

# Cellphone and Internet-Enabled Device Policy FAQs

Starting in the 2025-26 school year, students across New York state will be prohibited from using cellphones and other internet-enabled devices during the school day.

Rockland Central School District has created the following Frequently Asked Questions document regarding the District's Cellphone and Internet-Enabled Policy for Students.

## Why is there a ban on cellphones and other internet-enabled devices?

The state requires all schools to have a policy and plan in place to prohibit use of the devices by students during school hours on school grounds. The goal is to help reduce distractions, increase student engagement and to help support the mental health of students. Also in the event of 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.

## What devices are not allowed?

All personal electronic devices, including but not limited to cellphones, tablets, smartwatches, e-readers, headphones, earbuds, voice recorders, cameras, portable gaming systems and music devices, are prohibited. Students may wear fitness trackers as long as they do not interfere with instruction.

## Can students use devices during non-instructional times during the school day?

No. The ban is from bell to bell. Administrators and staff may also restrict use of electronic devices during school events and activities held outside of the school day and/or off school grounds.

## Will students have access to technology during the day?

Yes. Every student has access to a school-provided Chromebook and other technology needed for instruction.

## Are there exceptions to the ban?

Yes. If a student's Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 plan includes use of a device, it can be used only when allowed by the plan. If a student needs translation services, a personal device must be used with prior authorization. Devices can also be used if needed to manage a

student's healthcare. In emergency situations, exceptions may also be granted by teachers or administrators. Parents or guardians may request an exemption for bona fide medical or disability-related reasons. Requests must be made to the Building Principal, and must include documentation from an appropriate medical or educational professional.

## How will parents/guardians and students be able to communicate during the school day?

Students will be able to access their cellphones before and after school ends, and will be able to retrieve or send text messages and voicemails at that time. If contact must be made during the day, messages may be sent to and from the student's district-run email, which can be accessed on the student's school-provided Chromebook. Calls also be made to and from the school's main office.

## How will personal devices be stored during the school day?

Ideally, students will not bring devices to school. However, we acknowledge that devices are often used immediately before or after school.

We strongly discourage students in elementary school from bringing any personal devices to school. If they are brought to school, they must be turned off and kept in the classroom storage container.

At the middle and high school level, student devices must be turned off and stored in a district-determined storage device until the Yondr Pouches are received and provided to the student.

## What is a Yondr Pouch?

A Yondr Pouch is a secure bag that is used to store an individual's mobile device or devices. It is secured and unlocked with a special magnetic locking device.

## How will my student get a Yondr Pouch?

Yondr Pouches will be distributed to students once they have arrived from the distributor. .

## How will the Yondr Pouch be locked and unlocked?

Upon entering school, students will turn their phone off, place the phone inside of the Yondr pouch, and lock it. The pouches will be unlocked at the end of the school day or when the student leaves school at designated locations.

## What happens if the Yondr Pouch is damaged, lost or not brought to school that day?

If students lose or damage their individual pouches, their parent/guardian is responsible for paying for a replacement. If the pouch is not replaced, students are required to turn in their personal electronic devices at the main office for the day.

## Can BOCES students bring their devices with them to BOCES?

Yes. Students can bring their devices to their BOCES programs, and the devices will be stored per the BOCES' policy.

## What happens if students are found accessing a personal device during the school day?

For the first offense, students will be asked to store their device as policy dictates..

For any subsequent offences, the device will be held in the school office until the end of the school day. The first time the device is held in the school office, the student may retrieve the device, and the parents or guardians will be notified. For subsequent instances, the parents or guardians must retrieve the device. Further instances will result in the device being held in the school office daily for longer periods of time.

Administrators will also discuss the aims of this policy with students and their parents or guardians, 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.

Students will not be suspended based solely on violation of this policy. However, the district may use consequences under the district's Code of Conduct, including detention, in-school suspension and exclusion from extracurricular activities. Assignments on the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, smartphones in school, or other relevant topics may also be issued.

## Will the district ensure the safety of any devices brought to school?

The district encourages students not to bring any devices to school, as the safety and security of the devices cannot be guaranteed, as was the case before the prohibition went into effect. Middle and high school students may carry their locked Yonder Pouches with them. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure the safety of devices stored in classrooms or offices.

## How will enforcement be monitored?

The schools will track violations of the policy. The district will publish an annual report 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.

## Will staff be required to follow the same policy?

No. We do encourage staff to model good behavior and will ask them only to not use their cellphones during instructional periods unless necessary for instructional purposes.

## I still have questions on this policy. Who do I contact?

Call 845-439-1501 or email [rosa.finkel@rcsd.us](mailto:rosa.finkel@rcsd.us) or [christopher.hubert@rcsd.us](mailto:christopher.hubert@rcsd.us)