

# **Important Notice: New York State Distraction-Free Schools Law (Bell-to-Bell Cellphone Ban)**

Dear Chittenango Central School District Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to inform you about an important change that will affect all students in our District beginning September 2, 2025. New York State has enacted legislation requiring all schools to implement a "bell-to-bell" restriction on personal internet devices during the instructional day. This letter outlines how our district will comply with this law while ensuring a positive learning environment for all students. Please review this information carefully and discuss it with your child before the start of the 2025-2026 school year.



# Understanding the New State Law

## Effective Date

September 2, 2025

## Core Requirement

"Bell-to-bell" restriction on personal internet-enabled devices during the instructional day

## Covered Areas

All school buildings, athletic fields, playgrounds, and land within school boundaries

## Covered Times

Entire instructional day including class time, homeroom, lunch, recess, study halls, passing periods, and field trips

In simple terms, the law mandates that personal cell phones and internet-enabled devices must be "off and away, during the day."

This applies to the entire school day from the first bell to dismissal, covering all school grounds and activities. While school buses in transit are not included in this restriction, all other school-related activities during instructional hours are covered.

# Chittenango's District-Wide Policy

In accordance with this new state law, our Board of Education has adopted a comprehensive policy that establishes a district-wide ban on student use of internet-enabled devices during the school day. This policy applies to all personal electronic devices, including:



## Smartphones

All cell phones regardless of make or model



## Tablets & Laptops

Personal tablets, iPads, and laptop computers



## Smartwatches

Watches with internet connectivity or messaging capabilities



## Audio Devices

Headphones, speakers, and other audio equipment

It's important to note that school-issued devices such as laptops, tablets, or iPads that are specifically deployed for instructional purposes are exempt from this policy. These devices will continue to be used as educational tools under teacher supervision.

# Storage Solutions for Personal Devices

## Secondary Students (Grades 5-12)

To comply with the law while allowing students to bring devices to school for before/after school use, the district will provide:

- A school-issued non-locking Velcro pouch for each student
- Access to a secure school locker

Students may choose to keep their pouched device with them or store it in their locker during the day.

## Elementary Students (UPK - Grade 4)

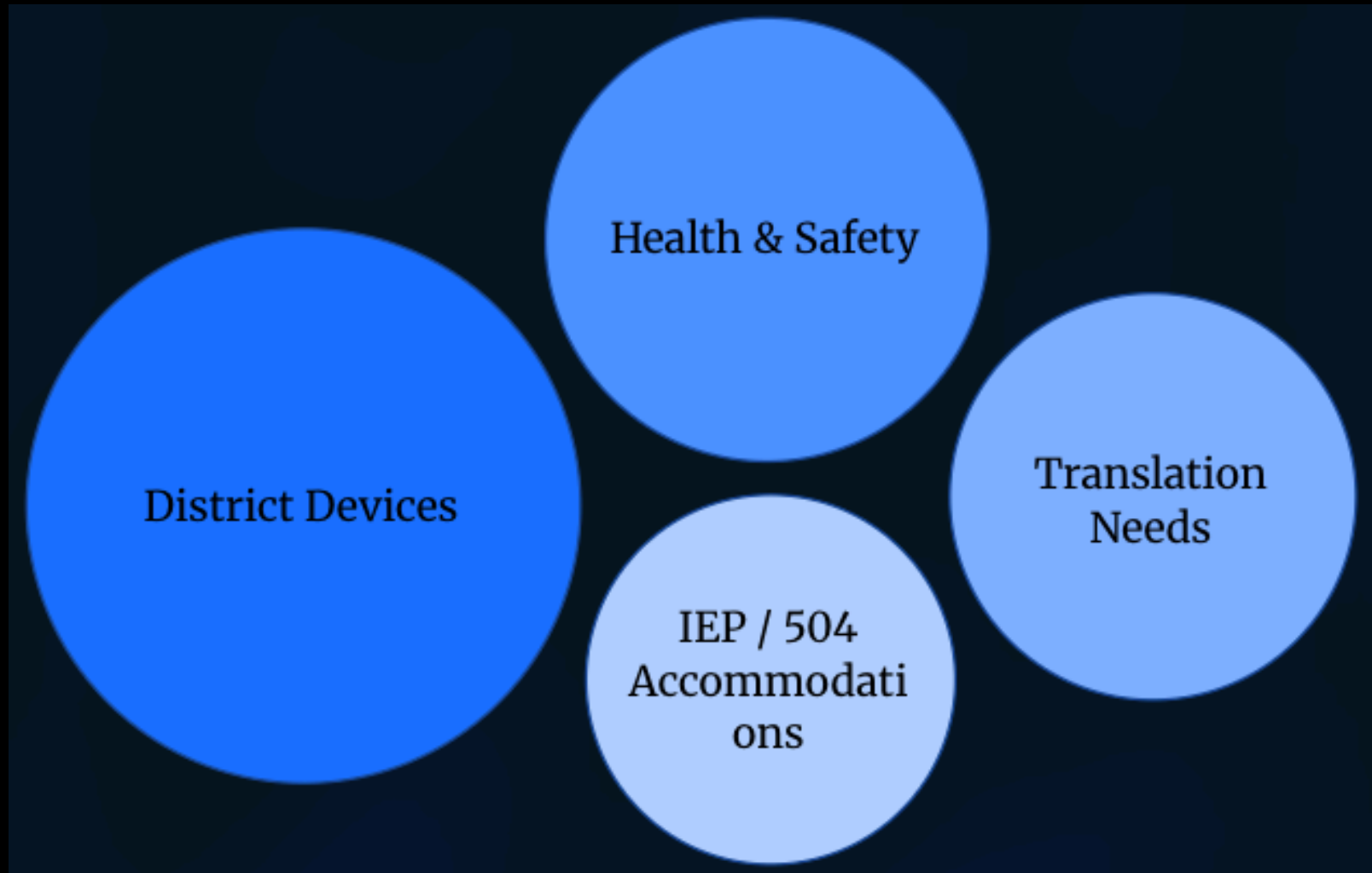
There is no change to our current elementary school policy. Personal cell phones and internet-enabled devices are discouraged and should not be brought to school. If circumstances require your elementary student to have a device, please contact your school principal to make appropriate arrangements.

# Daily Procedures for Secondary Students

These pouches are designed to be simple and effective. Each student will receive their own numbered pouch and will be responsible for it throughout the year. The Velcro closure ensures that devices are secured but can be accessed quickly at the end of the day or in case of emergency.

We understand this represents a significant change in routine for many students. Our staff will work closely with students during the first weeks of implementation to establish these new habits and answer any questions.

# Legal Exceptions to the Device Ban



**While the law is comprehensive, it does recognize several important exceptions where student use of personal devices may be permitted:**

- 1. District-provided devices used for educational purposes**
- 2. Health & Safety needs, such as glucose monitors or during emergencies**
- 3. Translation assistance for English Language Learners (ELL)**
- 4. Accommodations required by a student's IEP or 504 Plan**

**If you believe your child qualifies for one of these exceptions, please contact your school's administration to discuss appropriate documentation and accommodations.**



# **Parent-Student Communication During School Hours**

**We understand that the ability to contact your child during the school day is important to many families. While direct phone contact will no longer be possible, we have established alternative communication channels:**

- Call the school's main office to relay urgent messages to your child**
- Students can use a dedicated phone line in the main office to contact family when needed**
- The District will continue to use email and ParentSquare for both individual and mass communications**

**In case of a true emergency, students will be permitted to access their devices. Our goal is to balance the requirements of the law with the practical needs of families to stay connected.**

# Consequences for Non-Compliance

**Students who do not comply with the cell phone policy will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in our District's Code of Conduct. We will employ progressive discipline and restorative practices for repeated violations, focusing on helping students understand the importance of the policy rather than punitive measures alone.**

**We ask for your support in reinforcing these expectations at home and discussing with your child the importance of following school policies.**



# Forgotten or Lost Pouches

## If Your Child Forgets Their Pouch

We understand that students may occasionally forget their assigned pouches. In these cases, we have two options:

1. The Attendance Office will provide a "loaner" pouch for the day, which must be returned at dismissal
2. If no loaner is available, the student can leave their device in a secure location in the main office or in their school locker until the end of the day

## Replacement Policy

Students are expected to care for their assigned pouches as they would any other school property. If a pouch is lost or damaged, the replacement cost will be billed to the student's account.

We encourage students to develop responsible habits regarding their pouches to avoid any disruption to their school day or additional costs.

# Working Together for a Positive Transition

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We recognize that this new policy represents a change in practice for our school community. While we are required by law to implement these restrictions, we also see this as an opportunity to enhance our learning environment and help students develop healthy technology habits.

Research consistently shows that reducing digital distractions can improve academic performance, social interactions, and mental health. We are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible and will be providing additional resources and support throughout the implementation process.

We welcome your questions and feedback as we navigate this change together. Please feel free to contact your child's principal or District administration if you have any concerns or need clarification about any aspect of this policy.

Thank you for your continued partnership in supporting our students' education.

Sincerely,

Michael Eiffe - Superintendent of Schools