

MCSD DRAFT Distraction-Free Learning Policy

SUBJECT: USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Per education law and New York State mandate, our District developed this draft policy to prohibit the use of electronic devices by students during the school day on school grounds. This policy aims to ensure that students remain focused on their academic responsibilities throughout the school day, which includes all instructional and non-instructional periods such as lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time.

Definitions:

a) "Electronic Devices" shall include but not necessarily be limited to: cellular phones (both "smart phones" and call/text phones only), tablets, smartwatches, wired or wireless headphones and earbuds, walkie-talkies, personal digital assistants (PDA), pagers, laptops with two-way messaging, other hand-held computing devices (when such are used as communication devices), internet-connected accessories, e-readers, calculators, voice recorders, cameras, music devices, and fitness trackers. This definition shall also include any new device developed for communicating via voice, text, or images/video. Excluded from this definition is any District-provided device for instructional purposes and District-issued cell phones for professional use.

b) "Electronic devices" means and includes 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.

"Electronic devices" does not include:

Non-Electronic devices such as cellular phones or other communication devices not capable of connecting to the Internet or enabling the user to access content on the Internet; or

Electronic devices supplied by the District, Out of District School, or Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) that are used for an educational purpose.

c) "School day" means the entirety of every instructional day as required by subdivision 7 of Education Law Section 3604 during all instructional time and non-instructional time, including but not limited to lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time.

d) "School grounds" means in or on or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a district elementary, intermediate, junior high, vocational, or high school, a charter school, or a BOCES facility.

General Prohibition:

Students are prohibited from using internet-enabled electronic devices during the school day anywhere on school grounds.

Authorized Use Exceptions:

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 a personal/family 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).

The administrator makes the final decision after consultation with student support staff. Parents may request an exception for their children to use electronic 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. Where the district provides students with one-to-one devices, personal electronic devices are not permitted for educational purposes.

On-Site Storage of Electronic Devices Including Cell Phones:

Students must store their electronic devices in designated on-site lockers during the school day. On-site storage areas may include, but are not limited to, student lockers, or secure storage areas in the school's main office. These designated storage areas must be easily accessible to students and provide adequate security for safekeeping of devices. The District will communicate procedures for storing and retrieving devices and ensure that students understand their responsibilities.

Methods for Parents to Contact Students During the School Day:

To accommodate necessary communication, parents or persons in parental relation may use the following methods to contact their student during school hours:

- a) School Office Phone: Parents may call the school's main office, and staff can relay messages or call the student to the office to speak with them.
- b) Classroom Intercom System: In case of an emergency, the main office can use the phone/intercom system to notify or summon the student.

c) Written Notes: Parents can drop off written notes at the main office for staff to deliver to students.

Parents will be notified in writing of these contact methods upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year.

Student Discipline:

The District is prohibited from suspending a student solely for accessing internet-enabled electronic devices in violation of this policy.

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, enforcement and consequences will be addressed through the Code of Conduct.

In addition, administrators will discuss with students and their parents/guardians the aims of this policy, the benefits of a distraction-free environment, the reasons the student may have difficulty following this policy, and how the district can help the student contribute to a distraction-free environment.

Any consequence imposed or that may be utilized will fall under the district's Code of Conduct.

Posting and Translation of Policy:

The District will post this policy in a clearly visible and accessible location on its website.

Translations into non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the District will be provided upon request by a student or their parent(s).

Reporting and Mitigation Action Plan:

Beginning September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the District will publish an annual report on its website detailing enforcement of this policy in the prior school year. This report will include non-identifiable demographic data of students disciplined for non-compliance and an analysis of any demographic disparities. If statistically significant disparate impacts are identified, the report will include a mitigation action plan.

Legal Reference:

Education Law § 2803