ROCKAWAY TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents and Families:

At its August 12 meeting, the Rockaway Township Board of Education approved Policy and Regulation 5516 in accordance with legislation signed by the Governor on January 8, 2026 (P.L. 2025, c. 195). The Policy and Regulation address student use of internet-enabled devices during the school day. To promote academic engagement, limit distractions, and support students' well-being, this Policy and Regulation will prohibit the use of personal internet-enabled devices for the entire school day for all students in Prekindergarten through Grade 8.

Although our schools have consistently enforced expectations regarding the use of personal internet-enabled devices, the revised Policy and Regulation are based on legislation that requires the Board of Education to specify how student internet-enabled devices may be used in specific circumstances. If students choose to bring personal internet-enabled devices to school, they must remain off and stored throughout the school day. Students should not use devices during the school day unless granted an exception for medical or safety accommodations.

I encourage parents to review Policy and Regulation 5516 with their child(ren) and reference the attached FAQ. The administration understands that transitioning to new expectations may be challenging, and we intend to support students and parents as we adopt this new Policy and Regulation. Working with you, I am confident that these changes will foster a school culture conducive to learning.

Sincerely,

Richard R. Corbett, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guide synthesizes the key rules, exceptions, and disciplinary procedures outlined in Regulation 5516 (Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices) for Prekindergarten through Grade 8.

1. *What is an "internet-enabled device?"*

   "Internet-enabled device" means any device capable of connecting to the internet and accessing online content (e.g., smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, smart glasses, etc.), including social media applications. An internet-enabled device does not include an internet-enabled device provided by the Board when used for educational purposes.

2. *Are Prekindergarten to Grade 8 students allowed to use internet-enabled devices during the school day?*

   No. Students in Prekindergarten through Grade 8 are strictly prohibited from using internet-enabled devices on school grounds during the regular school day. This includes during lunch and passing time in the middle school.

3. *Does this Policy apply to all district students?*

   Yes. The Policy applies to all students in Prekindergarten to Grade 8.

4. *Are there exceptions to this Policy?*

   Yes. Exceptions will be provided when required by law, including accommodations documented in a student's IEP, 504 Plan, Individualized Health Care Plan, or other approved educational or medical plans.

5. *What are "school grounds?"*

   "School grounds" means and includes land, portions of land, structures, buildings, and vehicles, including school buses, owned, operated, or used for the provision of academic or extracurricular programs sponsored by the district. "School grounds" also includes athletic fields and facilities used for non-instructional or non-educational purposes; and any structure, building, or facility such as playgrounds or other recreational places owned by local municipalities, private entities, or other individuals during those times when the school district has exclusive use of a portion of such land.

6. *Where and how must devices be stored during school hours?*

   Any internet-enabled device brought to school must be turned off, password-protected, and stored in the student's backpack (Prekindergarten to Grade 5), or locker (Grades 6 to 8) for the entire school day. It is the student's responsibility to prevent unauthorized use by securing and powering off the device.

7. *Can students use their devices on school buses, or before/after school?*

   No. Internet-enabled device usage is prohibited on school buses while traveling to and from school, as well as on school grounds immediately before start or after the regular school day.

8. *How can I communicate with my child during the school day in the event of a family emergency?*

   In an emergency, you may call the school's main office. Students will be permitted to call their parents/guardians in urgent situations.

9. *Are devices allowed during field trips or off-ground events?*

   Yes, but only under direct staff supervision, provided no reasonable alternative exists, and explicit authorization is granted by the Superintendent or designee.

10. *Are devices permitted during extracurricular activities outside school hours?*

    Yes. Devices may be used during school-sponsored events outside regular school hours (such as sports practices or games) while under the direct supervision of a school staff member or Board employee.

11. *What about non-internet-enabled devices*?

    Non-internet-enabled devices are permitted when used under the direct supervision of a school staff member.

12. *What are the Discipline & Consequences for Offenses?*

Please see the elementary school Code of Conduct (Elementary) and the middle school Code of Conduct (CMS). Below are the consequences for violations of the Policy:

- First Offense in a School Year:
  - Surrender: The device is confiscated by the Principal or designee for the remainder of the school day.
  - Responsibility: The student must turn off and password-protect the device before handing it in.
  - Retrieval: The student can pick up the device at the end of the school day after signing a First Infraction acknowledgment form.
  - Further Action: Additional consequences apply per the Elementary or CMS Code of Conduct.
- Second, Third, or Fourth Offense in a School Year:
  - Surrender: The device is confiscated for the remainder of the school day.
  - Responsibility: The student must turn off and password-protect the device before handing it over.
  - Retrieval: The device must be picked up by a parent or guardian at the Principal's office at or after the end of the school day. The parent must sign for receipt and acknowledge notice of the infraction.
  - Further Action: Progressive discipline will be imposed according to the Elementary or CMS Code of Conduct.