



SHRSD Internet Enabled Device Policy FAQ 2026-2027

New Jersey Internet-Enabled Device Law

New Jersey's new law requires all public school districts, grades K–12, to adopt policies restricting student use of personal internet-enabled devices including smartphones, tablets, and smartwatches during the school day. Each district has flexibility in how it implements the law, and after careful consideration and consultation with our administrators, staff, students, parent focus group and the research supporting student well-being, **we have chosen to collect devices from students each day upon their arrival to school starting for the 2026-2027 school year.**

What does the Research tell us?

This law was shaped in part by research conducted right here in New Jersey. In 2025, Dr. Jeffrey Lane and a team from [Rutgers University's School of Communication and Information](#) partnered with the Rutgers-Eagleton/SSRS Garden State Panel to survey 923 New Jersey parents and 202 New Jersey teenagers about how social media shapes adolescent life. Their findings directly informed the NJDOE and Governor on the Effects of Social Media Usage on Adolescents, which produced the recommendations that became law.

Key Findings — Rutgers University Social Media Impact Survey (2025)

- The top three concerns shared by both parents and teens were the impact of social media on teen sleep, physical activity and attention span.
- Nearly 1 in 4 teens reported using social media during class but only 1 in 10 parents believed their child was doing so. The awareness gap is significant.
- 66% of teens reported using social media after 9 p.m., while only 38% of parents were aware of this late night use.
- Teens reported more negative emotional experiences with social media than their parents realized.
- Both parents and teens expressed openness to restrictions and guidance as neither group wants phones to be a free-for-all at school.

Beyond the Rutgers research, national evidence supports reduced phone access during the school day, including findings that limiting phone use improves academic test scores, reduces anxiety and depression symptoms, and improves in-person social connection among students.

How will our Collection Process Work?

We have designed our collection process to be simple, consistent, and respectful of your child's belongings. Here is what to expect each school day:

- Any elementary student who brings a phone or internet-enabled device (smartwatch) will hand it in at the start of the day to the main office upon entering the school. It will be returned to the student at the end of the school day.
- Upon arrival at school each morning, middle and high school students will place their internet-enabled device into a labeled, numbered storage cart assigned specifically to them.
- Devices will be securely stored in a mobile cart for the remainder of the school day. Each grade-level will have a cart that is a different color.
- Each storage slot is numbered and assigned to a student so students will always know exactly where their device is located.
- If a student needs to leave early from school they will be able to get back their phone before leaving.
- If a student arrives late to school, the main office will take the student's phone, place it in their assigned storage cart so that they can pick it up at the end of the school day.
- Devices should be silenced or powered off before they are stored.
- It is recommended for seniors who leave the building during the school day to keep their phone in their car so they have it in case of an emergency.
- Students enrolled in AM Polytech will be permitted to take their phones to Polytech and turn them in upon arrival back to South. Students enrolled in PM Polytech will turn their phones in when arriving to South in the morning and be permitted to take their phones to Polytech in the afternoon.
- Students (middle and high school only) may bring personal cell phones on field trips. Cell phones should be used only when authorized by school staff or for educational purposes related to the trip.
- Students who do not bring a device to school are not affected by this policy.

What about smartwatches and other wearable devices?

Under the law, internet-enabled smartwatches are also covered. Students should leave smartwatches with internet capability at home or store them with their phone. Standard (non-internet) watches are not affected.

Student Safety: Why Stored Phones Are Actually Safer?

We understand that one of the most common concerns parents have about this policy is: “What if there is an emergency? How will I reach my child?” This is a deeply understandable concern, and we want to address it directly and honestly. The evidence from school safety experts is clear: in an active emergency such as a lockdown or active shooter situation, students having access to their personal cell phones can actually make the situation more dangerous, not safer. Here is why:

Why Cell Phones Can Increase Risk During an Active Emergency

- A ringing, buzzing or vibrating phone can reveal the location of students who are hiding from a threat, putting them in direct danger.
- When students are texting, calling or livestreaming during a crisis, they are not focused on the life-saving instructions being given by trained staff and first responders.
- If hundreds of students simultaneously call 911 or family members, it can overload the local emergency communication systems and delay first responder response times.
- A shooter who is a student or community member may monitor social media posts and livestreams to locate where students are hiding or to evade law enforcement.
- Parents who receive panicked texts may rush to the school, inadvertently blocking emergency vehicle access or putting themselves in harm's way.

Standard active shooter lockdown protocols including those recommended by the Department of Homeland Security specifically instruct that all cell phones, pagers, and noise-generating devices be silenced immediately during a lockdown. When phones are already stored and secured, students do not face the temptation or distraction of their device during the most critical moments.

It is important to note that all SHRSB teachers and administrators carry their own phones and communication devices. In any emergency, staff will immediately contact 911 and activate our school-wide emergency notification system. Your family will be notified through our official emergency communication channels as quickly as possible.

Tracking and Location Sharing for Parents

We understand that many families, especially those with younger students, use their child's phone as a location-sharing tool. Here are alternative options that can provide peace of mind while complying with the new policy:

Location & Tracking Alternatives

- Apple Air Tag or similar Bluetooth tracker: A small, inexpensive tracker can be placed in your child's backpack. AirTags and similar devices allow parents to see their child's location via a parent smartphone without requiring the student to have an active cell phone.
- GPS enabled non-internet watches: Certain children's watches (such as GizmoWatch or Tick Talk) offer GPS tracking and the ability to call or text pre-approved numbers, without full internet access.
- Your child is at school. Our school buildings are secure. Staff are present and accountable for students' locations throughout the school day.
- In any situation requiring parent notification during the school day, we will contact you immediately either directly through a phone call or by using our communication system (ParentSquare).

We encourage families to explore these options before the start of the school year so that a comfortable routine can be established for both you and your child.

How Students Can Contact Parents During the School Day?

Students who need to contact a parent or guardian during the school day for any reason such as illness, a change in plans, an emotional need, or any other circumstance, will have access to a phone through their school's main office, counseling office or nurse at any time. We want students to feel supported and connected. No student will ever be denied access to communication with their family in a time of need. Our office staff are available throughout the school day and will assist any student who needs to make a call or send a message home.

During the School Day, Students Can:

- Visit the main office to use a school phone to call home at any time.
- Ask a teacher or counselor to help facilitate contact with a parent if needed.
- Reach the school nurse, who can contact parents directly in cases of illness/injury.

How can parents contact their child if there is an urgent need during the school day?

Parents can call the main office at their child's school and the message will be delivered promptly to their child. Students can also return calls home from the office if need be.

How will devices be returned before dismissal?

We recognize that after-school communication is important. Students need to coordinate rides, confirm activity schedules, check in with parents, and manage their afternoon routines. Our return process is designed with that in mind as students will be able to pick up their phone during the final minutes of the school day so they have their devices in hand as they head out the door.

Exceptions to the Policy

Students are permitted to use an internet-enabled device on school grounds during the school day in the following circumstances:

1. To fulfill accommodations provided in a student's individualized education program (IEP);
2. To support the implementation of a 504 plan;
3. To implement a student health plan established to monitor or address a student's health condition (upon submission by a parent or guardian of documentation from a healthcare professional indicating that the use of an internet-enabled device is necessary for the health or well-being of a student);
4. For translation services;
5. For a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care or well-being of a family member.

If any of the above needs apply to your child, you should reach out to the building Principal.

What happens if a student violates the Internet Enabled Device Policy

Elementary School:

Consequences will be age-appropriate and determined at the discretion of the Principal.

Middle and High School:

First Offense:

The electronic communication device shall be taken from the student by the Principal or designee for the remainder of the academic school day. The student will be able to pick up the electronic communication device in the Principal or designee's office at the end of the academic school day. Parent notification. The student will be required to check the phone in directly with administration for the next 5 school days.

2nd Offense:

The electronic communication device shall be taken from the student by the Principal or designee for the remainder of the academic school day. The electronic communication device must be picked up at the Principal or designee's office by a parent no sooner than the end of the current, academic school day. If the parent cannot pick up the electronic communication device by the end of the academic school day, the parent may pick up the electronic communication device before the end of the next or any subsequent school day. The student will be required to check the phone in directly with administration for the next 10 school days. The student will be required to participate in one hour of after school community service.

3rd Offense:

The electronic communication device shall be taken from the student by the Principal or designee for the remainder of the academic school day. Administrative conference with parent and student. The student will be required to turn in the phone each morning to an administrator for the remainder of the school year. The student will be required to participate in community service on a Saturday.

4th Offense:

The student will no longer be permitted to bring a cell phone to school.

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