



POLICY

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Cell Phone and Personal Device Policy

Belief:

Studies have shown that the use of personal electronic devices during the school day is a distraction and negatively affects students' academic achievement. The Rhode Island School for the Deaf believes that every student should have access to an academically rigorous, device-free environment to prevent students from being adversely affected by electronics.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to students, families, and faculty regarding the use of personal devices during the school day.

Definitions:

The following definitions are outlined in Table 1. Definitions are provided to clarify key terms with legal implications as seen in, but not limited to, Rhode Island General Laws §§ 16-2-2, 16-2-9, and 200-RICR-20-05-1.

Table 1. Definitions

<i>Key Word</i>	<i>Definition</i>
School Day	The total length of instructional time as defined in R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-2-2 and 200-RICR-20-05-1.
Instructional Time	Actual instruction in the subject areas required by the Basic Education Plan (BEP). This does not include lunch, recess, or passing time.
Personal Electronic Device	A personal device is any privately owned electronic or digital device not issued by the school that is capable of sending, receiving, storing, recording, displaying, or transmitting data, voice, images, or video through any form of wired or wireless communication, including but not limited to internet, cellular, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, radio, satellite, or peer-to-peer connections. Examples include, but are not limited to: Smartphones, mobile phones, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, e-readers, smartwatches, fitness trackers, smart glasses, virtual or augmented reality headsets, handheld gaming systems, personal hotspots, wireless earbuds with communication capability, and any similar emerging technology.

Policy Requirements:

The following policy requirements establish the minimum standards for school-level implementation and must be incorporated into all school-specific protocols. These requirements reflect the Rhode Island School for the Deaf's commitment to equitable practices.

Section 1: Personal Electronic Device Protocol:

Personal electronic devices cannot be used during the school day, including non-instructional time, which may include, but is not limited to, passing time, advisory, lunch, and dismissal. Students must have their personal electronic devices turned off and in their backpacks or locked in their lockers from arrival to dismissal.

Family members/guardians who wish to communicate with their child may call the main office, and a message will be conveyed to their child.

Section 2: Exemptions:

The Rhode Island School for the Deaf acknowledges that there are circumstances in which the use of a personal electronic device can enhance and supplement academic instruction, particularly for students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), a 504 plan, and/or multilingual learner status (MLL).

For students with specific academic needs, special educators, interventionists, school administrators, and other relevant staff must collaboratively define any accommodations that require the use of a personal electronic device. All accommodations must be documented within a student's IEP, 504 plan, or Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) and reviewed annually for continued need.

Other exemptions may be permitted for students who are primary caregivers or parents of children. Students must work with school administrators to develop a documented plan outlining how they may use their personal electronic devices. A designated school administrator must keep records of plan accommodations.

For all students who receive an exemption for specific reasons, the information must be relayed to teachers and staff, following confidentiality procedures, to ensure consistency. This communication must occur within five days of the plan's completion.

Accommodations for any of the aforementioned groups of students does not necessarily mean exemption from the entire policy. Non-compliance with an approved plan or district policy may result in disciplinary action. Teachers may determine that students need access to a personal electronic device to complete specific academic tasks or activities. As students have access to district-owned electronic devices like Chromebooks, the Rhode Island School for the Deaf requires teachers to seek permission from school administrators before allowing students access to personal electronic devices, even for academic purposes.

Section 3: Disciplinary Actions:

The Rhode Island School for the Deaf recognizes the professional expertise of school administrators and the importance of school-level leadership in implementing discipline practices.

Administrator decision-making must remain aligned with district policy and equity standards to ensure consistency across schools. Therefore, schools should embed the requirements within existing restorative and tiered discipline systems, provided district minimum expectations are met.

Table 2: Disciplinary Actions

<i>Offense</i>	<i>Required Action</i>	<i>Administrative Response</i>
First Offense	Personal electronic devices must be confiscated and sent to the principal or designee. Students	Administrators may reset expectations with the student and provide reteaching on personal

	may retrieve the device at the end of the school day.	device use expectations. Parents /guardians will be notified.
Second Offense	Personal electronic devices must be confiscated and sent to the principal or designee. A parent/guardian must retrieve the device.	Administrators are encouraged to implement restorative practices, such as a restorative circle or problem-solving conference.
Third Offense	Personal electronic devices must be confiscated and sent to the principal or designee. Parent/guardian retrieval is required. Schools must implement a temporary restriction on students bringing a personal device to school.	Administrators may determine the duration of the restriction, not to exceed one academic quarter.

All district minimum expectations for students are reset quarterly. In situations where students have violated the policy more than three times in a quarter, the administration must develop a plan to prevent further violations.

Section 4: Responsibilities and Support:

1) Student Responsibilities:

- a) Students are responsible for turning their devices off upon entering the school building and stowing them in their backpacks or in their lockers until dismissal. For other student responsibilities or guidelines, see *Section 1. Personal Electronic Device Protocol*.
- b) Students are responsible for purchasing a lock if they choose to stow their personal electronic devices in their locker. RISD is

not responsible for lost or stolen personal devices if left in an unlocked locker.

2) Rhode Island School for the Deaf Responsibilities:

Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Law § 16-21-43(d), “no school official, employee, or agent of the school shall search the contents of any personal electronic device that is retained by the school during school hours and not in the student’s possession in a locked pouch or container.”

Section 5: Loss, Damage, and Claims:

As outlined in Section 4, students are responsible for keeping track of any personal electronic devices brought to school. The Rhode Island School for the Deaf is not responsible for loss, theft, or damage to personal electronic devices brought to school.

If a parent or guardian believes that damage to a device resulted from school negligence, they may submit a written concern to the school principal. The concern will be reviewed in accordance with the district's existing complaint procedures.

Section 6: Staff:

The Rhode Island School for the Deaf acknowledges that there may be situations when a teacher's personal electronic device use is necessary for academic instruction, safety concerns, or emergency situations. However, when possible, all staff are expected to model acceptable use of personal devices in school. The use of personal devices during instructional time is strictly prohibited except in emergencies (ie texting the principal, emergency response team, school nurse, or maintenance staff).

Section 7: Communication Protocols:

The Rhode Island School for the Deaf acknowledges that there are emergency situations and extenuating circumstances that may require students to contact their parents or guardians during the school day. If communication is necessary, students must follow the protocols below.

1) As outlined in *Section 1. Personal Electronic Device Protocol*: students must receive a signed pass from their teacher to go to the main office to respond to messages from parent(s)/guardian(s). Main office staff will determine whether the matter requires immediate response during instructional time. Routine communication should occur before or after the school day unless otherwise authorized.

2) As outlined in Section 1: Personal Electronic Device Protocol: Parents must call the main office (401-222-3525) for all communication. If necessary, a message will be given to their child. If a response is required, there are landline phone/video phones located near the main office for students to use.

3) In case of emergency, parent(s)/guardian(s) will receive communication from the Rhode Island School for the Deaf providing immediate, accurate information and updates through email, phone, Parent Square Messaging System, Blackboard Alert System, or other relevant communication channels.

References

[RI Gen. Laws §16-2-2](#)

[RI Gen. Laws §16-2-9](#)

[RI Gen. Laws §16-21-43](#)

[200-RICR-20-05-1](#)

REVISED Policy without YONDR pouches

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