



Policy/Regulation 5516

Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices

Washington Township Public Schools

Board Meeting Presentation | Comprehensive Implementation Plan for Fall 2026

Legal Mandate & District Objectives

Building focus and digital citizenship for Washington Township students

THE LEGAL MANDATE

N.J.S.A. 18A:36-40b

Under New Jersey state law, public schools must adopt a "Bell-to-Bell" personal internet-enabled device restriction.

Students PreK through Grade 12 are prohibited from utilizing personal cell phones, tablets, smartwatches, or smart glasses on school grounds during the school day.

Goal 1: Direct Instructional Focus

Ensure classroom instructional time is entirely free of personal internet-enabled device distractions. Teachers will not incorporate personal devices into lessons. All digital instruction occurs through secure district-managed tools.

Goal 2: Digital Citizenship & Reconnection

Develop empathetic, thoughtful digital citizens who utilize technology to build community, respect diverse perspectives, and check source validity. Foster a return to active face-to-face play, collaborative group work, and direct communication.

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THE DEFINITIONS

Bell-to-bell” means the timeframe when the bell rings at the start of the school day until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic day. Bell-to-bell includes time in between class periods and lunch.

Internet-enabled device” means any device capable of connecting to the internet and accessing online content (e.g., smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, smart glasses, etc.), including social media applications. An internet-enabled device does not include an internet-enabled device provided by the Board when used for educational purposes.

Non-internet-enabled device” means a basic communication device that is not capable of connecting to the internet or enabling the user to access content on the internet. (Flip-Phones – Walkie-Talkie)

Device Storage Expectations by School Level

Differentiated storage parameters based on grade-level structures

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Grades PreK through 5

DAILY EXPECTATION: **Off & With Belongings**

Personal devices must be completely powered off or silenced and stored away within the student's personal belongings (backpacks or cubbies) throughout the entire school day.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Grades 6 through 8

DAILY EXPECTATION: **Off & In Lockers**

Personal devices must be turned off or silenced and stored securely inside the student's school-issued locker. Devices may not be kept in pockets or on bags during school hours.

HIGH SCHOOL

Grades 9 through 12

DAILY EXPECTATION: **Off & In Backpacks**

Personal devices must remain completely turned off, password-protected, and stored away inside the student's backpack or personal bag. Note: Devices will NOT be stored in school lockers.

Important Information

(Regulation 5600)

School Buses

01

Internet Enabled
Devices Permitted

Before/After Day

02

Internet Enabled
Devices Permitted

**School-Sponsored Events
(Off School Grounds)**

03

With Approval of
Principal

**School-Sponsored Events
(Outside of School Day)**

04

With Approval of
Principal

**Non-Internet Enabled
Devices**

05

Not Permitted

Ear Buds/Headphones

Sub

Not Permitted
(Exceptions)

District Communication Protocols

Ensuring safe, structured family connections during bell-to-bell hours

PARENT-TO-STUDENT COMMUNICATION (EMERGENCY)

In the event of a family emergency or critical non-emergency update, parents/guardians should contact the school's main office directly. Main office staff will ensure the student receives the message in a timely and sensitive manner.

STUDENT-TO-PARENT COMMUNICATION (OUTGOING)

If a student needs to make an urgent call home during the school day, a dedicated landline phone is positioned in the school's main office for student use with staff authorization.

TECHNOLOGY COMMUNICATIONS

Additional guidelines and details will follow in subsequent district communications regarding secure, approved electronic methods for parents and guardians to communicate with students via school-issued technology devices.

Middle School Discipline: Tier 2 Infractions

Enforcement rooted in existing locker expectations (Regulation 5600)

1st Instance

01

Documented administrative warning. Strategy focuses on initial policy redirection.

2nd Instance

02

Minimum of 1 detention. Administrator confiscates device; student retrieves at dismissal.

3rd Instance

03

Minimum of 2 detentions. Administrator confiscates device; student retrieves at dismissal.

4th Instance

04

Minimum of 1 Saturday school session. Administrator confiscates; parent/guardian retrieves.

5th Instance

05

Minimum of 1 day internal suspension. Administrator confiscates; parent/guardian retrieves.

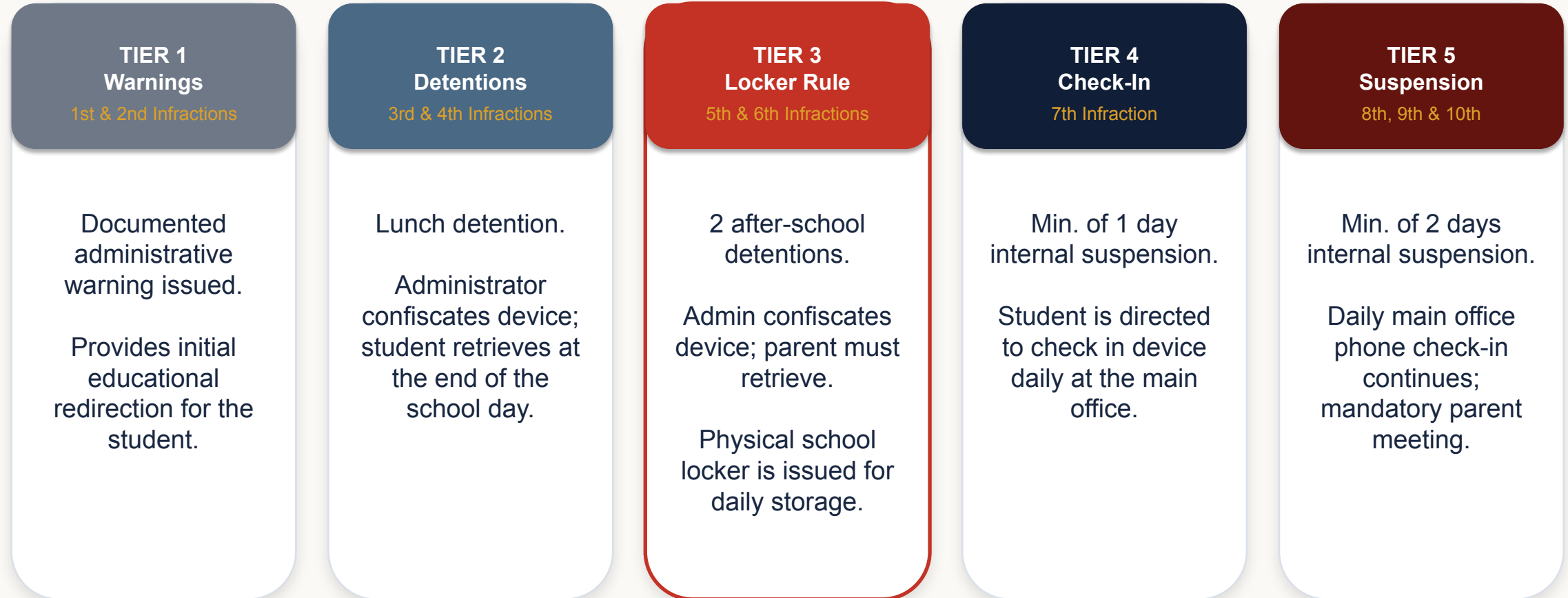
Subsequent

Sub

For any infractions beyond the fifth instance, a formal, personalized student device plan may be developed.

High School Discipline: Progressive 10-Step Plan

Graduated consequence tiers aligned with the Student Code of Conduct (Regulation 5600)



Exceptions, Accommodations & Requests

Compliance framework for medical, educational, and legal device usage

PERMITTED EXCEPTIONS UNDER STATE LAW

The district fully complies with all state and federal regulations protecting student needs. Personal device usage is authorized under the following conditions:

- To fulfill specific accommodations outlined in an active IEP.
- To support designated implementations under a student's 504 Plan.
- Documented Student Health Plan for active medical monitoring (requires written verification from a physician or medical professional).
- Required translation services or device caregiver duties.
- In the event of an active school-wide emergency.

FORMAL ACCOMMODATION REQUEST PROCESS

How to submit a request for student device accommodations:

Step 1: Write Request

Submit a formal written request to the Principal.

Step 2: Provide Documentation

Include necessary medical documentation from a physician, the student's medical provider, or relevant Child Study Team files.

Step 3: Administration Review

Administrators may consult with school nurses, case managers, or IEP/504 coordinators to plan implementation.

Step 4: Formal Decision

The district will issue a formal written approval or denial within five school days of receiving the request.