

Putnam Central School District

Distraction Free School Policy

School districts, charter schools, and BOCES must adopt a policy outlining prohibitions of internet-enabled devices during the school day by August 1, 2025, per New York State Education Department Regulations.

The Putnam Central School District will not permit any unsanctioned use of smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices on school grounds in K-12 schools for the entire school day (from “bell to bell”), including classroom time and other settings like lunch and study hall periods.

If students arrive at school with internet-enabled devices, students will be provided device storage lockers where the devices will remain from the entire school day (bell to bell).

Parents and/or Guardians who need to contact their child/student, may do so by contacting the main office at 518-547-8266. If the issue is deemed to be that of an emergency, the office will locate and provide immediate communication access to the student. For items not deemed to be emergency situations, the student will be directed to return the call at their next available break in schedule.

Exemptions to this policy will include:

- Authorization by a teacher, principal, or the school district, charter school, or BOCES for a specific educational purpose.
- Instances where necessary for the management of a student’s healthcare.
- Usage in the event of an emergency.
- Usage for translation services.
- Usage on a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor, for a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member.
- Or, where required by law.

Additionally, the policy may not prohibit the use of an internet-enabled device where it is included in the student’s individualized education program (IEP) or section 504 plans.

Definitions

Internet-enabled devices: Internet-enabled devices include any smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling access to content on the internet, including social media applications. Internet-enabled devices do not include the following:

- Non-internet enabled devices such as cellular phones or other communication devices not capable of connecting to the internet or enabling the individual to access content on the internet.
- Internet-enabled devices supplied by the school district, charter school, or board of cooperative educational services (BOCES) that are used for an educational purpose.
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School Day: The school day shall mean the entirety of every instructional day during all instructional and non-instructional time. This includes homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time.

School Grounds: The school grounds shall mean in or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a district elementary, intermediate, junior high, vocational, or high school, a charter school, or a BOCES facility.