

The Hallen School Cell Phone & Internet-Enabled Device Policy

In Compliance with New York State's Distraction-Free Schools Act (Ed. Law § 2803)

Effective September 2025

Purpose

To promote student focus, safety, and well-being during the school day, and to comply with New York State Education Law § 2803, The Hallen School will implement a school-wide policy prohibiting the use of internet-enabled devices by students during the school day.

This policy was informed by input from staff and families and reflects our commitment to a safe, respectful, and distraction-free learning environment for all students.

Definitions

- **Internet-enabled devices:** Includes smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, AirPods, and other personal devices capable of accessing the internet and apps (e.g., social media, messaging).
Note: This does not include basic cell phones without internet access, or school-issued devices used for educational purposes.
- **School day:** Refers to the entire instructional day, including homeroom, lunch, recess, and transition periods.
Note: For 11th and 12th grade students with parental permission to leave the school building for lunch, the policy still applies. These students may retrieve their cell phones only when signing out and must return them immediately upon re-entering the building.
- **School grounds:** Includes the school building, outdoor areas, buses, and any location supervised by Hallen School staff during the school day.

General Rule

Students are not permitted to use personal internet-enabled devices during the school day for non-educational purposes. This includes all instructional and non-instructional periods.

Permitted Exceptions

Use of a device may be permitted:

- When explicitly authorized by a teacher or administrator for an educational purpose.
- As required by a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

- For medical needs, emergencies, or translation assistance.
- When determined appropriate by a related service provider.
- As otherwise required by law.

Storage of Devices

To comply with the law, students must store personal devices in designated, secure, on-site storage during the school day.

- Elementary and Middle School students who bring a device to school will turn it off and place it in a locked classroom storage box. The storage box will remain secured during the school day.
- High School students who bring a device to school will turn it off and place it in the homeroom teacher's designated cell phone storage box, which will then be locked and remain secured during the school day.
- Students will retrieve their devices before dismissal.
- Staff will communicate clear procedures for storing and retrieving devices.

***Note:** The Hallen School is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices.*

Communication Between Parents and Students

During the school day, families may reach students by:

- Nurse Office Phone (914) 654-6908: Parents or guardians may call the nurse's office during the school day. The nurse will relay the message to the student or, if needed, call the student to the office to speak directly with their parent or guardian.
- Designated Contact Email [message@thehallenschool.net]: Parents or guardians may send a message to a school-monitored email address. Staff will check the inbox during the day and deliver messages to students as appropriate.
- Written Notes: Parents or guardians may leave a written note at the front desk in the school lobby. Staff will make sure the message is delivered to the student.
- Classroom Intercom System: In an emergency, the main office may use the intercom to call a student to the office or deliver a message directly.

This ensures students can stay focused while remaining reachable in necessary situations.

Disciplinary Procedures

In compliance with state law, students will not be suspended *solely* for accessing a device during the school day. However, the following procedures will apply:

1. **First Infraction:** Student will receive a verbal warning; parent/guardian will be notified; incident will be documented.
2. **Second Infraction:** Device confiscated; student may retrieve the device at dismissal; parent/guardian will be notified; incident will be documented.
3. **Subsequent Infractions:** The device may be stored in the school office for multiple days or until a parent meeting occurs.

Further support or intervention may be provided for students needing behavioral assistance in meeting this policy.

Policy Access

- This policy will be posted on the school website and shared with families at the start of each school year.

Commitment to Fair and Supportive Practices

Beginning in the 2026–2027 school year, The Hallen School will internally review and monitor non-identifiable data regarding enforcement of this policy, including general trends and whether any demographic group may be disproportionately impacted.

If any notable disparities are identified, the school may develop responsive strategies to ensure fair and supportive practices are in place.