



Distraction Free School Policy
St HOPE Leadership Academy Charter School
2025-26

In May 2025, a new law was enacted that prohibits students from using non-school issued internet-enabled devices during the school day while on school grounds. The law applies to all school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, and charter schools, including St HOPE Leadership Academy. This policy was developed in consultation with St HOPE Leadership Academy's stakeholders, including school leadership and staff, parents and students.

Beginning in 2015, St HOPE Leadership Academy established and implemented a policy regarding cellular phones and will now expand it to include all non-school issued internet-enabled devices.

Scholars may not use internet-enabled devices in school. Each morning, scholars who bring an internet-enabled device(s) to school will be required to turn it off and place it in a locked box upon arrival. The scholar will retrieve their internet-enabled device(s) at the end of the day from an administrator or staff member on duty.

If a scholar refuses to put their internet-enabled device(s) in the locked box or is dishonest about the whereabouts of their device(s), then the school may require the parent to pick-up the scholar's device(s) from school. In addition, they will meet with a member of the scholar support team to determine the why and create a plan for how to better use their technology, especially if it negatively affects their participation in and performance during academic classes. If the problem persists, and if necessary, the parent(s) and/or guardian of the scholar may be contacted in order to include them in the modification of the plan.

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Internet-enabled device(s): smartphone, tablet, smartwatch or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling access to content on the internet, including social media applications, including, without limitation, computing devices such as laptops, iPad and tablets; portable music and entertainment devices such as iPod and gaming consoles.

Non-internet enabled device(s): cellular phone or other communication device not capable of connecting to the internet or enabling the student to access the internet.

Parent: a student's parent(s) or guardian(s) or person(s) in any parental or custodial relationship to the student, or any individual designated by the parent to act in loco parentis

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School Day: The entirety of the school day (including all non-instructional time during the school day such as homeroom period, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time).

School Grounds: All building structures, athletic playing fields, playgrounds or land contained within the real property boundary line of the school.

Students shall not use internet-enabled devices during the school day on school grounds unless such use is subject to an exception set forth in this policy. This policy does not preclude the use of (i) non-internet-enabled devices; or (ii) internet-enabled devices supplied by the school for educational services that are used for an educational purpose.

Exceptions

1. If authorized by a teacher or administrator for a specific educational purpose;
2. Where necessary for the management of a student's healthcare;
3. In the event of an emergency;
4. For translation services;
5. On a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a school psychologist, school social work or school counsel, for a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member;
6. Where required by law.

Students will be permitted to use an internet-enabled device where the use is documented on an: a) Individualized Education Program (IEP); or b) Section 504 Plan.

A parent may make a request under one of the above exceptions to the Principal. Any healthcare related exception must also include documentation from a healthcare professional affirming such need.

On-Site Storage of Internet-Enabled Devices Including Cell Phones

Students must store their Internet-enabled devices in designated on-site storage areas during the school day. On-site storage areas may include, but are not limited to, ***a secure box that will be open during a typical arrival window and secured and locked for the duration of the school day.***

When scholars arrive, they will log their attendance and immediately place their Internet-enabled devices in a secure box that, during arrival, will be actively monitored by a St HOPE employee and then secured and locked for the duration of the school day. Internet-enabled devices can be retrieved at the end of the school day, or when picked up early by a parent or guardian, by requesting it from said secure box, which will be actively monitored by a St HOPE employee throughout the retrieval process.

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Methods for Parents to Contact Students During the School Day

To accommodate necessary communication from parents, parents may use the following methods to contact their student during school hours while adhering to this policy:

- Option 1: Contact the Main Office at 212-283-1204.
- Option 2: Contact the Director of Operations at 646-599-1839.
- Option 3: Contact a member of our staff via email or phone, as listed on the “Staff Contact” roster communicated during the Family Fair and initial parent communication when school begins.

Student Discipline for Accessing Internet-Enabled Devices During the School Day

St HOPE Leadership Academy is prohibited from suspending a student solely for accessing internet-enabled devices in violation of this policy. *Please refer to the 2025-26 Student Family Handbook for the school's next steps when responding to student discipline in regards to this policy.* Some uses of internet-enabled devices will constitute a separate violation of the Code of Conduct, other School policies, or in some the most serious cases, the law. St HOPE Leadership Academy will cooperate with law enforcement officials as appropriate.

Security of Devices

St HOPE Leadership Academy will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the School but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. St HOPE Leadership Academy shall not be responsible for any personal device that is lost, stolen or damaged during the School Day or at school-sponsored activities. Any lost, stolen or damaged personal device should be reported immediately to the Principal.

Posting and Translation of Policy

As required by law, this policy will be available in a clearly visible and accessible location on St HOPE Leadership Academy's website. Translations of the policy into the 12 most common non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the state will be provided upon request by a student or parent.

Reporting and Mitigation Action Plan

Beginning September 1, 2026 and annually thereafter, St HOPE Leadership Academy will publish an annual report on its website detailing enforcement of this policy during the prior school year. This report will include non-identifiable demographic data of students who have faced disciplinary action for non-compliance and analysis of any demographic disparities in enforcement of this policy. If a statistically significant disparate enforcement impact is identified, the report will include a mitigation action plan.

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