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MARANACOOK AREA SCHOOLS RSU 38

A Caring School Community Dedicated to Excellence

August 3, 2026

📵 A Phone-Free School Day, Starting 2026-2027 SY

Dear Maranacook Area Schools Families,

I'm writing with an important change for the coming school year. Maine has passed a new law requiring all public schools to be phone-free during the school day, which took effect August 1, 2026. Our Board's Policy Committee has finished its work on an updated cell-phone policy, and the full Board will take it up for final approval next week. I want you to know now what to expect — and, just as important, how you'll still be able to reach your child.

📱 What's changing

From the moment students enter the building in the morning until they exit at dismissal, students in all grades, Pre-K through 12, will keep personal phones, smartwatches, and similar connected devices powered off and stored — not carried, not worn. This covers the entire school day, including passing periods, lunch, recess, study halls and advisee time, assemblies, and school-day field trips. It is a shift from our previous rules, which allowed some phone use for older students during the day.

A few specifics families often ask about: smartwatches must be powered off and stored with the phone, because they can continue receiving notifications on their own. Wireless earbuds and headphones are still permitted when connected to a District-issued device for schoolwork. The rule does not apply to the bus ride before or after school, or to after-school activities, athletics, and events — unless a coach, advisor, or supervisor sets additional limits.

🎯 Why we're making this change

Beyond meeting the new law, this reflects what our teachers see every day and what a growing body of research confirms: when phones are away, students focus better, talk to one another more, and feel less pulled by notifications and social media. Our goal is a calmer, more connected school day.

☎️ You can always reach your child

If you need to reach your child during the day, call the school's main office, and we'll get a message to them or arrange a call back. Students who need to reach you may ask to use an office or classroom phone. Please don't call or text your child's device during the school day. In an emergency, we will contact families directly through our official channels — Thrillshare, email, the District website, and District social media — which are far more reliable in a crisis than a student's phone.

📋 If your child has a documented need

Exceptions are available for monitoring or managing a documented health condition through an Individual Health Plan, an IEP or Section 504 accommodation, or translation support for a student still learning English. Except in an emergency, a written exception must be on file with your building principal before a device may be used during the school day. If this may apply to your child, please contact your school's nurse or main office now, so we can put the right plan in place before school starts.

🗓️ What comes next

The storage requirement will be the same in all six of our schools: devices powered off at arrival, stored in a designated location, and retrieved at dismissal. Your principal will follow up before the start of school with the specific details for your child's building — where devices are stored, how they're collected and returned, and what the arrival and dismissal procedures will look like. Full details are in Policy JICJ and Procedure JICJ-R, which will be posted on the District website once the Board has adopted them, summarized in the student handbook, and available in each school office. If you have questions in the meantime, please contact your child's principal.

Thank you for partnering with us on this. I'm confident it will make for a better school day for our students.

Sincerely,

Karen G. Smith

Dr. Karen G. Smith, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools, RSU 38 / Maranacook Area Schools