

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY: CELL PHONE AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

DATE ADOPTED: June 16, 2026

STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the policy of CSD to maintain a cell phone-free school environment in accordance with state law (16 V.S.A. § 582) to promote focus, improved mental health, and increased social cohesion among our students.

The goal of this policy is to enable both students and employees to work free from distractions that interfere with learning by prohibiting student use of and access to cell phones and other prohibited personal electronic devices from the beginning of the school day to dismissal.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Cell phone** means any device capable of using cellular technology to facilitate voice service through a commercial telecommunications company, regardless of whether the device can access internet services or electronic mail.
2. **Other prohibited personal electronic devices** mean any non-school-issued personal electronic devices that connect to cellular networks, the internet, or have wireless capabilities (e.g., smartwatches, earbuds, and smart glasses).
3. **An individualized health care plan** means a written document developed by a school nurse, in collaboration with parents, students, and other relevant professionals, to outline specific health care needs and management strategies tailored to the health condition of a student.

ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

The superintendent, head of school, or designee shall establish procedures that outline:

1. The daily routines, employee responsibilities, and communication strategies that will be used to uphold the intent of this policy.
2. Expectations that students keep their phones and other electronic devices **off and away in their bags/backpacks for the entire school day and not on their person.**
3. An implementation plan for each school to provide storage for all students' cell phones and other prohibited devices.
4. How employees monitor compliance, including in classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, restrooms, and locker rooms; where devices are stored; and how exceptions are communicated in the student handbook.
5. Details regarding student cell phone and electronic device use during field trips and expectations for district-operated after-school programs or extended field trips.

Date Warned: May 15, 2026
 First Reading: May 19, 2026
 Second Reading: June 2, 2026
 Third Reading: June 16, 2026

- a. During school-day field trips, students are expected to have their phones off, away, and out of sight. Employees will collect phones if they are visible during school-day field trips.
 - b. For off-school-hour field trips or events (e.g., athletic events or co-curricular trips), employees, coaches, or advisors may allow students to use their phones.
6. On an annual basis, building principals shall report to the School Board on progress toward the goals of this policy, including areas of success and identified challenges.

EXCEPTIONS

Students may be permitted to use or access a cell phone or personal electronic device if they:

1. Require a cell phone or other electronic device as part of their individualized health care plan, IEP, or 504 plan, which shall be documented according to applicable state and federal law.
2. Have been granted permission by an employee for an academic, school-sponsored athletic, or co-curricular purpose, with use limited to the stated purpose.
3. Require a cell phone or personal electronic device for compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431-11435.

The superintendent or designee shall establish procedures for verifying exceptions as outlined above. With respect to accommodations documented in an individualized student plan (IEP or 504) or as required for compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the process shall give preference to the use of district-owned devices.

FAMILY AND GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

The superintendent or designee shall establish procedures to ensure families can communicate with students during the school day. Schools shall establish and publish building-based procedures to facilitate communication between parents/guardians and students.

1. Families needing to speak with their student may call the main office of their school or use other designated school communication channels, as outlined in school handbooks.
2. If a student needs to contact a parent or guardian during the school day, a school employee may authorize the use of school-approved communication methods in accordance with procedures outlined in the school handbook.

ENFORCEMENT ACTION

The superintendent or designee shall establish procedures that describe the sequence of consequences and the process for contacting parents or guardians when a student has violated the policy.

1. The CSD cell phone and personal electronic device policy and procedures are not designed to be punitive. The use of progressive responses under this policy is intended to support student learning and responsible use of personal electronic devices.

2. Students using a cell phone or personal electronic device in violation of this policy may be required to surrender the device for the remainder of the school day. Students who refuse to comply may be subject to additional disciplinary action in accordance with school procedures and the Student Code of Conduct.
3. For repeated violations, parents or guardians may be required to retrieve the device from the school. Schools may also develop individualized support or monitoring plans, including temporary check-in/check-out procedures for personal electronic devices.

Legal Citations

16 V.S.A. § 582 Definitions

16 V.S.A. § 582 Student use of cell phones and personal electronic devices in schools

16 V.S.A. § 582 School district to maintain public high school or pay tuition