



Distraction-Free School Policy

Updated to Meet NYS Requirements – Effective August 1, 2025

In alignment with a new New York State law signed by the Governor, all public schools—including charter schools—are required to implement and enforce policies that limit student access to internet-enabled devices during the school day. Hebrew Language Academy Charter School (HLA) fully supports this effort to maintain a focused and distraction-free learning environment. As such, we have adopted the following policy, which all students and families are expected to follow.

Hebrew Language Academy Charter School (HLA) is committed to creating a focused, distraction-free academic environment. To support this goal, we have adopted the following policy regarding the possession and use of internet-enabled devices during the school day.

Prohibited Devices

Students are not permitted to use the following items during the school day unless otherwise authorized under the exemptions listed below:

- Cell phones
- Smart watches and/or wearable computing devices
- Portable music/entertainment systems (e.g., iPods, MP3 players, handheld gaming devices, etc.)
- All other internet-enabled electronic devices or anything with similar functionality

Onsite Device Storage

Students must turn off their devices upon arrival and place them in a school-provided cell phone lock box stored securely by the Dean of Culture. These lock boxes are returned to classrooms at dismissal. Backpacks and lockers are not considered acceptable storage, as per state guidelines. This system ensures that students do not have continuous or unsupervised access to their devices during the school day.



Security of Devices

HLA will exercise reasonable care to maintain the security of devices that are held by the School but cannot guarantee the devices will be secure. HLA 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 Head of School.

Parent Communication

Parents or guardians who need to reach their child during the school day may do so by contacting the school's main office. Written notification of this communication process is provided to all families prior to the school year and again upon student enrollment.

Exemptions

Use of internet-enabled devices during the school day is only permitted under the following circumstances:

- When authorized by a teacher, school leader, or school staff for a specific educational purpose
- As necessary for a student's healthcare needs
- During an emergency situation
- For translation services
- If included in a student's IEP or Section 504 plan
- On a case-by-case basis for student caregivers with family responsibilities, as determined by a school psychologist, counselor, or social worker
- Where otherwise required by law

Violations & Consequences

If a student violates this policy, the following disciplinary steps may be taken:

1. First offense: Device is held by the Dean of Students and returned at end of day.
2. Second offense: Device held; parent/guardian must retrieve it in person.
3. Third offense: Parent meeting required in order to retrieve the device, students receive consequence in school.



Note: Students are not permitted to use devices at any time inside the building—including after dismissal while waiting for buses.

In accordance with state law, no student shall be suspended solely for violating this policy.

Reporting & Transparency

Beginning in September 2026, HLA will publish an annual report on our website that includes:

- Non-identifiable demographic data of students disciplined under this policy
- Analysis of any enforcement disparities
- A mitigation plan if statistically significant disparities are identified

Accessibility & Stakeholder Engagement

This policy was developed in consultation with school stakeholders, including parents, students, and staff. It is posted publicly on our website and, upon request, will be made available in multiple languages.