

# School in the Square Policy on Cell Phones & Internet-Enabled Devices

## I. Introduction: Legal Overview & Policy Rationale

### Legal Context

In accordance with NY State law and the district's [Distraction-Free Schools Policy](#), the use of internet-enabled devices during the school day is prohibited on school grounds. This legislation is designed to ensure student safety, minimize distractions, and promote academic focus. The law requires schools to create and enforce systems—such as cell phone lockers—that support compliance.

### School Rationale

Our school is committed to fostering a focused, respectful, and academically rigorous environment. Because unrestricted access to devices during the school day undermines instructional time, increases social pressures, and distracts from meaningful learning, the school previously enforced restrictions and will continue to do so per State law. By removing these devices from the school day, we aim to:

- Promote equity
- Reduce digital distractions
- Support student mental health by limiting social media access
- Reinforce healthy digital boundaries both in and out of school
- Ensure safety and compliance with legal requirements

We believe this policy is a shared responsibility—families, students, and educators all play a critical role in maintaining a healthy learning environment.

## II. Key Definitions

- **Internet-enabled devices:** Smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, laptops, iPods, game consoles, or any other devices capable of connecting to the internet or running apps.
- **Non-internet-enabled devices:** Devices that cannot connect to the internet (e.g., analog watches, basic flip phones).

- **School grounds:** All buildings, fields, and areas within the school's property lines.
- **School day:** Includes all periods from arrival through dismissal, including non-instructional time (lunch, recess, passing time, etc.).
- **Parent:** Any legal guardian or individual acting in loco parentis.

### III. Policy Statement

Students **may not use internet-enabled devices during the school day** while on school grounds unless a specific exception applies (section VII). The policy does not prohibit the use of:

- School-issued internet-enabled devices used for instructional purposes. This includes chromebooks or iPads provided by the school.

### IV. Student Responsibilities

- **Device Surrender:** Students are expected to turn in internet-enabled devices at arrival to a secure, assigned **cell phone locker**. If students arrive to school late, they will be turned in upon entry, and an operations staff member will place late phones in a cell phone locker.
- **Cell Locker Use:** Cell phone lockers are expected to remain locked during the day. Devices are expected to be powered off by students before entering the school building. Teachers will be responsible for securing students' devices in lockers.
- **Access Restrictions:** Devices may only be retrieved during dismissal, unless approved by an administrator.

### V. Parent Responsibilities

- Avoid sending unnecessary internet-enabled devices to school.

- Contact the main office for any urgent communication instead of calling or texting your student.
- Support healthy digital boundaries and habits at home to reinforce the school's efforts.

## VI. Staff Responsibilities

- **Morning Checks:** Staff will collect all student devices in the morning, either during arrival or the first block. All internet-enabled devices will be stored and locked during the day in phone lockers.
- **Monitoring:** Staff will conduct periodic phone checks and address misuse. Staff will report and confiscate any device found during the school day.
- **Emergencies:** In urgent cases - such as medical emergencies – staff may retrieve devices for students only with school leadership approval.

## VII. Exceptions to the Policy

Use of internet-enabled devices may be permitted **only** under the following circumstances:

1. Authorized by a teacher or administrator for educational purposes
2. Needed for student healthcare management
3. Emergency situations
4. Translation services where another school device is not sufficient
5. Required by law
6. Included in an IEP or 504 Plan

*These circumstances must have prior approval and be confirmed by school leadership. If you believe your student qualifies for an exception, you must reach out to the principal for approval.*

S2 Elementary School: Mr. Saunders: [jsaunders@schoolinthesquare.org](mailto:jsaunders@schoolinthesquare.org)

S2 Middle School: Ms. Werno: [hwerno@schoolinthesquare.org](mailto:hwerno@schoolinthesquare.org)

S2 High School: Ms. Penny: [ppanagiosoulis@schoolinthesquare.org](mailto:ppanagiosoulis@schoolinthesquare.org)

#### VIII. Consequences for Violations

| Violation | Consequence                                                                        |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1st       | Verbal warning and reminder to secure device properly                              |
| 2nd       | Device confiscated until end of day; parent contacted                              |
| 3rd+      | Reflection; parent must pick up the device; further disciplinary action may follow |

*Repeated violations may result in additional consequences aligned with the school's Behavior Code.*

#### IX. Lost, Damaged, or Stolen Devices

- The school is **not responsible** for lost or damaged devices.
- Students are encouraged not to bring expensive devices.

Families may want to **insure** valuable devices.