

Mrs. Traci Ferreira, Superintendent of Schools

600 Route 55, PO Box 249, Eldred, N.Y. 12732

Tel: 845.456.1010 ■ Fax 845.456.1113

Email: ferreirat@eldred.k12.ny.us

Cell Phone Ban Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are you doing this?

The “WHY” for a distraction free environment or cell phone ban:

1. Improving Academic Performance→ since 2020, educational research has shown that cell phone use in the classroom is a significant source of distraction. Students who frequently use their cellphones in class tend to have lower academic performance, and have difficulty with information retention and understanding.
2. Enhancing Mental Health→ Excessive cellphone use has been connected to increase anxiety and stress among students. There are indicators that suggest the pressures of constant connectivity and social media can lead to mental health issues. Students who use cell phones prodigiously are more likely to experience social isolation and depression.
3. Creating a Better School and Classroom Environment→ Cell Phones disrupt the school and classroom environment, making it challenging for students to focus on learning. Research has shown a link between cellphones and increased incidents of cheating and reduced participation in class discussions. Students without cellphones in the school and classroom improve the learning environment and overall school climate by promoting more face-face interactions among students and staff.
4. Phone-free environments do not compromise student safety→ Cell phones can negatively impact school safety. Here are just a few examples of the negative impact: cell phones have been used for making threats to individual students, cyberbullying, instigating fights and other school safety disruptions. Students using cell phones during an unfolding emergency can distract students from hearing correct emergency procedures. Student cell phone use during an emergency can impede public safety response by accelerating parental arrival at the scene during times when officials may be attempting to move students to another location.
5. Governor Hochul initiated this ban with the state budget for the 2025-2026 school year.

2. What constitutes a personal communication device or PCD?

Communication technology is always changing. Basically, we are talking about items that interfere with teaching and learning, relationships, and mental health, including cell phones, smart watches, headphones, etc.

3. Can students bring in non-internet enabled PCDs to school?

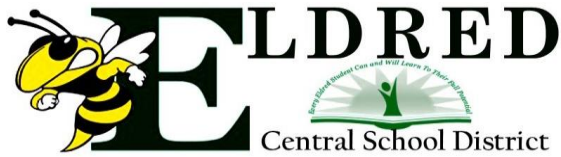
Yes- students can use non-internet enabled personal communication devices in school. These “kid-safe” PCDs are acceptable under Education Law 2803. Please check with the building principal regarding the approval procedure.

4. Can students use cell phones before and after school?

Yes

5. Can students use cell phones on school buses?

Yes.



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6. Do students that go to VoTech take their phones with them?

Yes. Students that leave to go to VoTech will take their phones with them. VoTech has their own cell phone policy.

7. Are there exceptions to this rule?

Yes. Students who have medical conditions or special education plans that require a cell phone access will have a differentiated plan in place to meet their needs. Families should contact the school principal to set up a meeting.

8. How can students get messages to families?

Students can make phone calls from the main office.

9. How can families get messages to students?

Families can call/email the main office.

10. Will teachers and staff be using cell phones during the school day?

Teachers and staff members will model "off and away" so they can focus on the classroom instruction.

11. How will students contact authorities if there is an emergency?

Students should go to a teacher or staff member. There are also phones in nearly every instructional space.

12. What happens in a safety or weather event?

Families should rely on factual information from the school district. Currently, Eldred CSD protocols include the frequent use of phone, email, text and website/social media notification for sharing information and updates with families.

13. What happens if a student uses a phone inappropriately (cyberbullying, harassment, etc.)?

This hasn't changed from previous years and depends on what the inappropriate behavior is. Consequences could range from suspension to expulsion and may include court or legal action.

14. Can student backpacks be used as storage for cellphones?

No. Backpacks alone are not permissible for storage. Education Law 2803 states that policies should make clear that continuous student possession of devices, either on their person or in backpacks, is not adequate to prohibit student use as defined in the law.

15. Can lockers be used as storage for cellphones?

Schools may utilize lockers as a dedicated storage method, though to be in compliance with the law, policies must be crafted to effectively prohibit the unsanctioned use of covered devices across the entire school day. Allowing continuous and unsupervised student access to covered devices when stored in a locker would not meet the law's objective of prohibiting unsanctioned use across the school day and school grounds.