

Personal and Student Electronic Devices Policy

2025-26

New Roots Charter School

Beginning August 1, 2025, Education Law §2803 requires each school district and BOCES to adopt a policy restricting the use of “Internet-enabled devices” during the entire school day on school grounds.

New Roots Charter School recognizes that personal electronics and Internet-enabled devices can create significant distraction to the school environment, negatively impact student mental health, contribute to disciplinary infractions, and reduce student engagement.

Such devices include: 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, but do not include any such device supplied by the district for educational purposes. Other personal electronic devices include devices which are not capable of connecting to and accessing content from the Internet, fitness trackers, wired or wireless headphones and earbuds, e-readers, calculators, voice recorders, cameras and music devices.

Additionally, in an emergency, the use of personal electronic devices can distract students from following the directions of staff or emergency responders, contribute to the spread of misinformation, create congestion in the emergency response system, and interfere with the district’s emergency response protocols.

Generally, the school is not responsible for stolen, lost or damaged personal electronic devices brought to school.

Communication with Parents/Persons in Parental Relation

During the school day, to minimize distractions, parents (which, for purposes of this policy, includes persons in parental relation) may contact their children via the following methods:

- calling the school office
- the school-provided email address
- the school’s communication app (ParentSquare)

Students may contact their parents by:

- Contacting the front desk to make arrangements to call
- Emailing parents from their school email account

The school will notify parents in writing of the communication protocol at the beginning of each school year and upon enrollment.

Device Access and Storage

As required by Education Law §2803, this policy prohibits student use of Internet-enabled devices during the school day (including all classes, homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time) on school grounds (any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the boundary of a school), unless under an exception (e.g., IEP/Section 504 or as permitted below).

At the middle school level, student devices must be silenced and stored in homeroom device caddies.

At the high school level, student devices must be silenced and stored in designated centralized device holders.

Students are discouraged from bringing other personal electronic devices to school. If students do bring such devices to school, they must be stored for the entire school day in lockers and they must be silenced and not used during the school day unless permission is granted by the school. However, students may wear fitness trackers as long as they do not interfere with instruction and are not used to access Internet content.

Administrators and staff may also restrict use of electronic devices during school events and activities held outside of the school day and/or off school grounds.

Exceptions for Specific Purposes

Use of school-approved Internet-enabled devices will be permitted where included in a student's Individualized Education Program, Section 504 plan, or where required by law. Additionally, the school permits the use of Internet-enabled devices in the event of an 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).

Parents may request an exception for their children to use Internet-enabled devices during the school day as listed above. Requests must be made to the Principal and Superintendent, and for healthcare exceptions, must include documentation from an appropriate healthcare professional.

The district provides students with one-to-one devices; therefore, personal electronic devices are not permitted for educational purposes.

Enforcement, Consequences and Reporting

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.

If a student is out of compliance with this policy, the device will be held in the designated school administrator's office until the end of the school day. The first time this happens, the student may retrieve the device, and the parent will be notified. For subsequent instances, a parent or caregiver must retrieve the device. Further instances will result in the device being held in the designated administrator's office daily for longer periods of time.

The school will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the school, but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. For students with exceptions under this policy, the schools will examine alternative ways to achieve the purpose of the exception, including different storage or access provisions.

Administrators will also discuss the aims of this policy with students and their parents, the benefits of a distraction-free environment, the reasons the student had difficulty following this policy, and how the school can help the student contribute to a distraction-free environment.

The district will not impose suspension from school if the sole grounds for the suspension is that the student accessed an Internet-enabled device as prohibited by this policy. The focus of the school's initial response to non-compliance will be educational and restorative, including utilizing assignments on the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, smartphones in school, or other relevant topics. However, the district may also utilize consequences under the district's Code of Conduct, including detention, in-school suspension, and exclusion from extracurricular activities. Students who violate this policy may also be subject to the school's policy on search and seizure.

Some uses of personal electronic devices may constitute a violation of the school district Code of Conduct or other district policies, and in some instances, the law. The district will cooperate with law enforcement officials as appropriate.

Beginning September 1, 2026 and annually thereafter, the school will publish an annual report on its website detailing the enforcement of this policy over the past year, including non-identifiable demographic information of students who have faced disciplinary action for non-compliance with this policy, and an analysis of any demographic disparities in enforcement of this policy. If a statistically significant disparate enforcement impact is identified, the report will include a plan

to mitigate such disparate enforcement.

Electronic Devices and Testing

To ensure the integrity of testing, in accordance with state guidelines, students may not bring cell phones or other electronic devices into classrooms or other exam locations during any testing period.

Test proctors, monitors and school officials have the right to collect cell phones and other prohibited electronic devices prior to the start of the test and to hold them for the duration of the test taking time. Admission to the test will be prohibited to any student who has a cell phone or other electronic device in their possession and does not relinquish it.

Students with Individualized Education Plans, Section 504 Plans, or documentation from medical practitioners specifically requiring use of electronic devices may do so as specified.

Adoption date: July 31, 2025