

New Jersey Legislature

NJ School Phone Policy Overview

- **Policy:** [S3695](#); Requires cell phone and social media policy to be developed and adopted in schools. DOE Guidelines: [NJDOE guidelines](#)
- **Status:** Passed 2026
- **Effective:** 26/27 School Year
- **Applies to:** Public school districts and public school academies (charter schools)

 The DOE has developed model guidelines for districts concerning student use of cell phones or social media platforms during regular school hours, on a school bus, or during school-sanctioned events when the student is under the direct supervision of a teaching staff member or employee of the board of education.

 **There are two sections of this document:**

(1) Key Points highlights key aspects of New Jersey's new student cellphone policy

(2) Aligning with The Commons App shares how The Commons supports compliance with the new policy

Key Points: S.3695 Sec 1 b & c

③ Guideline Interpretations <https://www.nj.gov/education/safety/sandp/digital/docs/GuidanceSchoolsStudentUseInternet-EnabledDevices.pdf>

Governing Body Policy Mandate - p.2 of guidelines

By August 1, 2026, a school board shall adopt and implement a policy prohibiting use of personal electronic devices during the school day. Here are the 3 options for MS & HS.

- 1
 - Bell-to-Bell Policy: If cell phones and other devices are brought to school, they are securely stored by school district staff upon entering the building and returned at the end of the day. Students are unable to access their devices throughout the entire school day.
 - Off and Away Policy: Cell phones and other devices are expected to be powered off and stored out of sight during the entire school day. Students maintain physical access to their devices and may store them in their backpack, locker, or other out of sight location. Students are not permitted to access their devices through the entire school day (including during lunch or between classes).
 - Limited Use Policy: Cell phones and other devices are expected to be powered off and stored out of sight during instructional periods but may be used during designated times and in specific areas (e.g., lunch or between classes). Under this type of policy, schools may elect to collect and store student devices during instructional periods or allow students to maintain physical access to their devices as long as they remain off and stored out of sight.

Exceptions for Limited Use

Exceptions to the prohibition required under par. (a) for all of the following:

- 2
 - a. To fulfill accommodations provided in a student's individualized education program (IEP);
 - b. To support the implementation of a 504 Plan;
 - c. To monitor or address a student's healthcare ;
 - d. For translation services;
 - e. For a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care or well-being of a family member;
 - f. When required by law; and
 - g. In the event of an emergency.

Digital Citizenship & Literacy - p. 7 of guidelines

3 In addition to providing instruction aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards on Digital Citizenship, schools may also consider instructional programming tied to device expectations.

- Example: A "Wellness Wednesday" advisory curriculum might include lessons on social media stress, identifying misinformation, avoiding distractions, and setting personal screen time goals.

Aligning with The Commons App

Below are the sections of the new cellphone policy mandate parsed out to show how The Commons aligns with each section.

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① Review The Commons [sample policy template](#) tailored for NJ Bell-to-Bell & Off & Away legislation

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6. In the event of an emergency.

① The Commons blocks distractions from all apps besides those a school whitelists inline with approved use cases 1-6. Here is a list commonly used medical, emergency and academic apps: <https://policyhub.the-commons.app/use-cases-in-schools>

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① The Commons Implementation includes a 4-module digital citizenship curriculum, built-in app student behavioral reinforcement nudges for real time support, advisory mini-challenges & at-home mini-challenges.

❑ Learn more about The Commons and how it helps comply with state mandates while supporting students in building healthier digital habits for life: <https://www.the-commons.app/resources>