



*A statewide network of Maine parents, educators, and experts working together for a healthier, less technology-based childhood. • [www.turnthetidecoalition.org](http://www.turnthetidecoalition.org)*

# **Best Practices for Implementing Maine’s Phone-Free School Law**

*From The Turn the Tide Coalition*

---

Maine law now requires schools to **prohibit student use of personal electronic devices during the school day**. While districts have flexibility in how they implement this, research and real-world experience point to what works best.

## **1. Phones must be stored—and inaccessible**

The most effective policies do not just prohibit use—they remove access. If students can reach their phones (in backpacks, pockets, or lockers they can open), the temptation to check them remains. Schools cannot realistically enforce a “no use” policy if devices are still within reach. This is the single most important factor in success.

### **Best practice:**

- Phones are stored at the start of the day
- Phones remain inaccessible until the final bell
- Students do not carry phones on their person or in backpacks

## **2. Use secure, school-managed storage systems**

The law includes **\$350,000 in state funding** to support implementation. While not prescriptive, this funding was included to help schools adopt solutions that make phone-free policies actually work.

### **Recommended approaches:**

- Classroom-based locked phone cubbies
- Centralized locker systems
- Other secure storage solutions managed by staff

Whenever possible, lockers or locked systems are strongly encouraged to ensure consistency and accountability.

## **3. Follow the evidence: “no access” is what works**

Research—and experience from Maine schools—shows that phone policies are most effective when devices are **completely out of reach**, not just “not in use.” Allowing access (even if use is technically prohibited) significantly weakens outcomes (and might be considered in violation of the law).

Districts aiming to align with best practice—and the intent of the law—should prioritize:

- Clear, universal rules
- No gray areas around access
- Simple, enforceable systems

#### **4. Local control comes with responsibility**

Maine’s approach allows districts flexibility—but that flexibility comes with an obligation to follow the law, the research and best practices.

Effective implementation may require:

- Clear communication with families
- Supporting students through the transition
- Making decisions that prioritize learning over convenience

As with many school policies, initial adjustment may be challenging—but schools across Maine and the country report that the benefits are significant.

#### ***Example: York High School***

York High School offers a strong model of effective implementation.

- Phones are placed in locked classroom cubbies during homeroom
- Devices remain locked and inaccessible all day
- Students retrieve phones after the final bell
- Enforcement is simple and consistent

Since implementation, the school reports:

- Stronger student engagement
- Fewer disruptions
- Improved school culture

Notably, enforcement became **\*\*easier—not harder—\*\***because expectations are clear and universal. [More about the York High School rollout here.](#)

---

#### **Bottom line**

You cannot effectively prohibit phone use if phones remain accessible.

**The most successful schools remove the temptation entirely—by ensuring devices are stored, secure, and out of reach for the entire school day.**