

Pharos Academy Charter School

Distraction-Free School Device Policy

Below is a comprehensive **Distraction-Free School Device Policy** tailored for Pharos Academy Charter School (Bronx, NY), fully aligned with New York State Education Law § 2803 and related guidance. It meets the State's August 1, 2025 deadline and ensures eligibility for State Aid funds.

1. Purpose & Scope

To create a distraction-free, mentally supportive, and academically focused environment "from bell to bell"—covering all instructional and non-instructional periods and all school grounds [Times Union+13The Official Website of New York State+13stateaid.nysed.gov+13](#).

This policy applies to:

- All scholars in grades K–12
- Personal internet-enabled devices
(defined as smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, etc.)

This policy excludes non-internet phones and school-issued devices used for instruction [Governor Kathy Hochul+9The Official Website of New York State+9stateaid.nysed.gov+9opschools.org+2Reddit+2Times Union+2Governor Kathy Hochul+2IMPRINT+2Governor Kathy Hochul+2](#).

2. Definitions

- **Internet-enabled Device:** Any personal device capable of internet access or social-media apps.
- **School Day:** Includes instructional time, lunch, study halls, transitions, and recess.
- **School Grounds:** All buildings, playgrounds, and property within the school boundaries during the day [Governor Kathy Hochul+5The Official Website of New York State+5Governor Kathy Hochul+5](#).

3. General Prohibition

Scholars may not access, carry, or use internet-enabled personal devices during the school day while on school property, except where specifically exempted [NYSenate.gov+9The Official Website of New York State+9IMPRINT+9](#).

4. Storage Requirements

- All such devices must be power-off and stored in secure, on-site storage methods—e.g., lockable pouches, lockers, or designated centralized secure areas.
 - Specifically, Pharos Academy Charter School will collect all personal devices (to be turned off) upon arrival at school and will return all personal devices at the conclusion of the school day
 - These devices will be stored in the Main Office of Pharos Academy Charter School in a numbered, divided storage space/cubby
 - Backpacks **do not** qualify as compliant storage [Reddit+3stateaid.nysed.gov+3The Official Website of New York State+3](#).
 - Pharos Academy Charter School will allocate funds toward proper storage solutions using State-aid dollars (\$10.90 per secondary scholar, District-wide funding) [stateaid.nysed.gov](#).
 - Pharos' allocation for the 25 - 26 school year is \$3804
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5. Permitted Exemptions

Use of personal internet-enabled devices during school hours is allowed **ONLY** in these circumstances:

- **Educational authorization** by teacher/staff for instructional purposes. All requests for this exemption must be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer 48 hours in advance of the exception being needed
- **Medical necessity**, e.g. devices used for diabetes management. All requests for this exemption must be submitted to the Special Education Coordinator; please allow 48 hours for review

- **Translation services** for ELL scholars.
 - **Emergencies**, or where required by law.
 - **IEP or 504 Plan requirements**.
 - **Case-by-case** approval for scholar caregivers as determined by school psychologist/social worker [New York Post+15The Official Website of New York State+15stateaid.nysed.gov+15Council of Administrators & Supervisors+3opschools.org+3Times Union+3Governor Kathy Hochul+3Governor Kathy Hochul+3Council of Administrators & Supervisors+3](#).
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6. Family Contact Mechanisms

- Pharos Academy Charter School will provide alternative communication channels (front office, school phone) for parents to reach scholars during school hours.
 - These channels will be documented in the Scholar Family Handbook, on its [website](#), and verbally shared at orientation .
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7. Policy Development & Accessibility

- Policy has been developed **in consultation** with teachers, parents, scholars, and staff, per State guidelines .
 - Pharos Academy Charter School will host an (optional) community Zoom session annually each August for the community to be able to share their feedback
 - This Zoom session will be announced via the ParentSquare communication tool
 - Published in English and, upon request, up to 12 most common languages represented by our families [The Official Website of New York State](#).
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8. Discipline & Enforcement

- Misuse will result in **progressive, educationally focused interventions** (e.g., reminders, device storage) and **not suspension alone** .
 - Discipline will align with restorative practices and be non-exclusionary where possible.
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9. Annual Reporting Requirements

By **September 1, 2026**—and annually thereafter—Pharos Academy will publish on its website:

- Aggregated, non-identifiable data on device policy violations
 - Analysis of demographic data and any disparities identified
 - Plan detailing corrective or mitigating actions if disparities exist [nyssba.org+2The Official Website of New York State+2Council of Administrators & Supervisors+2](#).
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10. Use of State-Aid Funds

Pharos Academy will allocate funding for (may include one or more of the following)

1. **Storage solutions** (pouches, lockers)
2. **Policy finalization** (legal review, stakeholder feedback)
3. **Staff training** on consistent and equitable enforcement
4. **Family outreach materials** (multilingual)
5. **Scholar education modules** on device responsibility
6. **Other implementation needs** with clear documentation [Governor Kathy Hochul+14stateaid.nysed.gov+14Governor Kathy Hochul+14Reddit+14Reddit+14nyssba.org+14](#).

A formal attestation will be filed in SED's Monitoring portal by **August 1, 2025** (by the school's Chief Operations Officer), and State-aid reimbursements are expected by **August 29, 2025** [stateaid.nysed.gov](#).

11. Review & Updates

- Policy effectiveness reviewed semi-annually by a committee (administrators, staff, scholar/parent reps).
- Adjustments made in response to enforcement data, stakeholder feedback, or State guidance updates.
- Full policy review annually, prior to public posting and reporting deadlines.

Summary

Pharos Academy Charter School's Distraction-Free Device Policy:

- Bans personal internet-enabled devices "bell to bell"
- Provides secure storage and exempted access
- Supports health, equity, and learning priorities
- Ensures transparent, stakeholder-informed enforcement
- Meets all NYSED legal, funding, and reporting mandates