

Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices Policy 5516

MPHS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ):

What is Policy 5516?

Policy 5516 is a mandated district-wide policy adopted by the Midland Park Board of Education that prohibits student use of personal internet-enabled devices on school grounds during the school day. The policy aligns with New Jersey State law (N.J.S.A. 18A:36-40b) and guidelines issued by the Commissioner of Education to foster distraction-free learning environments and support positive digital citizenship. All public school districts in New Jersey are required to follow the new law at the start of the 2026-2027 school year.

What hours are phones and other devices prohibited from being used by students?

Students are prohibited from using their devices from the start of the school day (when they enter the building) until the end of the academic day. This timeframe explicitly includes class periods, passing time in between classes, and lunch periods. Personal internet-enabled devices are strictly prohibited throughout this entire duration. Devices should not be visible throughout the entirety of the school day.

Where does this policy apply?

Once a student enters the school building in the morning, the policy applies across all "school grounds," which includes school buildings, administrative facilities, playground, outdoor common areas, and athletic fields. After the end of the day dismissal bell, students are permitted to use devices in the school building and on school grounds.

Are students permitted to use cell-phones on the school bus? Students are strongly discouraged from using cell phones on the school bus. Since monitoring student cell phone use on the school bus is extremely difficult, if a student uses a device while on a school bus, he or she must abide by all of the district and school rules regarding the appropriate use of technology.

How must personal internet-enabled devices be kept during the school day?

If a student chooses to bring a personal internet-enabled device onto school grounds, the device **must remain powered off** for the entirety of the school day. **Devices should not be visible and must be stored in student back packs, purses, or bags.** On days when students are not carrying backpacks, purses, or bags, students may store their devices in their pockets. However, if stored in pockets, devices must be powered off at all times and should not be visible. Students should not hold powered off devices in hand as they should be stored away and not visible at all times.

*Please note that students may be asked to remove their phones from their personal storage and put their phones in classroom storage devices during quizzes, tests, and exams.

What happens if a student leaves school grounds during the day (e.g., open lunch or internship)?

When a student leaves school grounds for an authorized reason such as an open lunch period or an off-campus internship they are permitted to use their personal internet-enabled device while off school grounds. However, immediately upon returning to the school building, the device must be powered off and properly stored for the remainder of the school day.

How do parents contact students during the school day?

In the event of a family emergency or for non-emergency messages, parents and families should contact the school's main office directly (via phone? Not sure if you want to include this.) rather than attempting to call or text students on personal devices.

What happens if an unplanned emergency closure occurs while devices are stored?

In the event of an unplanned emergency closure that prevents students from immediately retrieving their stored personal devices, the district will initiate a centralized, secure protocol to allow parents and students to retrieve stored devices safely and efficiently once the school building is accessible.

Under what circumstances can a student be exempted from Policy 5516?

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:36-40b and federal/state laws protecting student rights, students are permitted to use an internet-enabled device under the following eight

specific circumstances:

- To fulfill accommodations in an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- To support implementation of a Section 504 Plan.
- To implement an established student health plan monitoring or addressing a health condition (supported by medical documentation).
- For translation services needed for educational access.
- For a student caregiver routinely responsible for the care or well-being of a family member.
- When no reasonable alternative exists for a specific purpose (authorized by Superintendent, Principal, or designee).
- When required by federal or state law.
- In the event of an active emergency.

How do parents request an accommodation or exemption from the policy?

Parents seeking an accommodation must submit a formal written request to the building principal via email.

What can a student without an exemption do if they need to contact home during the school day?

Students who need to contact home should report to the main office. Students are discouraged from leaving class to contact home unless it is an emergency. For non-emergency but necessary contact with someone at home, students should report to the main office during their lunch period.

What happens if a student violates Policy 5516?

At the Jr./Sr.High School the disciplinary action is outlined below.

First Offense

- One (1) day of detention
- Parent/guardian notification
- Phone held in the main office until the end of the school day

Second Offense

- Three (3) days of detention
- Parent/guardian notification
- Phone held in the main office until retrieved by a parent or guardian

Third Offense

- Five (5) days of detention
- Parent/guardian notification
- Student must drop off his/her device at the main office at the beginning of each school day and pick up the device at the end of the school day until authorized by administration to resume normal device storage procedures.