CALDWELL-WEST CALDWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

104 GRAY STREET, WEST CALDWELL, NEW JERSEY 07006
Tel: (973) 228-6979 ● www.cwcboe.org
Lydia E. Furnari, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools
Brian P. McCarthy, School Business Administrator

August 6, 2026

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

I hope you are enjoying your summer. As we look forward to the 2026-2027 school year, I would like to share a very important update from the New Jersey Department of Education regarding student use of personal internet-enabled devices (i.e., cell phones, tablets, smartwatches, smart glasses, etc.). In accordance with a recently enacted law (P.L.2025,c.195) and the New Jersey Department of Education's 2026 Guidance for Schools on Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices, all New Jersey school districts are required to adopt policies that prohibit the use of personal internet-enabled devices, from "Bell-to-Bell". Policy and Regulation 5516 require all personal internet-enabled devices to be turned off and not in use for the duration of the school day; from the first bell to the last bell. This means that personal devices may not be used at any time during the school day, including during lunch or in between classes. The policy and regulation also describe more detailed, age-appropriate information for students in grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. This new law does not refer to technology devices provided to students by the school district for academic purposes. You will receive additional information from your school principal, as well as a form to acknowledge your receipt of this information, among the other forms located on the Parent Portal.

Chapter 195 was enacted as a public health measure in response to growing concerns regarding the impact that excessive device and social media use has on students.

Research cited by the New Jersey Department of Education shows that:

- Nearly 95% of high school-aged students use social media, with many reporting frequent or near-constant use.
- Teens may spend up to 7 hours per day on social media, with a portion of that time occurring during the school day
- Students who spend more than three hours per day on social media are at greater risk for anxiety and depression

Reducing access to personal internet-enabled devices during the school day is intended to support student learning, improve focus, and increase opportunities for meaningful, in-person interactions with peers and school staff. These efforts are directly aligned to the Vision, Mission, and Strategic Plan Goals of the Caldwell-West Caldwell Public Schools, related to both academic success and creating a positive climate and culture at all of our schools.

Please be reminded that our district has always had policies and procedures in place that prohibited the use of personal electronic communication devices during the school day. There are some new restrictions that are imposed through this new State law, which we have included in each school's student/parent handbooks, the Code of Conduct, and our daily practice. In the event that you need to contact your child during the school day due to an emergency, our practice has always been to call the school's main office. This procedure has not changed. Students, under the supervision of school staff, will continue to visit the main office if they need to contact a parent or caregiver.

We understand that this policy may represent a change from the regular routines of students and families. However, it reflects a shared commitment to supporting students' academic success, social development, and overall well-being. We appreciate your partnership as we implement Policy and Regulation 5516 and look forward to working together to foster a focused, supportive, and healthy learning environment for all students.

To foster, inspire, and champion learning for all.

If you have any questions, please contact your child's school for assistance.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,



Dr. Lydia E. Furnari
Interim Superintendent