



Subject: **Changes to Personal Electronics and Personal Possessions Policies (2026-2027)**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we prepare for the 2026-2027 school year, we wanted to provide an early "heads up" regarding changes to our student handbook, specifically concerning personal electronics like cell phones and smartwatches, as well as personal possessions.

Why the Policy is Changing

You may have seen in recent news that Michigan recently passed **House Bill 4141** (now Public Act 2 of 2026). This new state law requires all public school districts to implement a policy that prohibits the use of "wireless communication devices" during instructional time.

To comply with this state mandate, our school's personal electronics language will shift drastically for the upcoming year. In addition, we continue to improve our safety protocols to ensure that all students and staff feel safe and free of distractions. With that in mind, we will be implementing a new policy regarding personal possessions.

26-27 Handbook Language:

Personal Communication Devices:

- ***Storage Requirements:*** During the school day (from the morning bell to the afternoon dismissal), all PCDs must be powered completely off—not just placed on vibrate or silent—and stored in the student's assigned locker.
- ***Permitted Times:*** Students may use PCDs before and after school, during passing periods, and during their assigned lunch period in the cafeteria.
- ***Prohibited Areas:*** The use or possession of PCDs is strictly forbidden at all times in locker rooms, bathrooms, and any other area where a reasonable expectation of privacy exists.
- ***Instructional Exceptions:*** Teachers may permit PCD use in the classroom solely for educational purposes under their direct supervision and discretion.

Personal Possessions:

All bags, purses, backpacks and other personal belongings are expected to be housed in a student's school issued locker for the duration of the school day. If an item is too large for the student's locker, please report the item(s) to the high school office or designated locked location for oversized bags/possessions.

Early Notice for Families

While we understand these are significant changes, we are sharing this update now for a few important reasons:

- **Informed Purchasing:** Smartwatches and phones are a major investment. We wanted to get this message out early so that families do not purchase expensive new devices for their children to use at school.
- **Prioritizing Focus:** The intent of the Michigan law is to reduce digital distractions and support student mental health and academic focus. We anticipate aligning our handbook with these standards will create a better learning environment for everyone.
- **Planning Ahead:** Giving our community this lead time allows for conversations at home about these new expectations before the first day of school.

We are currently finalizing the specific handbook language to ensure it meets all state requirements while supporting our students. We appreciate your partnership and understanding as we navigate these new state-mandates and safety updates together.

Sincerely,

Tracy L. Ripley, High School Principal
New Buffalo Area Schools