



## **POLICY 5695 Frequently Asked Questions**

*Updated July 30, 2025*

*(This document will be updated periodically.)*

**Please review Policy 5695 [HERE](#).**

### **Policy Overview:**

***Q: Are personal electronic devices that are not internet-enabled (e.g., headphones, flip phones, smart watches, Fit Bits) banned under this policy?***

A: Yes.

***Q: Why has the District been so slow to implement a policy?***

A: The district monitored developments to state law on cell phone bans, electing to wait until the state passed a law in its last budget process (spring 2025). We recognized that this policy would mean a shift in the way things are done, and we were hoping to avoid having to make big sweeping changes to procedures for students and staff multiple times in a short time span if it could be avoided. We were also looking to make thoughtful decisions about the use of all technology, not just cell phones. For information on policy committee discussions on this, please see the information posted on the policy [webpage](#).

***Q: How is this policy not just more of the same?***

A: The new policy:

- Aligns with NYS mandates, especially regarding the full-day prohibition and equity reporting;
- Significantly expands structure, clarity, and accountability, including roles for all stakeholders;
- Focuses more on student education and equity rather than strict punitive discipline; and
- removes teacher-level discretion in favor of a top-down, administrator-controlled exception process.

***Q: When will the regulations mentioned in the policy be available for parents/guardians and students?***

A: We anticipate that the regulations will be complete by the end of August and will be shared with all stakeholders at that time

### **Parent/Guardian – Student Communication:**

***Q: How can I contact my children while they are at school?***

A: As the policy states, during the school day, parents/guardians may contact their children by calling the school office, emailing the school office, or emailing their children at their district-assigned email address, which students in grades 6 - 12 can access on their district-issued device.

***Q: Is it a school requirement that my child bring their cell phone to school in the first place?***

A: No.

### **Storage:**

***Q: Will the school purchase locks for student lockers?***

A: The district will purchase locks for high school lockers. The middle school lockers have built-in locks. The district is not planning to purchase locks for Springhurst at this time.

***Q: Does Springhurst have lockers?***

A: Yes. 4th and 5th-graders are provided lockers at Springhurst.

***Q: What if a student in K-3 has a phone? Where is it stored?***

A: Students must store their devices in their designated classroom cubbies.

***Q: Can I purchase my own lockable pouch for my child's cell phone?***

A: Yes, but it must be stored in the child's locker, and the district will not be responsible for locking or unlocking the pouch.

***Q: Why can't students keep their phones in their backpacks?***

A: The law and NYS Education Department funding requirements do not permit students to keep their phones in backpacks.

***Q: How will expecting students to keep cell phones in their lockers actually work? Won't they just visit their lockers throughout the day to check their phones?***

A: Staff and administrators will circulate throughout hallways during passing periods and class time. Parents/guardians should discuss the policy and rules with their children and set expectations for compliance.

***Q: What if students don't put their devices in their lockers and just keep them in their backpacks?***

A: Students are expected to follow the policy by storing their personal electronic devices in their lockers (or cubbies for younger students) for the entire school day. Keeping devices in backpacks does not meet the storage requirement, and students risk having their phones confiscated if the device is seen.

This rule is in place to create a distraction-free learning environment, and consistent enforcement helps ensure fairness for all students. If a student does not store their device as required, administrators may confiscate the device and follow the consequences that will be outlined in the forthcoming regulations.

***Q: Will administrators be searching students for personal electronic devices?***

A: No.

### **Exceptions**

***Q: Will students be allowed to use personal computers at school under this policy?***

A: As the policy states, students may be permitted to use their personal electronic devices during the school day on school grounds for specific educational purposes if the following criteria are met:

- With the approval of the superintendent, the building principal has authorized the use of personal electronic devices (e.g., laptop computers) for specific academic classes or co-curricular clubs;
  - The student has registered the device with the district in accordance with district procedures; and
  - The student uses the device to access the internet or authorized applications through the district's network, under the terms of Policy 4526: Computer Use in Instruction.
- Additional information will be available in the forthcoming regulations.

***Q: Will high school students be allowed to take their phones off campus at lunch?***

A: Yes. Additional information will be available in the forthcoming regulations.

### **Consequences for Students Who Violate the Policy and Regulations:**

***Q: What will the consequences be for students who use their phones during the school day? How will these consequences be enforced?***

A: Building administrative staff are chiefly responsible for enforcing this policy, but all employees are expected to assist in enforcement. Any employee who sees a student accessing/using an internet-enabled device will refer that student to a building administrator, and, as the policy states, “administrators will confiscate personal electronic devices that are not stored in accordance with this policy.”

As is spelled out in the [law](#), the district may not impose suspension from school *if the sole ground* for the suspension is that the student accessed a personal electronic device as prohibited by this policy. The district may, however, impose consequences for associated prohibited behavior under the district's Code of Conduct (e.g., failing to comply with the reasonable directions of teachers, school administrators or other school employees) up to and including detention, in-school suspension, and exclusion from extracurricular activities. Alternatively, the district may refer students to district counseling staff and/or assign homework on the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, smartphones in school, or other relevant topics.

When students violate this policy, administrators will discuss with the students and their parents/guardians:

- the aims of this policy;
- the benefits of a distraction-free environment;
- the reasons students did not follow this policy; and
- how the district can help the student contribute to a distraction-free environment.

The superintendent is directed to develop regulations for the implementation of this policy, including specific consequences for students who violate the policy.

### **Funding:**

***Q: I understand the district is eligible to receive funding from the state to implement this law. Why won't it spend it on lockable pouches? How will it spend that funding?***

A: Among all the forty districts surveyed in the Lower Hudson region, only two plan on using state funding to purchase lockable pouches. Hastings-on-Hudson, for example, will be purchasing pouches because their students do not have access to lockers. Our district will be spending

state funding on school-issued locks for the high school lockers. The plan to use lockers has a few important benefits, including:

- It is environmentally friendly and financially responsible because every student in our school is already assigned a locker, and the need to replace locks should be both rare and affordable.
- Having technology in student lockers means that students will not be distracted by the mere presence of the device on them or in their bookbags.
- State funding covers the full cost of the locks.
- Keeping phones in lockers helps the district avoid congestion issues around storage devices or locking/unlocking stations.

It is important to note that the district will be in full compliance with the law. If at any time it becomes clear that storing personal electronic devices in lockers is ineffective for a critical mass of our students, the board will revisit the policy and adjust accordingly.

***Q: Is the Dobbs Ferry Schools Foundation providing money for this policy?***

A: No. It is not our intention to ask for assistance in paying for storage solutions because:

- We can purchase locks by using the funding we receive from the state;
- Managing device storage is part of how the district handles day-to-day operations and student discipline. If the state doesn't cover certain costs, it's up to the district, not the Foundation, to fund them;
- The cell phone storage system is a compliance measure for a state mandate, not an educational enhancement;
- Using money from the Foundation diverts money that could be used on educational innovation and curriculum;
- Using money from the Foundation for device storage does not align with the Foundation's mission of supporting educational enrichment; and
- Using donor funds for compliance could discourage future donations.

We are extremely grateful for the funds that come through the Foundation, and we will continue to be thoughtful about the grants for which we apply.