



Dear Pine Hill School District Families,

As the summer comes to a close and we prepare for the start of the 2026–2027 school year, we want to share an **important update regarding the use of personal internet-enabled devices during the school day**, including cell phones, tablets, smartwatches, Meta glasses, and similar devices. Over the past few years, our schools have had procedures in place for students to keep their phones and devices from distracting them during class. New Jersey has now enacted [legislation](#) addressing student use of internet-enabled devices in schools. In accordance with this law and the New Jersey Department of Education’s [2026 Guidance for Schools on Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices](#), all school districts are required to adopt policies that prohibit the use of personal internet-enabled devices **from “bell to bell.”** This means that students may no longer use their devices in the hallways, during study hall, and during lunch.

This legislation was enacted as a public health measure in response to growing concerns regarding the impact of excessive device and social media use on adolescents.

Research cited by the New Jersey Department of Education indicates that:

- Nearly 95% of high school-aged students use social media, with many reporting frequent or near-constant use.
- Teens may spend up to seven hours per day on social media, with a portion of that time occurring during the school day.
- Students who spend more than three hours per day on social media are at greater risk for anxiety and depression.

Reducing access to personal internet-enabled devices during the school day is intended to support student learning, improve focus, and provide greater opportunities for meaningful, in-person interactions with peers and school staff.

Staying Connected with Your Child

We recognize that many families have become accustomed to communicating directly with their children throughout the school day. We also understand that any change in this routine may take some adjustment. Our goal is to ensure that students remain accessible to their families, when necessary, while also maintaining a focused learning environment.



To support this transition:

- **In the event of an emergency**, please contact your child's school's main office. School staff will ensure that messages are communicated to students promptly.
- **Students may access the main office** if they need to contact a parent or caregiver regarding an emergency or other situation requiring immediate attention. We want to ensure that not having access to a personal cell phone or device does not mean that a student cannot communicate with home when necessary. In those circumstances, your child's school's staff will make sure those communications occur.

Our District's Approach

At Pine Hill School District, we recognize that this change is about more than simply putting phones away. We want our schools to be places where students are engaged in learning, present with one another, and able to build positive relationships with their peers and teachers without the constant distraction of personal devices.

In preparing for this change, the district carefully considered the requirements of the new law as well as input from faculty, students, and administration. Based on that work, students will **turn off their personal internet-enabled devices and store them in their backpacks, other designated bags (at the high school level), and/or lockers for the duration of the school day.**

The district's [Policy #5516](#) requires that personal internet-enabled devices be turned off and not used for the duration of the school day, from the first bell to the last bell. Exceptions to the state requirements are an accommodation included in an IEP or 504 Plan, a medical necessity supported by appropriate provider authorization, or an emergency authorization approved by the Superintendent. Such exceptions must be supported by proper documentation and district approval. If your child requires an exception, please work with your building school personnel for the necessary documentation and procedures to be put in place.

Board [Regulation #5516](#), outlines the specific expectations and procedures for each grade span, including consequences for students who access or attempt to use internet-enabled devices in violation of district expectations.

When Students May Use Internet-Enabled Devices

The bell-to-bell restriction applies to the regular school day. There are circumstances when students may use their personal internet-enabled devices, consistent with district expectations and applicable law:



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Melissa Williams, Ed.D., Superintendent

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- **On school buses:** Students may use their devices while traveling to and from school on district transportation, provided their use complies with the district's transportation rules and expectations.
- **Before and after the school day:** Students may use their devices on school grounds before the start of the regular school day and after the school day has concluded, subject to the expectations established by their school.
- **School-sponsored activities and events:** Students may be permitted to use their devices at certain school-sponsored activities or events that take place off school grounds during the school day when circumstances warrant. Such use will be determined by the supervising staff and must be consistent with applicable law, NJDOE guidance, and district procedures.

These provisions are intended to provide students with reasonable opportunities to use their devices when appropriate while maintaining the bell-to-bell expectation during the regular school day.

A Shared Commitment

We believe that our schools are strongest when students are able to be fully present—engaged in their classes, interacting with their peers, and developing relationships with the adults who support them. While this policy represents a change for many of our students and families, we believe it provides an opportunity to strengthen the learning environment and support our students' academic, social, and emotional development.

We appreciate your partnership and support as we implement these expectations. Prior to the first day of school, we ask that families help us reinforce the importance of following the policy and encourage students to view this change as an opportunity to be more present and connected throughout the school day.

If you have questions about the policy or how it will be implemented in your child's school, please contact me or your child's principal. Thank you for your continued partnership and support of the Pine Hill School District.

In Education,

Melissa Williams, Ed.D., Superintendent
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