



# WAYLAND-COHOCTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

— Excellence Starts Here —

**MISSION:** *To ensure high levels of learning for all students*

**VISION:** *To continuously develop our capacity to function as a collaborative culture.*

7/30/25

Dear Wayland-Cohocton Families,

As we prepare for New York State's new guidance limiting student cellphone use during school hours, we want to thank the 238 parents and caregivers who shared their thoughts through our ThoughtExchange survey. Your feedback—165 thoughtful comments and over 4,000 ratings—has been vital in shaping our next steps.

**What we heard from you:**

- Families want students to stay connected—but without constant dependence on phones.
- Concerns about safety, consistency in enforcement, and fairness came through clearly.
- Suggestions included better communication through school phones, messaging apps, and clear emergency protocols.

Below, we've provided answers to your most common questions and concerns you shared with us. Our hope is to make this transition as smooth and supportive as possible for students and families alike.

---

**Why is this change being made?**

This change is required by NY State law and it applies to all public school districts. We've also seen a sharp rise in student anxiety, conflict, and classroom distractions linked to cellphone and social media use. The new policy aims to reduce these risks and help students focus on learning, social connection, and well-being during the school day.

---

## What will the daily procedure look like?

- Middle and High School students upon arrival will turn their phones off and store them in their lockers.
  - Elementary students (PreSchool - 4th grade) are expected to keep any personal internet enabled devices in designated areas in their classrooms.
- 

## How will I reach my child during the school day?

All classrooms are equipped with phones that can make outside calls. Students have always been allowed to use these phones with teacher permission. If needed, families can also contact the school office, and messages will be delivered promptly. School staff are always available to support students with urgent needs. There are also dedicated phones in each of the main offices for student use.

---

## What about emergencies or lockdown situations?

In a true emergency, it's critical that school communication channels remain open. Emergency services rely on timely and accurate information, and unfortunately, misinformation from students using personal phones has caused confusion in past events.

The district has systems in place to notify families via phone and text. Staff may also receive internal alerts to coordinate responses. Keeping phones off during emergencies helps ensure the best, fastest response possible.

---

## Will the new rules be applied fairly to all students?

It is easy to anticipate that this change in practice will require a transitional phase as students become more independent from their devices as it is also expected there will be some resistance. The district will work diligently to make sure all situations are addressed and dealt with similarly across buildings. The following chart will be presented to staff and students at the beginning of the year. [Procedure Chart](#)

---

## What if my child needs their phone for medical reasons?

Students who require access to a personal device due to a medical need, such as managing diabetes or tracking symptoms, may be eligible for an exception. Please contact your building principal or school

nurse to begin the documentation process. Devices approved through an IEP or 504 Plan will continue to be permitted as required by law.

---

### **Can students use devices on the bus?**

Yes. The policy applies during the school day on school grounds. Students may use personal devices before entering school in the morning and after they are dismissed, including on the bus. However, misuse of devices on the bus may still be addressed under the Code of Conduct.

---

### **Will staff also limit their phone use?**

We expect our staff to model respectful device use and support the same focused learning environment we expect of students. Cellphones will only be used by adults if required for their job responsibilities—such as administrators, counselors, or safety officers, who may use phones to manage student needs or safety concerns.

---

### **What if my child is involved in sports or extracurriculars and needs to tell me about a change in schedule?**

Students will be allowed to use their phones at the end of the school day to update families. Additionally, coaches and activity leaders are being asked to use the **Rooms** app and our **athletics calendar service**, which offers automatic schedule alerts. In urgent cases, parents can always call the school office, and we will make sure your child gets the message.

---

### **What if my child has a medical or exceptional need for a device?**

We recognize that some students may require special accommodations for health or safety reasons. If your child has a documented need for phone access, please reach out to your building principal. These requests will be reviewed carefully and with compassion.

---

## What's next?

We know this will take time. However, we do hope to see that the benefits will outweigh the negatives. Students will need support as they become less dependent on their devices—and we're prepared to help. Our goal is to do what is necessary to improve student well-being and opportunities to improve growth and educational opportunities. The benefits of this change are meaningful: fewer distractions, less social pressure, and a stronger focus on academics and well-being.

We are grateful for your partnership as we work together to create distraction-free learning environments where every child can thrive.

Please reach out to your school principal if you have any questions about the cellphone restrictions.

Respectfully,

**Wayland-Cohocton Administration**

Resources: [Distraction-Free Schools \(NYS Release\)](#); [More Learning, Less Scrolling : Creating Distraction-Free Schools report](#)