Maine DOE PRIORITY NOTICE

PRIORITY NOTICE: Implementation of Maine's Bell-to-Bell Personal Electronic Device Policy

Dear Champions of Education,

The following information is intended to support school administrative units (SAUs) in preparing for the implementation of a new law requiring that school boards adopt and implement a policy "prohibiting student use of personal electronic devices for the duration of the school day, from starting bell to dismissal bell" by August 1, 2026.

The following language is in Part GG of the Supplemental Budget and replaces the existing language in statute, which required a policy related to the use of personal electronic devices:

"By August 1, 2026, a school board shall adopt and implement a policy prohibiting student use of personal electronic devices for the duration of the school day, from starting bell to dismissal bell. The policy must restrict student use of cellular telephones and other personal electronic devices with Internet or cellular network capabilities. The Department of Education, in coordination with the Maine School Management Association or a successor organization and other relevant stakeholders, shall make available a model policy for school boards. The model policy must include exceptions for compliance with a student's individualized education program, a documented accommodation under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 United States Code, Section 794 (2026) regarding an individual student, the delivery of prescribed medical care as outlined in a student's individualized health care plan and language support services for a student who is an emergent English language learner when no other translation option is available."

Required Action

All school boards must adopt a compliant local policy no later than August 1, 2026.

Scope of the Law

The law applies to:

- Cell phones
- Smartwatches
- Other personal electronic devices with internet or cellular network capabilities

The legislation establishes a "bell-to-bell" expectation, meaning student use of these devices must be prohibited for the duration of the school day.

Model Policy Available

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) and Maine School Management Association (MSMA) collaborated on a model policy, which is available here: Model Policy JICJ – Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices in Schools.

Required Exceptions

Local policies must include exceptions for:

- A student's Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Documented Section 504 accommodations
- Medical care needs
- Translation needs when no other option is available

Additional exceptions may be authorized in emergency situations, consistent with local health and safety procedures.

Maine DOE Implementation Guidance

The Maine DOE has developed Implementation Guidance intended to support thoughtful, student-centered implementation of bell-to-bell policies. The guidance emphasizes that while personal electronic device use is being prohibited, technology remains an important component of modern teaching and learning.

The guidance includes recommendations related to:

- Intentional and instructional use of school-managed technology
- Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) considerations
- Equity and access for all learners
- Restorative and educational approaches to implementation and discipline
- Communication, staff training, and implementation planning

The guidance encourages SAUs to distinguish between prohibited personal electronic device use and purposeful instructional technology use, while continuing to support digital literacy, accessibility, and technology-rich learning environments.

Restorative and Educational Approaches

The Maine DOE encourages SAUs to approach implementation through clear expectations, consistent routines, and restorative practices that prioritize instruction, reflection, and relationship-centered responses to policy violations whenever possible.

Recommended practices include:

- Explicitly teaching expectations and routines
- Progressive and educational responses to violations
- Restorative conversations and reflection
- Family engagement and collaborative problem-solving

Funding Support

The Maine DOE will provide funding for SAUs to support costs associated with prohibiting the use of personal electronic devices during the school day. A total of $350,000 has been allocated by the Maine Legislature for this initiative.

Funds will be distributed to SAUs that operate schools serving grades 6 through 12, based on October 1, 2025, attending enrollment counts (linked here). Distribution of funds to those SAUs will occur after the enactment of the Supplemental Budget on July 29, 2026. Funds should be recorded in each SAU as Revenue Code 3290 Miscellaneous State Receipt with a fund code in the range of 2200 - 2214 – Special Revenue Fund – State Grants.

Additional Support Opportunities

To support implementation efforts statewide, the Maine DOE and Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention will offer implementation support opportunities throughout the summer and fall. Additional information regarding webinars, technical assistance, and implementation resources will be shared in the coming weeks.

Questions

Questions regarding implementation may be directed to Maine DOE Learning Through Technology team coordinator Emma-Marie Banks at emma-marie.banks@maine.gov. Additional guidance and resources will continue to be shared on the Maine DOE website.

Thank you.

Sent May 20, 2026

Like Tweet

Maine DOE Newsroom on Twitter | Forward to a Friend

Maine Department of Education | Maine DOE Newsroom | Contact Us

Subscribe to News Releases | Update Subscription Preferences

This email was sent to rhersom@msad49.org

why did I get this? unsubscribe from this list update subscription preferences

https://mailchi.mp/maine/cu5lemq6y0-1594470?e=723856b1e4