



South Shore
Charter School

Distraction- Free Schools Law at South Shore Charter School

Policy Background:

The Board of Education recognizes that students may have personal electronic devices that can perform different functions. Such devices include “internet-enabled devices” defined as: 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.

These devices can create significant distractions in the school environment, negatively impact student mental health, contribute to disciplinary infractions, and reduce student engagement. 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.

South Shore Charter School is not responsible for stolen, lost or damaged personal electronic devices brought to school.

Communication with Parents/Person In Parental Relation

During the school day, to minimize distractions, parents (which, for purposes of this policy, include persons in parental relation) may contact their children by calling the school office. Students may contact their parents through the main office. 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 or district or BOCES facility), unless under an exception (e.g., IEP/Section 504 or as permitted below).

At all levels “internet-enabled devices” are defined as: 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.

At the elementary school level, students are discouraged from bringing any internet enabled devices to school. Any device that is brought to school must be silenced and kept in the student’s backpack or stored in the student’s personal cubby throughout the entire school day including at lunch/recess.



Distraction- Free Schools Law at South Shore Charter School

Middle School and High School

Students who bring their internet-enabled devices to school are expected to secure all of their devices in the digital security storage pouches prior to entering school each day. The district will provide and have accessible magnetic devices and necessary equipment required to unlock the digital security pouches at dismissal time so that students can access and operate their devices upon dismissal from school.

In the event, a student misplaces their digital security storage pouch, the cost for replacement of the pouch will be at the expense of the parent or caregiver. In extenuating circumstances, the principal of the school can arrange to utilize district funds to replace the pouch. Ex. Another student commits a disciplinary infraction and damages another student's pouch or financial hardship.

At all levels 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 internet-enabled devices must be permitted where included in a student's Individualized Education Program, Section 504 plan, or where required by law. Additionally, the district 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 well-being 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. All initial requests for an exemption to this policy must be made to the Building Principal. In the case of requests for a healthcare exemption, parents and caregivers must complete and submit to the principal the district's Mobile Devices Exemption Requests (Form 5695 R) which must be completed and signed by the parent/caregiver and the student's Primary Care Provider. All forms must include a medical diagnosis. All applications for an exemption due to healthcare will be reviewed and approved by the District's Medical Director.

Use of Internet Enabled Devices for Educational Purposes

South Shore Charter School provides students with one-to-one devices; therefore, personal electronic devices are not permitted for educational purposes.



Distraction- Free Schools Law at South Shore Charter School

Under any of these exceptions, devices may only be used for the purposes outlined in the exception, and the device must be silenced and put away when not in use, to the extent compatible with the reason for the exception.

Enforcement, Consequences and Reporting

The district aims to reinforce this policy through educating students regarding the positive benefits of attending school in a distraction-free environment, but also through progressive disciplinary methods prescribed within this policy and within the district's Code of Conduct. Enforcement of this policy is chiefly the responsibility of the 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.

For students out of compliance with this policy, the following steps will be taken to address student violations:

Elementary School Level

Students are encouraged to leave all internet-enabled personal devices at home and not bring them to school. From bell to bell, all devices capable of internet connection and/or communication must be stored in the student's book bag or the main office.

Occurrence Enforcement/Consequences

First: The device will be taken and secured in the main office. Parents/guardians will be contacted. The device will be returned to the student at the end of the school day with parental permission. A verbal warning will be issued to the student.

Second: The device will be taken and secured in the main office. The device will only be returned to a parent or guardian who must pick it up from the school.

Third Offense +: The device will be taken. Additional steps and/or consequences will be determined at the discretion of the principal, following a consultation with the parent/guardian and a review of the school's Code of Conduct.

Note: It is recognized that situations may vary based on individual student needs and circumstances. The discretion of the building principal is advised in all cases.

Middle School and High School Level

First: A warning from the Administrator or other staff member is given, the student will be reminded of the district's personal electronic devices policy. The parent/guardian will be contacted by phone and the violation will be documented.

Second: The student's personal electronic device will be confiscated until the end of the school day. The parent/guardian will be contacted by phone and the violation is documented.



South Shore
Charter School

Distraction- Free Schools Law at South Shore Charter School

Third Offense: The student's personal electronic device will be confiscated. The parent/guardian will be contacted by phone. The parent/guardian will be required to come to school to retrieve the confiscated device(s) from the main office and the violation is documented.

Fourth Offense: The student's personal electronic device will be confiscated. The parent/guardian will be contacted by phone and the parent/guardian will be required to come to school to retrieve the confiscated device (s) from the main office and the violation is documented. The student will be required to turn their phone in to the main office for the next 30 days.

Fifth Offense: The student's personal electronic device will be confiscated. The parent/guardian will be contacted by phone and the parent/guardian will be required to come to school to retrieve the confiscated device(s) from the main office and the violation is documented. The student must also now turn their phone in to the main office for the remainder of the school year. Parents/Guardians will be encouraged to have their child leave their devices at home.

The district may 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. However, in addition to the consequences, reinforcers and interventions included within this policy, the district Code-of-Conduct will be followed for instances in which students willfully ignore or refuse to follow directions from school staff regarding compliance with this policy and/or commit other violations of the district's code of conduct in response to the district's enforcement of this policy.

Examples may include but are not limited to repeated incidents of insubordination, disrespect towards staff, or threatening behavior and use of foul language. In such instances, the district may utilize consequences under the district's Code of Conduct, including detention, in-school suspension, exclusion from extracurricular activities and out-of-school suspension. As an alternative, the district may also utilize student assignments regarding the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, smartphones in school, or other relevant topics.

When enforcing this policy, administrators and other school personnel will also discuss the aims of this policy with students and their parents/caregivers, educate students regarding the benefits of a distraction-free environment, explore the reasons the student had difficulty following this policy, and how the district can help the student contribute to a distraction-free environment.

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

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 all testing.



South Shore
Charter School

Distraction- Free Schools Law at South Shore Charter School

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 an approved medical exemption specifically requiring use of electronic devices may do so as specified.

Policy Distribution and Translation

As required by law, the district will post this policy in a clearly visible and accessible location on its website. Upon request by a student or parent, the district will translate this policy into any of the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by limited English proficient individuals in the state, as identified by the most recent American community survey published by the U.S. Census bureau.

South Shore Charter School will also use multiple communications methods including its website, ClassDojo and other methods to include this information, or a plain language summary, in publications such as the school calendars and newsletters issued to families and employees.

Beginning September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, the district will publish an annual report on its website detailing the enforcement of this policy over the past year, including demographic information of students who have faced disciplinary action for noncompliance with this policy, and an analysis of 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.

Cross-ref: 4526, Computer Use in Instruction 4526.1, Internet Safety 5300, Code of Conduct

Ref: Education Law §2803

Price v. New York City Board of Education, 51 A.D.3d 277, lv. to appeal denied, 11 N.Y.3d 702 (2008) (District may ban possession of cell phones on school property)

NYSED, Prohibition of Cell Phones and Electronic Devices in New York State Assessments, www.nysed.gov/educator-integrity/prohibition-cell-phones-and-electronic-devices-new-york-state-assessments