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. Other personal electronic devices include devices which are not capable of connecting to the internet and access content on the internet, fitness trackers, wired or wireless headphones and earbuds, e-readers, calculators, voice recorders, cameras and music devices. These devices can create significant distraction 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.

Generally, the district is not responsible for stolen, lost or damaged personal electronic devices brought to school.

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 method: Any necessary communication between students and families during the school day will go through the main office of the school the child attends. Families will be able to call the school. Students will be able to use the phone in the main office should they need to contact a parent or guardian during school hours. The district will notify parents in writing 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 school day (including all classes, homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time) on school grounds (any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the boundary of a school or district or BOCES facility), unless under an exception (e.g., IEP/Section 504 or as permitted below).

1. At the elementary school level, students are discouraged from bringing devices to school. Any device that is brought to school must be silenced and kept in the child's locker. In grades 7-12, each student receives a Yondr Pouch for their phone. Pouches are school property, but students must bring them daily and maintain them.

The procedure will be as follows:

- Upon arrival students will turn off/silence devices, secure personal electronic devices in the Pouch in front of staff and store them in their backpacks or locker.

- When dismissing, students will unlock pouch using the magnet at the exit, remove phone, and keep Pouch for continued use.
- Students leaving early or arriving late will pouch/unpouch in the Main Office.

Exceptions for Specific Purposes

Use of internet-enabled devices must 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 translation services; and/or
3. For students who are routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member (on a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor).

Parents may request an exception for their children to use internet-enabled devices during the school day as listed above. Requests must be made to the Building Principal, and for healthcare exceptions, must include documentation from an appropriate healthcare professional.

Under any of these exceptions, devices may only be used for the purposes outlined in the exception, and the device must be silenced and put away when not in use, to the extent compatible with the reason for the exception.

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.

The Taconic Hills Central School District has a strict no personal electronic devices (i.e. cell phones, Smartwatch, Smart glasses, etc.) policy during school hours. Students found using cell phones or other electronic devices during this time may have their cell phones confiscated, which will require the student or parent to pick the phone up in the high school office at the end of the day. Students who refuse to turn over their cell phones or other electronic devices, when asked to do so by a staff member, may face disciplinary action for insubordination. Personal electronic devices cannot be out or used during local or Regents exams and will face disciplinary action and may automatically receive a grade of zero on said exam. Students may not record or photograph staff or students during the school day unless directed by a staff member. All unauthorized distribution of recordings and photographs or students or staff is prohibited. Should the use of personal electronic devices constitute a violation of the law, the school will cooperate with law enforcement officials as appropriate.

Procedure for damaged, lost, or forgotten Pouches:

- In the case of a damaged/lost Pouch, an administrator will contact parents/guardians, and the student will be responsible for replacing damaged/lost pouches.
- If a student forgets their Pouch, the personal electronic device(s) is expected to be off and is not to be out during the school day. If the student takes the PED out during the day, the device will be sent to the office and the code of conduct will be followed.

The consequences for the use of personal electronic device(s) during school hours are:

- **First Infraction**: The personal electronic device(s) will be confiscated by a teacher or school staff member and held in the school office. The student can pick it up after 2:30 p.m. The administrator will meet with the student and review this contract. The student may receive lunch/work hall detention and parents will be notified.
- **Second Infraction**: The personal electronic device(s) will be confiscated by a teacher or school staff member and held in the school office. The student can pick it up after 2:30 p.m. The administrator will meet with the student to review this contract and the student may be assigned after school detention. The student's parent/guardian will be notified.
- **Third Infraction**: The personal electronic device(s) will be confiscated by a teacher or school staff member and held in the school office. The administrator will meet with the student to review this contract and the student may be assigned in-school suspension. The student's parent/guardian will be called and will be asked to pick up the cell phone from the office.
- **Fourth Infraction and beyond**: The personal electronic device(s) will be confiscated by a teacher or school staff member and held in the school office and a parent meeting may be scheduled. Progressive discipline will be applied.

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.

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

Requirement of the Law

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, in accordance with state guidelines, students may not bring cell phones or other electronic devices into classrooms or other exam locations during all testing.

Test proctors, monitors and school officials have the right to collect cell phones and other prohibited electronic devices prior to the start of the test and to hold them for the duration of the test taking time. Admission to the test will be prohibited to any student who has a cell phone or other electronic device in their possession and does not relinquish it.

Students with Individualized Education Plans, Section 504 Plans, or documentation from medical practitioners specifically requiring use of electronic devices may do so as specified.

Policy Distribution

As required by law, the district will post this policy in a clearly visible and accessible location on its website. The district will also include this information, or a plain language summary, in the Code of Conduct.

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

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

Adoption date: