HEWLETT-WOODMERE UFSD

Policy # 5695
(X) Required
(x) Local
( ) Notice

STUDENTS AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Board of Education recognizes that students may have personal electronic devices that can perform different functions. Such devices include "internet-enabled devices" defined as: any smartphone, tablet, smartwatch or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling the user to access content on the internet, including social media applications, but do not include any such device supplied by the district for educational purposes. Smart glasses and similar wearable devices are included within this definition where they are capable of connecting to the internet and enabling access to internet content. Other personal electronic devices may include non-internet-enabled cellular phones, fitness trackers, wired or wireless headphones and earbuds, e-readers, calculators, voice recorders, cameras, and music devices unless permission is granted by authorized District staff.

These devices can create significant distractions to the school environment, negatively impact student mental health, contribute to disciplinary infractions, and reduce student engagement. Additionally, in an emergency, the use of personal electronic devices can distract students from following the directions of staff or emergency responders, contribute to the spread of misinformation, create congestion in the emergency response system, and interfere with the District's emergency response protocols.

Communication with Parents/Persons in Parental Relation

During the school day, to minimize distractions, parents (which, for purposes of this policy, includes persons in parental relation) may contact their children via the following methods:

1. **At the elementary level:** calling the school office
2. **At the middle school level:** calling the school office
3. **At the high school level:** calling the school office or by using the District-provided email address.

Students may contact their parents by using these same methods above. The District will notify parents in writing annually of the communication protocol at the beginning of each school year and upon enrollment.

Device Access and Storage

As required by Education Law §2803, this policy prohibits student use of internet-enabled devices during the entirety of every instructional day, including all instructional and non-instructional time, such as classes, homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time, anywhere on school grounds, unless an exception applies as provided below.

1. **At the elementary level:** Any device that is brought to school must be turned off and kept in the student's backpack.
2. **At the middle-school level:** Any device that is brought to school must be turned off and kept in the student's locker.
3. **At the high-school level:** Any device that is brought to school must be turned off and kept in the student's backpack or locker. Students are strongly encouraged to store devices in their assigned locker rather than in a backpack to reduce the risk of device access during class time. Students who leave school grounds for lunch during the school day are permitted to take their internet-enabled devices with them; however, all devices must be turned off and kept in the student's backpack or locker immediately upon reentering the building.

Students are discouraged from bringing other personal electronic devices to school. If students do bring such devices to school, they must be stored for the entire school day in backpacks or lockers, and they must be silenced and not used during the school day unless permission is granted by authorized District staff.

Exceptions for Specific Purposes

Use of internet-enabled devices will be permitted where included in a student's Individualized Education Program, Section 504 plan, or where required by law. Additionally, the District permits the use of internet-enabled devices in the event of an emergency, and under the following circumstances:

1. Where necessary to manage a student's healthcare (e.g., diabetes, asthma, medication, etc.);
2. For a student who is routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member, on a case-by-case basis, following review and determination by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor

Parents must submit requests for healthcare or student-caregiver exceptions in writing to the Building Principal. Healthcare requests must include documentation from an appropriate healthcare professional. Student-caregiver requests will be reviewed and determined by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor, as required by law. Healthcare and student-caregiver exceptions may be subject to periodic review and renewal, as appropriate. Nothing in this paragraph limits device use required by law or included in a student's Individualized Education Program or Section 504 plan.

The District provides students with one-to-one devices; therefore, personal electronic devices are not permitted for educational purposes.

Enforcement, Consequences and Reporting

Enforcement of this policy is chiefly the responsibility of building administrative staff; however, all designated employees are expected to assist in enforcement. Students will be reminded of this policy regularly and consistently, especially at the start of the school year and after returning from breaks.

For students out of compliance with this policy, the device will be confiscated and held in the school office until the end of the school day. The first time this happens, the

student may retrieve the device, and the parent will be notified. For subsequent instances, the parent must retrieve the device. The District will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the District, but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. The District is not responsible for stolen, lost or damaged personal electronic devices brought to school.

Administrators will also discuss the aims of this policy with students and their parents, the benefits of a distraction-free environment, the reasons the student had difficulty following this policy, and how the District can help the student contribute to a distraction-free environment.

The District will not impose suspension if the sole grounds for the suspension is that the student accessed an internet-enabled device in violation of this policy. The District may utilize other consequences under the District's Code of Conduct, including detention and exclusion from extracurricular activities. More significant consequences may apply where the student's conduct also violates another provision of the Code of Conduct or another District policy.

Some uses of personal electronic devices may constitute a violation of the District's Code of Conduct or other District policies, and in some instances, the law. The District will cooperate with law enforcement officials as appropriate.

Beginning September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the District will publish an annual report on its website detailing the enforcement of this policy over the past year, including non-identifiable demographic information of students who have faced disciplinary action for non-compliance with this policy, and an analysis of any demographic disparities in enforcement of this policy. If a statistically significant disparate enforcement impact is identified, the report will include a plan to mitigate such disparate enforcement.

Electronic Devices and Testing

To ensure the integrity of testing, students may not bring cell phones or other prohibited electronic devices into classrooms or other locations where New York State assessments are being administered, except where permitted as an approved testing accommodation or documented medical exception.

The District also prohibits students from possessing or accessing cell phones, smartwatches, smart glasses, or other unauthorized electronic devices during locally administered assessments, including but not limited to unit examinations, midterms, and final examinations. Devices must be stored outside the testing space unless otherwise directed by the Building Principal or the Principal's designee.

The District recognizes that internet-enabled devices may provide access to artificial intelligence tools that can be used to gain an unfair academic advantage. A student's unauthorized use of an artificial intelligence tool or electronic device during a locally administered or state assessment constitutes academic dishonesty and will be subject to consequences under the District's Code of Conduct.

Cross-ref: 4526, Computer Use in Instruction
4526.1, Internet Safety
5300, Code of Conduct

Adopted: 7/23/25

Amended: 11/18/26

Ref: Education Law §2803

Price v. New York City Board of Education, 51 A.D.3d 277, lv. to appeal denied, 11 N.Y.3d 702 (2008) (District may ban possession of cell phones on school property)

NYSED, Prohibition of Cell Phones and Electronic Devices in New York State Assessments, www.nysed.gov/educator-integrity/prohibition-cell-phones-and-electronic-devices-new-york-state-assessments