

Staten Island HEBREW PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

Distraction-Free/Device-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 **smartphones and other internet-enabled personal devices, such as smartwatches**, during the school day. SIHP: Charter School for Global Citizens (SIHP) 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.

SIHP (SIHP) is committed to creating a focused, distraction-free academic environment. It is also committed to the mental health and well-being of our students and staff. To support this goal, we have adopted the following policy, limiting the possession and use of internet-enabled personal devices during the school day and any school-related activities, including morning care and after-school activities.

Parents are strongly encouraged to review these and other resources annually before the start of school and make informed decisions regarding technology usage.. Reviewing the policy and receiving the school handbook affirms a family's consent to this policy.

Common Sense Media:

<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/cellphones-and-devices-a-guide-for-parents-and-caregivers>

Glow Kids Research:

<https://www.drkardaras.com/research.html>

Anxious Generation Parent Resources:

<https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/take-action#parents>

Prohibited Devices

Students are NOT permitted to have the following items during the school day unless otherwise authorized in writing by the Head of School/Executive Director or their designee under the exemptions listed in this policy:

- 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 capabilities functionality. (non-school-issued iPads, tablets, laptops, smartwatches, or smart devices, etc)

Onsite Device Storage for Authorized Devices Only

Students who are permitted to have their devices based on the exemptions below must turn off their devices upon arrival and place them in a school-provided cell phone box stored securely by the teacher without student access during the day until dismissal. Backpacks and lockers are not considered acceptable storage, as per state guidelines. This system prioritizes teaching and learning by ensuring that students do not have continuous or unsupervised access to their devices during the school day or any school-related activities, including morning care and after-school programs.

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 notifications outlining this communication process are provided to all families before the start of the school year and again upon student enrollment. This information can be found in the school handbooks and published on the website, in addition to the public board meeting.

Exemptions

Use of internet-enabled devices during the school day is only permitted under the following circumstances, which must be approved in writing by the Head of School/Executive Director or their designee and requested by the parent in writing:

- 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
- For translation services, when other means are not available
- 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 in coordination with the Head of School/Executive Director
- Where otherwise required by law

Violations & Consequences

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

1. First offense: The device is confiscated by the appropriate school personnel and returned at the end of the day.
2. Second offense: The device is confiscated by the appropriate school personnel, and the parent/guardian must retrieve it in person at the end of the week on the day and time designated for device retrieval, which will be Fridays after dismissal has concluded at approximately 1:30 p.m.
3. Third offense: A parent meeting is required during which the device will be returned to the parent/guardian. Additionally, the student will receive disciplinary action that is in line with our school's Code of Conduct/discipline policy.
4. In accordance with state law, no student shall be suspended solely for violating this policy; however, they may be subject to disciplinary action as allowed by law and school discipline policy.

Please Note: *Students are not permitted to use devices at any time inside the school building—including after dismissal while waiting for buses or parent pick-up, or on the buses to and from school, except as outlined above.*

Reporting & Transparency

Beginning in September 2026, SIHP 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 is required if statistically significant disparities are identified

Accessibility & Stakeholder Engagement

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