

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: New Jersey Department of Education Releases Updated Guidance on Bell-to-Bell Policies to Prohibit Student Use of Cell Phones in Schools

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TRENTON – The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) today released updated [Guidance for Schools on Student Use of Internet-Enabled Devices](https://www.nj.gov/education/safety/sandp/digital/) (<https://www.nj.gov/education/safety/sandp/digital/>).

to assist local school boards as they adopt bell-to-bell policies banning student use of cell phones and other internet-enabled devices during the school day.

Recently signed legislation (P.L.2025, c.195 (https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S4000/3695_R3.PDF)) requires each local board of education to adopt such bell-to-bell policies prohibiting students' non-academic use of cell phones and personal internet-enabled devices during the school day, with certain exceptions. The local bell-to-bell policies are required to be aligned to the NJDOE's guidance.

"By removing cell phones from New Jersey schools, we are ensuring our classrooms are a place for learning and engagement, not distracting screens that detract from academic performance," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "We are reaffirming our commitment to youth mental health, while providing the resources our education community needs to seamlessly implement phone-free policies in the upcoming school year. I thank Commissioner Dehmer and the New Jersey Department of Education for creating these guidelines."

"Building on the landmark legislation recently signed, these guidelines are designed to help New Jersey's school boards develop policies that will foster a positive school climate, improve academic engagement, and protect student well-being," **said Kevin Dehmer, Commissioner of Education**. "These guidelines were developed thoughtfully, with significant stakeholder feedback, and are structured specifically to allow for local flexibility based on the needs and capacity of each local school community."

This guidance provides examples of storage options such as locked pouch systems, school-managed lockers or bins, classroom-based storage, or student-managed storage such as backpacks or lockers. While all boards of education are required to adopt a bell-to-bell policy that complies with state law, districts will retain flexibility in determining how their policies will be implemented and will be able to make decisions on device storage, supervision, and enforcement that best fit their local needs.

The guidance announced today outlines statutory requirements, policy considerations, and implementation


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strategies, and it includes developmentally appropriate recommendations across various grade levels.

The NJDOE will continue to develop additional resources to assist local school districts as they implement bell-to-bell policies aligned with the guidance. These resources may include implementation tools, sample materials, and vignettes describing district implementation strategies. Additional information will be shared as resources become available.

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