

July 14, 2025

Dear Parents, Guardians, & Caregivers,

The Rockland Central School District is writing you to communicate important information regarding the new, state-wide cell phone policy effective at the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year. As dictated by Education Law §2803, this policy mandates a bell-to-bell restriction on cell phone use or any other personal internet-enabled device at any point during the school day.

The use of such devices have caused significant disruptions in student education, engagement, disciplinary procedures, and emergency management protocols, in addition to mental and social-emotional health concerns. The implementation of this policy will aid in creating improved student focus, minimize distractions to the learning process, and reduce inappropriate and unwanted interactions through social media and cell phone-related mechanisms. Parent, guardian, and caregiver support will be integral throughout this process. Your cooperation in helping to maintain this policy is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

John Evans

 845 439 4400

 john.evans@rcsd.us

 19 School St Livingston Manor, NY

STUDENTS & PERSONAL DEVICES:

The Board of Education recognizes that students may have personal electronic devices that can perform different functions. Such devices include, but are not limited to “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 includes 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, portable entertainment systems, 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 methods: calling the school office or using the district-provided email address. Students may contact their parents by: calling from school office or using district provided email address. The district will notify parents in writing of the communication protocol at the beginning of each school year

DEVICE ACCESS & STORAGE:

As required by Education Law §2803, this policy prohibits student use of internet-enabled and other personal electronic 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 turned off and kept in the classroom storage container.
2. At the middle school level, student devices must be turned off and stored in the school's authorized compartments, pouches or other containers.
3. At the high school level, student devices must be turned off and stored in the school's authorized compartments, pouches or other containers.

If students lose or damage their individual pouches, their parent 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.

Students are discouraged from bringing other personal electronic devices to school. If students do bring such devices to school, they must be stored for the entire school day in the methods detailed above, and they must be turned off and not used during the school day unless permission is granted by the school. However, students may wear fitness trackers as long as they do not interfere with instruction.

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.

EXCEPTIONS FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES:

The district will make exceptions to this policy whereas an individual requires a device for:

- Healthcare management purposes (e.g. diabetes, asthma, medication, etc.)
- Translation services
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plans dictate such usage
- School-related emergency management with prior consent

Requests for the above listed exceptions must be made to the building level administrator. Those requests regarding a medical exception must be supported by proper medical documentation.

Rockland Central School District provides all students with 1-to-1 devices, thus no exceptions will be given for use of personal electronic devices for educational purposes.

ENFORCEMENT, CONSEQUENCES, & 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.

For students out of compliance with this policy, the device will be held in the school office until the end of the school day. The first time this happens, the student may retrieve the device, and the parent will be notified. For subsequent instances, the parent must retrieve the device. Further instances will result in the device being held in the school office daily for longer periods of time. The district will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the district, but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. For students with exceptions under this policy, the district will examine alternative ways to achieve the purpose of the exception, including different storage or access provisions.

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.

The district may not impose suspension from school if the sole grounds for the suspension is that the student accessed an internet-enabled device as prohibited by this policy. However, the district may utilize consequences under the district's Code of Conduct, including detention, in-school suspension, and exclusion from extracurricular activities. The district may also utilize assignments on the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, smartphones in school, or other relevant topics.

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.

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 nonidentifiable demographic information of students who have faced disciplinary action for noncompliance 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 & 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 state assessments.

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 & TRANSLATION:

As required by law, the district will post this policy in a clearly visible and accessible location on its website. Upon request by a student or parent, the district will translate this policy into any of the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the state, as identified by the most recent American community survey published by the U.S. Census bureau. The district will also

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,



ROCKLAND CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT PHONE-FREE ENVIRONMENT

COMING SEPTEMBER 2025

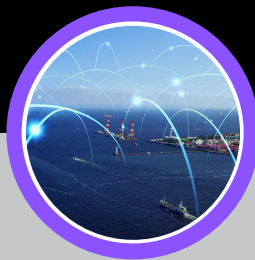
BENEFITS OF PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS

- Fewer distractions
- Decrease in cyber-bullying and social media-related confrontations
- Improved student focus and concentrations
- Improved attendance rates
- Increase in student-staff interactions
- Enhanced engagement
- Increase in peer socialization
- Decrease in class disruptions
- Improvement in student mental health
- Improved awareness



DAILY PROCEDURES

- UPON ARRIVAL, ALL DEVICES ARE TO BE TURNED OFF AND SECURED IN THE ASSIGNED STORAGE AREA. THOSE LEAVING & RETURNING DURING THE SCHOOL DAY ARE TO REPEAT THIS PROCEDURE UPON RE-ENTRY



COMMUNICATION NECESSITIES


- PARENT/GUARDIAN-CONTACT AS NOTED IN SCHOOLTOOL SHOULD REACH OUT TO THE HIGH SCHOOL OFFICE VIA TELEPHONE.
- STUDENT INITIATED CONTACT MUST BE DONE THROUGH THE HIGH SCHOOL OFFICE IN BETWEEN CLASSES



POLICY VIOLATIONS

- PER THE CODE OF CONDUCT, ALL STUDENT VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY WILL RESULT IN FORFEITURE OF THE DEVICE

CONTACT INFORMATION:

 (845) 439-4400

 rosa.finkel@rcsd.us OR christopher.hubert@rcsd.us



WHAT THE STATISTICS SAY

72%

OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS REPORT CELL PHONES ARE A MAJOR DISTRACTION IN THEIR CLASSROOMS WITH 83% IN SUPPORT OF AN ALL-DAY PHONE FREE POLICY

SOCIAL MEDIA USE IS UNIVERSAL

40% OF 8-12 YEAR OLDS ARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA
95% OF TEENAGERS ARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

OF STUDENTS USE PHONES DURING SCHOOL WITH 43 MINUTES BEING SPENT PRIMARILY ON SOCIAL MEDIA, YOUTUBE, AND GAMING

97%

MENTAL HEALTH INFLUENCES

TEENS SPEND NEARLY 5 HRS A DAY ON SOCIAL MEDIA APPS. 3+ HRS OF DAILY USE DOUBLES THE RISK OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH INCLUDING SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION & ANXIETY. STUDIES ALSO SUPPORT AN INCREASE IN STUDENT-RELATED STRESS.

50% +

OF KIDS GET 237 NOTIFICATIONS PER DAY. SOME RECEIVING AS MANY AS 4,500 EVERY DAY. 23% OF WHICH OCCUR DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

CLASSWORK INCREASE

STUDENTS NOT USING THEIR PHONES DURING CLASS WROTE DOWN 62% MORE INFORMATION AND SCORED A FULL LETTER GRADE AND A HALF HIGHER ON MULTIPLE CHOICE TESTS

ROCKLAND CENTRAL
SCHOOL DISTRICT

CELL PHONE POLICY DISCUSSION

Community discussion of Education Law §2803

AUG 5, 2025

6:30 PM

(845) 439-4400



Livingston Manor Auditorium

