



2026-27 QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

PERSONAL DEVICE POLICY

Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices Policy 5516

THE RULE AT A GLANCE

From the opening bell through dismissal — including lunch and passing periods — students may not use personal internet-enabled devices unless an approved exemption applies.

"BELL TO BELL" = DEVICES AWAY

FOCUS • SAFETY • CONNECTION

WHY "BELL TO BELL?"

New Jersey law requires public school districts to implement a "bell-to-bell" policy beginning in the 2026–27 school year. The goal is simple: reduce digital distractions while strengthening learning, student well-being and face-to-face connection.

FOCUS

More attention on teaching, learning and academic engagement.

SAFETY

Clear expectations that support coordinated school routines and emergency procedures.

CONNECTION

More face-to-face interaction with classmates and staff.

WHAT DOES "BELL TO BELL" MEAN?

The entire academic day — from the opening bell until the dismissal bell. It includes classroom instruction, lunch, passing periods, assemblies and other activities during normal school hours.

PERSONAL DEVICE VS. DISTRICT-ISSUED DEVICE

PERSONAL DEVICE — AWAY

Personal smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, smart glasses and other internet-enabled devices must remain off/silenced and stored away.

DISTRICT TECHNOLOGY — FOR LEARNING

District-issued laptops, tablets and approved platforms may still be used for educational purposes when directed by staff.

WHAT DEVICES ARE COVERED?

The state defines an internet-enabled device as a personal device capable of connecting to the internet and accessing online content. Linden's adopted Board Policy 5516 may include additional personal electronic devices.

- Smartphones / mobile phones
- Tablets
- Smartwatches and connected wearables
- Smart glasses
- Other personal internet-enabled technology

Note: Basic non-internet-enabled devices, such as traditional flip phones, are treated separately under state guidance. Families should follow Linden Public Schools' adopted policy for any additional restrictions.

WHAT STUDENTS DO EACH DAY

ARRIVE → STORE → LEARN → RETRIEVE

GRADE-LEVEL EXPECTATIONS

GRADE BAND	CORE EXPECTATION	DAILY ROUTINE
PK-5	No personal internet-enabled device use during the school day.	If brought to school, the device must remain off and stored for the entire school day, using the storage procedure established by the school.
6-8	No personal internet-enabled device use during the school day.	If brought to school, the device must remain off and stored for the entire school day, using the storage procedure established by the school.
9-12	No personal internet-enabled device use during the school day.	If brought to school, the device must remain off and stored for the entire school day, using the storage procedure established by the school.

STORAGE MATTERS

New Jersey permits districts to select storage methods that fit local needs, including classroom storage stations, lockers or bins, secured pouches, or student storage in a backpack/locker. Students and families will receive school-specific instructions for storage and retrieval.

BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL

- Personal device use before the instructional day and after official dismissal is governed by Linden Public Schools' adopted policy and school procedures.
- For before- or after-school activities, athletics and school-sponsored events, students must follow the directions of the staff member in charge and any district restrictions.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP STILL MATTERS

Bell-to-bell does not mean technology disappears from learning. Students will continue to build digital citizenship skills and use district-managed technology for appropriate educational purposes.

STAYING CONNECTED WITH YOUR CHILD



FAMILIES → STUDENTS

Need to reach your child during the school day? Contact the school's Main Office. Staff will follow school procedures to deliver urgent information promptly.

STUDENTS → FAMILIES

Students who need to contact a parent or guardian should go to the Main Office, where staff can assist. Personal-device access may be permitted when authorized by an administrator or when an approved exception applies.

KEEP CONTACT INFORMATION CURRENT

Accurate parent/guardian and emergency contact information is essential. Families should keep all contact details current in Linden Public Schools' Genesis student information system. Please contact your child's school with any changes.

PLAN AHEAD WHEN POSSIBLE

After-school rides, work schedules, caregiving arrangements, sibling pick-ups and family plans should be finalized before the school day whenever possible. If something unexpected changes, the Main Office in your child's school is the connection point.

EXEMPTION & ACCOMMODATIONS

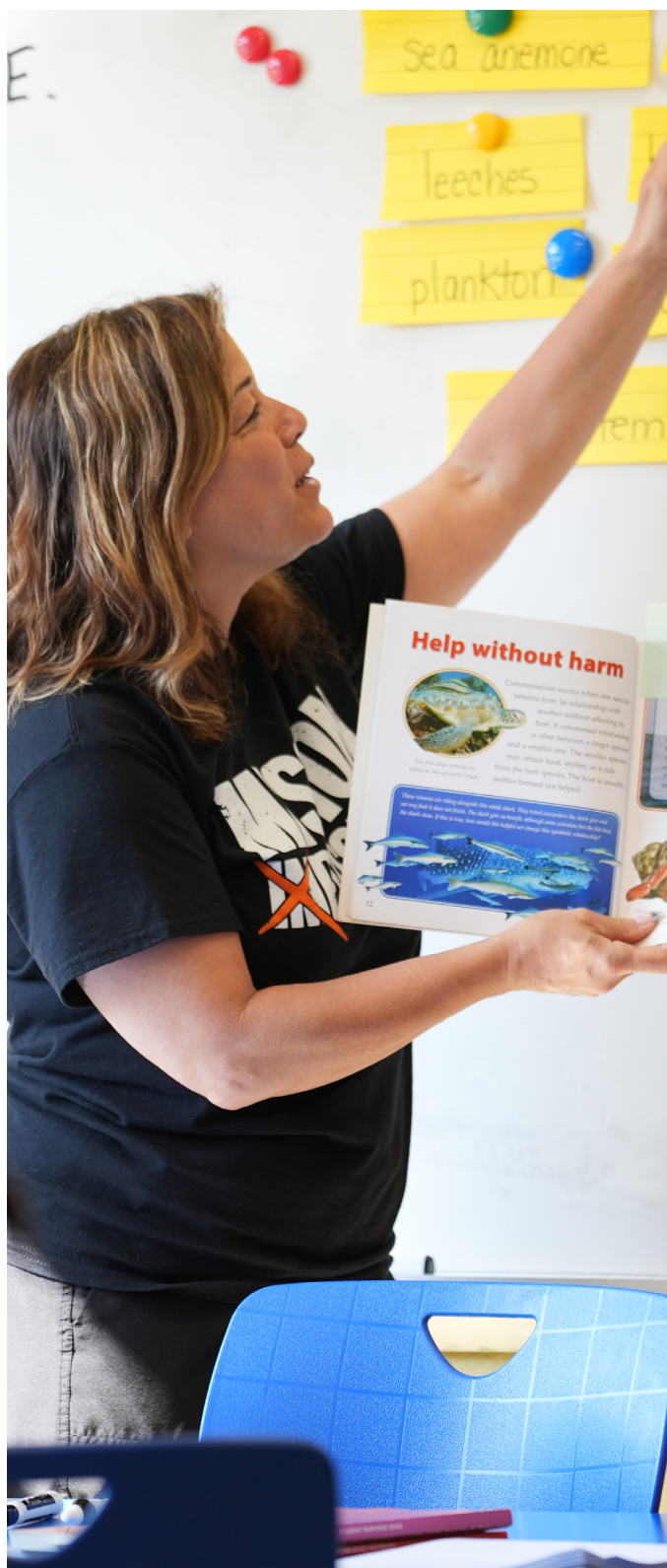
An approved exemption is not a violation. New Jersey guidance recognizes circumstances in which a student may need access to a personal internet-enabled device. Parents/Guardians must contact the building administrator to request an exemption.

- An Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- A Section 504 Plan
- A documented student health plan or medical need
- Translation services
- A student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care or well-being of a family member
- A specific need for which no reasonable alternative exists, when authorized by the superintendent, principal or designee
- Use required by law

DIGNITY & CONFIDENTIALITY

Device accommodations will be implemented discreetly and consistently. Students with approved accommodations should not be singled out or treated as though they are violating the policy.

EMERGENCIES: FOLLOW DIRECTIONS. TRUST OFFICIAL INFORMATION.



DURING A LOCKDOWN OR OTHER EMERGENCY

Students must follow the directions of school staff and emergency personnel regarding personal devices. Phone use can interfere with emergency communication, contribute to misinformation and disrupt coordinated safety procedures.

Depending on the emergency, students may be instructed not to communicate unnecessarily, or they may be given specific directions about when device use is appropriate. The district will use official communication channels to provide families with verified information.

FAMILY EMERGENCY DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Call the school's Main Office rather than contacting the student directly. Staff will ensure the information reaches the student in a timely and appropriate manner.

IF STORED DEVICES CANNOT BE RETRIEVED

If an emergency closure prevents students from retrieving stored devices, the district/school will communicate a safe, centralized retrieval procedure when the building is accessible.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE POLICY IS NOT FOLLOWED?

Linden Public Schools will address violations consistently and in accordance with its adopted policy and Student Code of Conduct. Responses should be developmentally appropriate and progressive, with an emphasis on teaching responsibility, restoring expectations and keeping students engaged in learning.

Staff will reinforce the expectation and redirect inappropriate device use.

Repeated or willful violations may result in progressive consequences.

Families may be contacted early to strengthen home-school alignment.

School procedures will address secure handling and return of devices when confiscation is required.

"BELL-TO-BELL" FAQ

Q: Does "bell-to-bell" include lunch and passing periods?

A: *Yes. The state definition includes the entire academic day from the opening bell through dismissal, including lunch and time between classes.*

Q: Can students still use school-issued laptops or tablets?

A: *Yes. District-Issued technology and approved platforms may continue to be used for educational purposes under staff direction.*

Q: Can my child bring a phone to school?

A: *The state requires that personal internet-enabled devices not be used during the school day. Grade-level expectations and storage procedures will follow Linden Public Schools' adopted policy and school procedures.*

Q: How do I reach my child?

A: *Call the school's Main Office. Staff will assist with urgent communication.*

Q: What if my child needs a phone for medical monitoring or an IEP/504 accommodation?

A: *Approved accommodations remain in effect. Families should work with the school administration to document and implement the student's device-related need.*

Q: Can a student use a device for translation?

A: *State guidance recognizes translation services as a permitted exception when needed. Families should contact the school administration regarding the approval process.*

Q: What if my child is responsible for caring for a family member?

A: *State guidance recognizes an exception for a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for a family member's care or well-being. Families should contact the school administration regarding the approval process.*

Q: What happens during a lockdown?

A: *Students should follow staff and emergency personnel directions. Unnecessary device use may interfere with safety procedures and official communications.*

Q: What happens if a student violates the rule?

A: *Violations will be addressed under Linden Public Schools' adopted policy and 5516 Student Code of Conduct using consistent, developmentally appropriate and progressive responses.*

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