

Cell Phone & Internet-Enabled Device FAQ

2026–2027 School Year

Why is the district changing its cell phone policy?

New Jersey law requires public school districts to establish a “bell-to-bell” policy limiting student use of internet-enabled devices during the school day. Hopatcong Borough Schools is implementing these requirements for the 2026–2027 school year.

What is the expectation during the school day?

Students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 may not use internet-enabled devices on school grounds during the school day. Students are responsible for turning off their devices and keeping them secured in their **backpack, locker, or other bag** for the entire school day.

Can students bring their phones into the classroom?

No. Students should not bring cell phones or other internet-enabled communication devices into classrooms. Devices should remain secured in a backpack, locker, or other bag. The exception is for students with a **previously identified medical need** that requires access to a device.

Can students use their phones before or after school?

Yes. Students may use internet-enabled devices on school grounds **before the start of the regular school day and after the regular school day.**

Can students use their phones on the school bus?

Yes. Students may use internet-enabled devices on the school bus **to and from school at the beginning and end of the school day.**

What about field trips or other school-sponsored events?

For school-sponsored events **off school grounds during the school day**, students may use an internet-enabled device only with the approval of the Principal or designee and while under the direct supervision of school staff.

For school-sponsored events **outside of the school day**, such as clubs, practices, or games, students may use an internet-enabled device with the approval of the Principal or designee while under the direct supervision of school staff.

Can students use devices that do not connect to the internet?

Yes, non-internet-enabled devices may be used when students are under the direct supervision of a school staff member or Board employee.

What happens if a student violates the policy?

The district will use clear, age-appropriate consequences. Depending on the number of offenses during the school year:

- **First offense:** The device is collected and held in the Principal's or designee's office for the remainder of the school day. The student may pick it up at dismissal and will acknowledge the offense.
- **Second offense:** The device is held for the remainder of the school day and must be picked up by a parent/guardian. A parent/guardian must sign for the device.
- **Third offense:** The device must be picked up by a parent/guardian, who will be notified of the third offense and required to sign for the device.
- **Fourth offense:** The device must be picked up by a parent/guardian, who will be notified of the fourth offense and required to sign for the device.
- **More than four offenses:** The student may be prohibited from bringing an internet-enabled device onto school grounds during the school day and from using the device during specified school-sponsored programs for the remainder of the school year.

Additional discipline for violations will be outlined in the **Student Code of Conduct**, which is updated annually.

What should families do to prepare?

Students should arrive each day with their device **turned off, password protected, and secured in their backpack, locker, or other bag**. Families are encouraged to review these expectations with their children before the start of the school year.

Where can I find the complete policy?

Families should review **Policy and Regulation 5516, "Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices,"** for the complete requirements, exceptions, accommodations, and consequences.