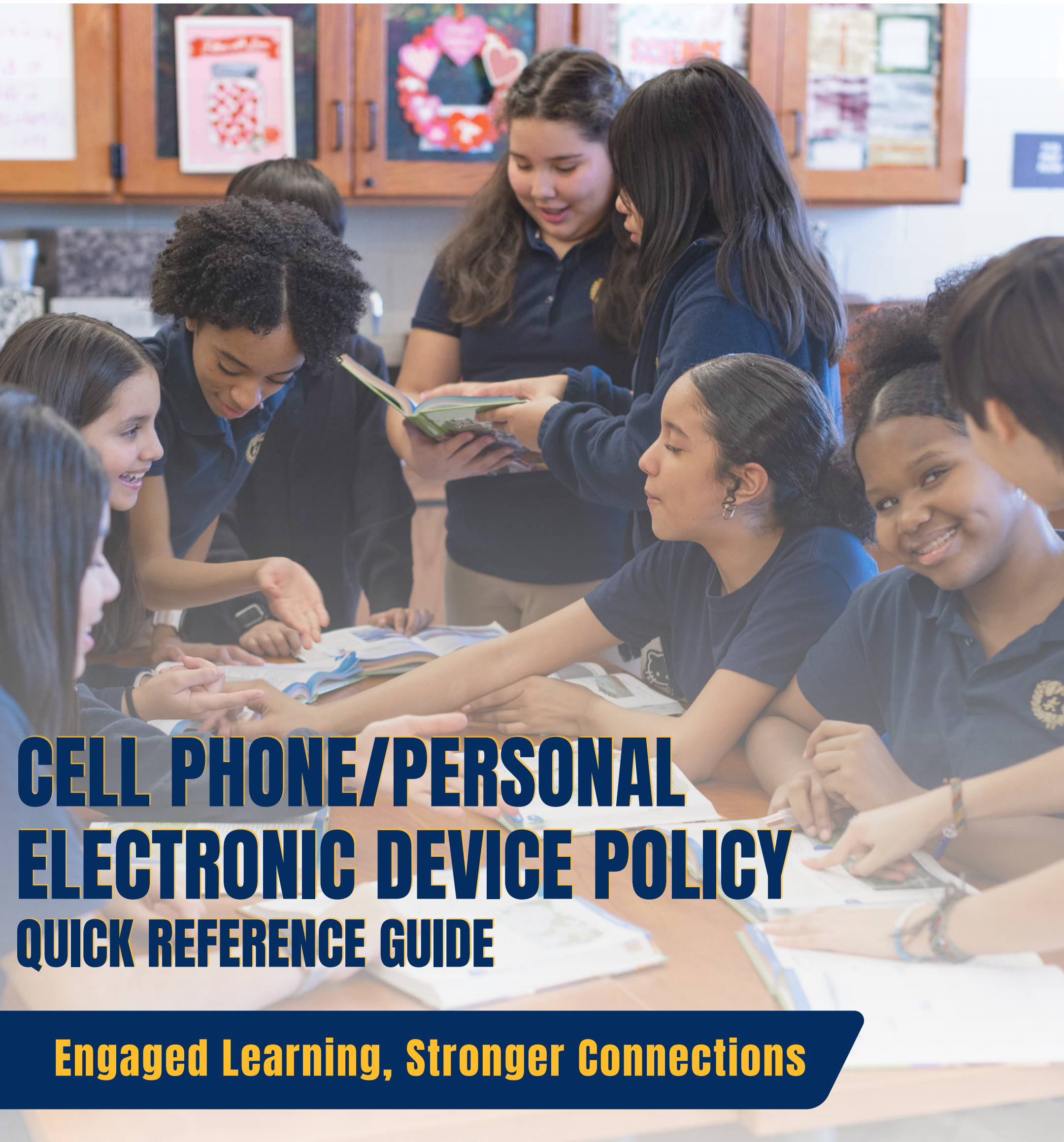




CELL PHONE/PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Engaged Learning, Stronger Connections

Overview & The "Bell-to-Bell" Standard

In today's increasingly connected world, cell phones and other internet-enabled devices are integral to how students communicate, access information, and engage with the broader world. However, the unregulated use of these devices during the school day can result in lower academic performance, harm to emotional well-being, and deterioration of a positive school climate (Böttger & Zierer, 2024; Gath et al., 2024). Additionally, adolescents who spend over three hours a day on social media platforms are at double the risk of experiencing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression (Riehm et al., 2019).

In response to these concerns, on January 8, 2026, the Governor signed legislation (P.L.2025, c.195), which requires the Commissioner of Education to develop guidelines concerning student use of internet-enabled devices and also requires each board of education to adopt a bell-to-bell policy prohibiting student use of internet-enabled devices during the school day.

Elizabeth Public Schools is committed to fostering an environment that prioritizes engaged learning, supports social development, and promotes student well-being. In accordance with the law and the New Jersey Department of Education guidelines, and to uphold this commitment, the EPS cell phone policy (**EBOE Policy 6142.11**) restricts students from unauthorized access to and use of personal electronic devices during the entire school day ("bell-to-bell").

The Core Rule: "Bell-to-Bell" Prohibition

Devices must remain turned off, silenced, and stored away from the start of the school day until the final dismissal bell.

The school day includes:

- Instructional class time
- Lunch breaks
- Class transitions/passing periods
- Any other structured or unstructured activities during normal school hours

What Counts as a Personal Electronic Device?

Any device used to access the internet, wi-fi, cellular signals, or play/capture images or video, including:

- Smartphones and mobile phones
- Smartwatches and smart wearables
- Headphones and wireless earbuds
- Tablets, laptops, and handheld gaming devices



Privacy and Security Standards

- Camera and video recording functions are **strictly prohibited** on school premises and at school activities.
- Personal devices are **never permitted** in restrooms, locker rooms, or shower facilities.
- **The District is not liable for the damage, loss, or theft of any personal devices brought to school premises.**

Expectations by Grade & Daily Routines

Grade Level	Policy Rule	Daily Storage Expectation
Elementary School (K-5)	Not Permitted to bring 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.
Middle & High School (6-12)	No Access during school hours.	If brought to school, 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.

Before & After School Rules

- **Before/After Bell:** Cell phones and other personal 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.
- **Activities:** Devices are not to be used by students participating in before- or after-school activities unless specifically authorized by the staff member in charge.
- **School Events:** Device use is prohibited at all school-sponsored events.

Digital Communication & Staff Roles

- **Student District Email:** Students may continue using their district-issued email accounts to communicate with parents as appropriate throughout the day.
- **Staff Modeling:** School staff are strongly discouraged from using personal devices in front of students, except for essential educational or safety tools (e.g., Raptor Alert, Class Dojo, Microsoft Authenticator).

Parent & Student Communication

We recognize that families need to stay in touch, but personal device access during class distracts from student learning. EPS has established clear procedures to ensure seamless communication when needed.

How Parents Can Reach Their Student

- Call the **Main Office** directly.
- School administrative staff will ensure **urgent** messages are delivered to your child promptly.
- Please ensure your primary and emergency contact numbers are kept current in PowerSchool.

How Students Can Reach Parents

- Students who need to contact a parent or guardian during the day can use the phone in the **Main Office**.
- A student may access their personal cell phone in the **Main Office** with permission from a school administrator

Work & Caregiving Responsibilities

- After-school job schedules, caregiving arrangements, and family plans should be made *before* the school day starts.

Contact Information

- Parents and guardians are reminded to keep emergency contact details current in PowerSchool.

Exceptions, Accommodations & Emergency Protocols

Medical & Educational Accommodations

- **IEP, 504 & Health Plans:** If a student requires a personal electronic device for a documented disability or medical condition, the accommodation will be detailed in their IEP, 504 Plan, or health plan.
- **Inclusion:** Students receiving device exceptions will participate alongside their peers and will not be separated unless required by their official plan.

GPS Tracking Devices

- Location-tracking devices (with or without recording capability) placed on a student or their property are permitted.
- If the tracking device is part of a student's IEP, classroom teachers will be notified and the device will be utilized according to the plan.

Emergency Procedures

- **Definition:** An emergency is defined as an event involving imminent danger of bodily injury, loss of life, or property damage.
- **Immediate Access:** Restriction rules are automatically lifted in the event of an active emergency.
- **Crisis Plan:** EPS maintains a comprehensive communication and crisis response plan using school-provided tools (e.g., school phones). The crisis response team manages official communication to ensure families remain updated during catastrophic events or routine emergencies.

BELL TO BELL CELL PHONE POLICY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



What kinds of devices are included in the policy?

The policy includes any personal electronic device that utilizes the internet or cellular signal. This list includes, but is not limited to, smartphones, mobile phones, headphones, earbuds, smartwatches, tablets, gaming devices, and smart glasses.

How can I reach my student during the day?

If you need to reach your student during the school day, please contact the school's main office. and school staff will ensure your message is delivered. ***Please remember to ensure your contact information is correct in PowerSchool.***



How can my student reach me during the school day?

If your student needs to reach you during the school day, they can visit the main office, where staff will assist them in contacting you. ***It is important that all contact information remain up to date in PowerSchool.***

What if there is a lockdown or other emergency in the building?

In the event of a lockdown or other emergency, the school will communicate with families through official channels, such as SchoolMessenger, emails, and phone calls. ***To receive communication through these channels please regularly update your contact information in PowerSchool to remain current.***



What if my child uses a tablet or other communication device as part of their IEP or 504 plan?

Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities who use electronic devices to communicate, or for other reasons related to their disability, in accordance with the student's IEP or 504 plan.



What if my child needs to reach other people during the school day, such as their siblings or their boss to make after school plans?

We encourage students to finalize after-school plans outside of school hours. However, if your student needs to reach other people, such as their sibling or boss, they can visit the main office, where staff will assist in making the necessary contact.



References

Böttger, T., & Zierer, K. (2024). To ban or not to ban? A rapid review on the impact of smartphone bans in schools on social well-being and academic performance. *Education Sciences*, 14(906), 1-11.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14080906>

Gath, M. E., Monk, L., Scott, A., & Gillon, G. T. (2024). Smartphones at school: A mixed-methods analysis of educators' and students' perspectives on mobile phone use at school. *Education Sciences*, 14(351), 1-17.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14040351>

Riehm, K. E., Feder, K. A., Tormohlen, K. N., Crum, R. M., Young, A. S., Green, K. M., Pacek, L. R., La Flair, L. N., & Mojtabai, R. (2019). Associations between time spent using social media and internalizing and externalizing problems among US youth. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 76(12), 1266-1273.

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.232531>