



STUDENTS AND PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY

Harlem Village Academies recognizes that students may have personal electronic devices that can perform different functions. Such devices include “internet-enabled devices” defined as: any smartphone, tablet, smartwatch or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling the user to access content on the internet, including social media applications, but do not include any such device supplied by Harlem Village Academies (HVA, “the school”) for educational purposes. These devices can create significant distractions to the school environment, negatively impact student mental health, contribute to disciplinary infractions, and reduce student engagement. Additionally, in an emergency, the use of personal electronic devices can distract students from following the directions of staff or emergency responders, contribute to the spread of misinformation, create congestion in the emergency response system, and interfere with the school’s emergency response protocols.

Generally, HVA is not responsible for stolen, lost or damaged personal electronic devices brought to school.

Communication with Parents/Persons in Parental Relation

During the school day, to minimize distractions, parents (which, for purposes of this policy, includes people in parental relation) may contact their children via the following methods: calling the school office, or using the communication app/web portal. Students may contact their parents by calling from their school's main office or nurse's office. HVA will notify parents in writing of the communication protocol at the beginning of each school year and upon enrollment within the school.

Device Access and Storage

As required by Education Law §2803, this policy prohibits student use of internet-enabled devices during the school day (including all classes, homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time) on school grounds (any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the boundary of a school or district or BOCES facility), unless under an exception (e.g., IEP/Section 504 or as permitted below).

1. At the elementary school level, students are discouraged from bringing personal, internet-enabled devices to school. Any device that is brought to school must be silenced and kept in a classroom or school storage container.
2. At the middle school level, student devices must be silenced and stored in a classroom or school storage container.
3. At the high school level, student devices must be silenced and stored in a classroom or school storage container.

Administrators and staff may also restrict use of electronic devices during school events and activities held outside of the school day and/or off school grounds.

Exceptions for Specific Purposes

Use of internet-enabled devices must be permitted where included in a student's Individualized Education Program, Section 504 plan, or where required by law. Additionally, the district permits the use of internet-enabled devices in the event of an emergency, and under the following circumstances:

1. Where necessary to manage a student's healthcare (e.g., diabetes, asthma, medication, etc.)
2. For translation services; and/or

3. For students who are routinely responsible for the care and wellbeing of a family member (on a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by the school principal or his/her designee.)

Parents may request an exception for their children to use internet-enabled devices during the school day as listed above. Requests must be made to the principal, and for healthcare exceptions, must include documentation from an appropriate healthcare professional.

HVA provides students with shared or one-to-one devices, therefore personal electronic devices are not permitted for educational purposes.

Enforcement, Consequences and Reporting

Enforcement of this policy is chiefly the responsibility of school leaders and the educational community; however, all designated staff are expected to assist in enforcement of educational community expectations. Students will be reminded of this policy regularly and consistently, especially at the start of the school year and after returning from breaks.

For students out of compliance with this policy, the device will be held in the school office until the end of the school day. The first time this happens, the student may retrieve the device, and the parent will be notified. For subsequent instances, the parent must retrieve the device at a prescheduled date/time during school hours. Further instances may result in the device being held in the school office daily for longer periods of time. HVA will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the school but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. For students with exceptions under this policy, HVA will examine alternative ways to achieve the purpose of the exception, including different storage or access provisions.

School leaders, faculty and support staff members will also discuss the aims of this policy with students and their parents, the benefits of a distraction-free environment, the reasons the student had difficulty following this policy, and how the school can help the student contribute to a distraction-free environment.

HVA may not impose suspension from school if the sole grounds for the suspension is that the student accessed an internet-enabled device as prohibited by this policy. However, the school may utilize consequences under the district's Code of Conduct, including detention, in-school suspension, and exclusion from extracurricular activities. The school may also utilize assignments on the detrimental impact of social media on mental health, smartphones in school, or other relevant topics.

Some uses of personal electronic devices may constitute a violation of HVA's Code of Conduct or other school policies, and in some instances, the law. HVA will cooperate with law enforcement officials as appropriate.

Beginning September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, HVA will publish an annual data set/report on its website detailing the enforcement of this policy over the past year, including non-identifiable demographic information of students who have faced disciplinary action for noncompliance with this policy, and an analysis of any demographic disparities in enforcement of this policy. If a statistically significant disparate enforcement impact is identified, the report will include a plan to mitigate such disparate enforcement.

Electronic Devices and Testing

To ensure the integrity of testing, in accordance with state guidelines, students may not bring cell phones or other electronic devices into classrooms or other exam locations during all state assessments.

Test proctors, monitors and school officials have the right to collect cell phones and other prohibited electronic devices prior to the start of the test and to hold them for the duration of the test taking time. Admission to the test will be prohibited to any student who has a cell phone or other electronic device in their possession and does not relinquish it.

Students with Individualized Education Plans, Section 504 Plans, or documentation from medical practitioners specifically requiring use of electronic devices may do so as specified.

Policy Distribution and Translation

As required by law, HVA will post this policy in a clearly visible and accessible location on its website. Upon request by a student or parent, the school will translate this policy into any of the twelve most common non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the state, as identified by the most recent American community survey published by the U.S. Census bureau.

The district will also include this information, or a plain language summary, in student/family handbooks.

Cross-ref: 4526, Computer Use in Instruction
4526.1, Internet Safety
5300, Code of Conduct

Ref: Education Law §2803
Price v. New York City Board of Education, 51 A.D.3d 277, lv. to appeal denied, 11 N.Y.3d 702 (2008) (District may ban possession of cell phones on school property)
NYSED, *Prohibition of Cell Phones and Electronic Devices in New York State Assessments*, www.nysed.gov/educator-integrity/prohibition-cell-phones-and-electronicdevices-new-york-state-assessments

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