Cell Phone Policy FAQs

Overview

In July 2025, New York State passed legislation requiring all public schools to implement new restrictions on student cellphone use beginning with the 2025–2026 school year. Effective September 3, 2025, schools must enforce a "bell-to-bell" ban on the use of personal internet-enabled devices. This means students may not use these devices from arrival until dismissal each school day.

The purpose of this FAQ is to help families understand what the mandate means for our students, what exceptions are permitted, and how the district will support parents, staff, and students in successfully implementing these changes. By working together, we can promote safe, responsible, and balanced technology use while ensuring our schools remain focused on learning.

1. What is a "personal internet-enabled device"?

A personal internet-enabled device is any electronic device not issued by a school that can connect to the internet, allowing the user to access content online. Examples include:

- **Communication devices** (cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches)
- **Computing devices** (laptops, tablets, iPads)
- **Entertainment devices** (MP3 players, game consoles)

2. Can my child bring a cell phone to school? What happens to it during the school day?

Yes. Students may bring a cell phone to school; however, it must be silenced and stored away for the entire school day, per building policy.

3. When may students use their cell phones?

Limited exceptions may be granted for:

- **Special Education & Legal Requirements –** If a student's IEP, 504 Plan, or other law requires cell phone use, it will be permitted.
  → **Parents should contact their child's case manager or school principal.**

- **Medical Needs –** Students may use a cell phone to manage a documented health condition (e.g., diabetes, asthma, medication monitoring) with proper documentation.
  → **Parents must provide a doctor's note and notify the school principal.**

- **Translation Support –** Cell phones may be permitted for translation services with prior written approval.
  → **Parents should inform the school principal.**

- **Student Caregivers –** In exceptional cases, a student who is a regular caregiver for a family member may be granted permission. This requires review and written approval.
  → **Parents should communicate this need to the school psychologist, counselor, or social worker.**

- **Emergencies –** Teachers or administrators may allow cell phone use during emergencies on a case-by-case basis.
  → **Parents should review the district's Safety & Emergency Management Plan, ensure the school has their up-to-date contact information, and notify the school's main office of specific circumstances if relevant.**

- **Educational Purposes –** Teachers may authorize cell phone use for classroom activities with administrative approval.

Note: *Cell phones or other devices approved for exceptions must only be used for that purpose and silenced/put away when not in use.*

4. Will my child be able to use a personal laptop in school?

- At the middle and high school levels, students may use personal laptops if registered with the district.
  → **Please follow the Laptop Registration Process to register your child's personal laptop.**

5. What are the enforcement steps and consequences if a student does not follow the policy?

Enforcement is primarily the responsibility of administrators, with support from school staff. Consequences may include:

- Device held until the end of the day, with parent/guardian notification
- Parent required to retrieve the device from school
- Parent meeting with an administrator; device may need to be checked in daily for a set period
- Additional consequences may follow the District's Code of Conduct (e.g., detention, in-school suspension, or loss of extracurricular privileges)

6. How will students learn to use technology responsibly?

Our students are growing up in a digital world, and we want them to be safe, balanced, and confident online. That's why lessons on digital responsibility are built right into K–12 instruction. Students explore topics like:

- Staying balanced and well in a digital age
- Protecting privacy, safety, and security
- Building a positive digital footprint
- Thinking critically about what they see online

7. How are parents supported as partners?

We know families are children's first and most important teachers. To help, the District has gathered the following resources to guide families in talking about digital wellness, managing device use at home, and keeping open, healthy communication with children:

- **Google Family Digital Wellbeing Guide:** Tools and tips to manage screen time and build healthy tech habits.
- **Be Internet Awesome:** Google's interactive toolkit to teach kids digital safety.
- **AAP Family Media Plan:** Create a personalized plan to set screen-time boundaries and balance media use.

8. What is the best way to reach my child during the school day?

If you need to get an urgent message to your child, please call the school's main office. This ensures your message gets through quickly without interrupting learning time.

9. How will the District make sure this policy is working well?
We're committed to transparency and fairness.

- **By August 1, 2025:** The policy will be posted on the District website in a format that can be translated into multiple languages.

- **Beginning September 2026:** We'll share an annual public report on how the policy is being enforced, including demographic data. If we see any disparities, we'll create a plan to address them.

10. Who should I contact if my question isn't answered here?

If you have additional questions about the cell phone policy, please contact the school's main office or counselor.

We believe that learning thrives when students are fully engaged, supported, and present in the classroom. This new state mandate gives us an opportunity to strengthen that focus while also partnering closely with families to guide students toward healthy, balanced use of technology. Thank you for working with us to help our children grow into safe, responsible, and confident digital citizens. Together, as one Ramily, we can ensure success for every student.