[See POLICY ALERT Nos. 190, 207, 234, and 238]

5516 STUDENT USE OF INTERNET-ENABLED DEVICES

The Board of Education prohibits student use of internet-enabled devices on school grounds during the school day in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:36-40b. The Board adopts this Policy and Regulation 5516 pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:36-40b. and the guidelines developed by the Commissioner of Education concerning student use of internet-enabled devices during regular school hours, on a school bus, or during school-sponsored events when the student is under the direct supervision of a teaching staff member or employee of the Board.

For the purpose of this Policy and Regulation 5516:

1. "Bell-to-bell" means the timeframe when the bell rings at the start of the school day until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the academic day. Bell-to-bell includes time in between class periods and lunch.

2. "Digital citizenship" means the development of thoughtful, empathetic citizens who can wrestle with important ethical questions at the intersection of technology and humanity. Model digital citizens focus on using technology to make communities better, engage respectfully online with others, and leverage technology to amplify voices and perspectives. They are careful to determine the validity of online sources of information and are always respectful of ideas different than their own.

3. "District-managed tools" means school-issued technology or platforms used for educational purposes (e.g., laptops, tablets, learning management systems, etc.).

4. "Internet-enabled device" means any device capable of connecting to the internet and accessing online content (e.g., smartphones, tablets, smartwatches, smart glasses, etc.), including social media applications. An internet-enabled device does not include an internet-enabled device provided by the Board when used for educational purposes.

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5. "Non-internet-enabled device" means a basic communication device that is not capable of connecting to the internet or enabling the user to access content on the internet (e.g., basic flip-style cell phones, two-way radio/walkie-talkie, etc.).

6. "School grounds" means and includes land, portions of land, structures, buildings, and vehicles, not to include school buses, owned, operated, or used for the provision of academic or extracurricular programs sponsored by the district or community provider and structures that support these buildings, such as school wastewater treatment facilities, generating facilities, and other central facilities including, but not limited to, kitchens and maintenance shops. "School grounds" also includes athletic stadiums; swimming pools; any associated structures or related equipment tied to such facilities including, but not limited to, grandstands; greenhouses; garages; facilities used for non-instructional or non-educational purposes; and any structure, building, or facility used solely for school administration. "School grounds" also includes other facilities as defined in N.J.A.C. 6A:26-1.2; playgrounds; and other recreational places owned by local municipalities, private entities, or other individuals during those times when the school district has exclusive use of a portion of such land.

A student's use of an internet-enabled device on a school bus or during school-sponsored events when the student is under the direct supervision of a teaching staff member or employee of the Board will be in accordance with the age-appropriate and grade-level differentiated requirements outlined in Regulation 5516.

District-issued technology and sponsored platforms are permitted to be used in classrooms for educational purposes. The district may use existing information technology systems to proactively establish and monitor restrictions to the district's network. The district may utilize device management software to restrict or monitor student browsing on school-issued devices or from devices connecting to the district's Wi-Fi. **If the district chooses to use software or other technology to block students' use of their internet-enabled devices, the district may collaborate with the local municipality to determine that there are no safety or security concerns.** The Board shall notify students and parents about the monitoring practices in Policy and Regulation 2361.

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The Board shall assume no responsibility for the security of or damage to a student's internet-enabled device brought onto school grounds. If a student brings an internet-enabled device to school, the internet-enabled device must remain off and may be required to be stored in a storage system as indicated in Regulation 5516. An internet-enabled device required to be stored in a district storage system shall be password protected by the student so only the student owner of the internet-enabled device can use the internet-enabled device.

The district shall provide instruction aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) on Digital Citizenship and shall ensure classroom instructional time is entirely free of internet-enabled devices. Teachers shall not incorporate students' personal technology into lesson plans. All digital engagement shall occur through district-managed tools and devices.

The district shall communicate behavioral expectations for student use of internet-enabled devices to students and their parent(s) and reinforce these behavioral expectations throughout the school year. Communication of this Policy and Regulation 5516 may include, but not be limited to, school-wide notifications, signage, and reinforcement as part of classroom routines.

The district shall comply with all applicable State and Federal laws that protect the rights of students with disabilities or health related needs, including, but not limited to, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Students shall be permitted to use their internet-enabled device on school grounds during the school day, on the school bus, and at school-sponsored events in the following circumstances in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:36-40b.:

1. To fulfill accommodations provided in a student's individualized education program (IEP);

2. To support the implementation of a 504 Plan;

3. To implement a student health plan established to monitor or address a student's health condition (upon submission by a parent of documentation from a healthcare professional indicating that the use of an internet-enabled device is necessary for the health or well-being of the student);

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4. For translation services;

5. For a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care or well-being of a family member;

6. When no reasonable alternative to the use of the internet-enabled device for a specific purpose exists (upon authorization by the Superintendent, Principal, or designee);

7. When required by law; and

8. In the event of an emergency.

The **Superintendent** ~~Principal~~ or designee will inform students and parents of their right to request an internet-enabled device accommodation. The parent(s) shall submit a written request to the **Superintendent** ~~Principal~~ or designee. The written request shall include, but not be limited to, supporting documentation from the student's physician, child study team, and/or any other documentation as required by the **Superintendent** ~~Principal~~ or designee as to why the student requires an internet-enabled device accommodation. The **Superintendent** ~~Principal~~ or designee shall inform the parent(s) of the approval or denial of the written request for an internet-enabled device accommodation within five school days of receiving the written request. The **Superintendent** ~~Principal~~ or designee shall base such an accommodation determination on documented **educational,** medical, developmental, **accessibility,** or other needs **or specific purposes** and review them on a regular basis.

[Optional

A supervising staff member may submit a request for an internet-enabled device accommodation for their students to use their internet-enabled device for a specific purpose. The supervising staff member shall submit the written request to the Superintendent or designee at least ____ school days before the anticipated date of use and shall include, but not be limited to, supporting documentation as to why no reasonable alternatives exist for a student to use an internet-enabled device; the students who will be granted the accommodation; and the date of the activity. The Superintendent or designee shall inform the supervising staff member of the approval or denial of the written request for an internet-enabled device accommodation within ____ school days of receiving the written request.]

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The **Superintendent** ~~Principal~~ or designee may involve school nurses, case managers, and IEP/504 coordinators in planning for and implementing internet-enabled device accommodations. Staff responsible for implementation shall have ready access to documentation of the accommodation and shall ensure their enforcement strategies minimize disruption. The district shall develop and disseminate clear procedures to ensure staff implement internet-enabled device accommodations confidentially. Staff training may be necessary to recognize and honor valid internet-enabled device accommodations without drawing unnecessary attention to the student. Staff shall treat students with an internet-enabled device accommodation with sensitivity and dignity. As appropriate, the district may develop one-page "internet-enabled device use summaries" for staff to ensure awareness while maintaining student confidentiality.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1, the district has developed and implemented comprehensive plans, procedures, and mechanisms that provide for safety and security in the district's schools. School safety plans include thoughtful integration of internet-enabled device procedures during emergencies or perceived threats. The district has incorporated clear expectations into school safety plans, emergency drill protocols, and staff professional development.

In the event of an unplanned emergency closure that prevents students from retrieving stored internet-enabled devices, the district shall develop and communicate a clear, centralized protocol for retrieving stored internet-enabled devices safely and efficiently once the school building is accessible.

In the event of a family emergency or for non-emergency communication, families shall contact the school's main office directly rather than reaching out to students during the school day. District staff will then follow local notification procedures to ensure the student receives the information in a timely and appropriate manner.

When a student leaves school grounds, whether for an open lunch period, internship, or other purpose, the student may be permitted to use their internet-enabled device. However, upon returning to school grounds, the student's internet-enabled device must be stored for the remainder of the school day in accordance with Regulation 5516.

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POLICY GUIDE

The district shall ensure students, parents, and school staff members are aware of this Policy and Regulation 5516 and understand how this Policy and Regulation 5516 apply to them. The Board shall include information about this Policy and Regulation 5516 in student handbooks.

District staff shall apply clear, age-appropriate consequences and use strategies to redirect students who attempt to use internet-enabled devices. Discipline and consequences shall be addressed in Regulation 5516.

No student enrolled as a student of an elementary or secondary school, knowingly and without the express written permission of the Board, its delegated authority, or any Principal, shall bring or possess any remotely activated paging device on any property used for school purposes, at any time and regardless of whether school is in session or others are present pursuant to N.J.S.A. 2C:33-19.

N.J.S.A. 2C:33-19.
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-40a.; 18A:36-40b.
Guidance for Schools on Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices,
New Jersey Department of Education, January 2026
Guidance for Schools on Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices,
Frequently Asked Questions

Adopted:

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