



COMMUNITY
EDUCATION
COUNCIL
DISTRICT 31

Dr. Roderick Palton
*Acting Interim District
Superintendent*

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D31 Representative
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**Community Education Council District 31
Resolution Regarding Cell Phone, Smart Watch, and other
Electronic Device Use In District 31**

**Approved at the March 3rd, 2025 Calendar Meeting by a roll call vote of all members present
(11 in favor/0 opposed/ 0 abstain)**

WHEREAS, the Community Education Council of District 31 (CEC 31) recognizes that national studies¹ show the use of personal cell phones, smart watches, smartphones, or other electronic communication devices (collectively “cell phones”) in classrooms can negatively impact the emotional well-being of students, disrupt the learning environment, cause distractions that can negatively impact teaching, learning, and testing, and can negatively impact the safe learning environment that is desired in all New York City Public Schools; and

WHEREAS, according to a 2024 National Education Association survey, a significant majority (79%) of teachers working in schools that permit cell phone use consider them highly disruptive, and an even larger majority (90%) support policies restricting student cell phone usage during class time².

WHEREAS, personal cell phones and smartwatches are used by students on all grade levels and 97% of kids use their phones during school hours for a median of about 43 minutes per day³; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of students, administrators, teachers, and employees to minimize distractions and disruptions during instructional time, which is critical for increasing academic proficiency; and

WHEREAS, 82% of K-12 teachers in the U.S. say their school or district has a cellphone policy of some kind. Middle school teachers (94%) are especially likely to say this, followed by elementary (84%) and high school (71%) teachers⁴; and

¹<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2024/04/04/challenges-in-the-classroom/>

²<https://www.nea.org/resource-library/impact-social-media-and-personal-devices-mental-health>

³https://www.common Sense media.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2023-cs-smartphone-research-report_final-for-web.pdf

⁴<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/06/12/72-percent-of-us-high-school-teachers-say-cellphone-distraction-is-a-major-problem-in-the-classroom/>

COMMUNITY EDUCATION COUNCIL DISTRICT 31

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WHEREAS, Governor Kathy Hochul unveiled a plan to restrict smartphone use in schools statewide and ensure distraction-free learning in New York on January 25th, 2025⁵; and

WHEREAS, New York City Public Schools (NYC Public Schools) authorizes school administrators to enforce reasonable rules relating to the use of cell phones on school property; and

WHEREAS, the Community Education Council of District 31 (CEC31) believes it is in the best interest of students, administrators, teachers, and District 31 to minimize distractions and disruptions during instructional time, which is so important to increase academic proficiency; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that CEC31 strongly encourages NYC Public Schools to implement uniform, school-wide policies to create ongoing and consistent expectations for students, staff, and families limiting the use of cell phones and or other electronic communication devices while on school property; and be it further

RESOLVED, that CEC31 strongly encourages NYC Public Schools to adopt a uniform discipline policy for violations and repeat violations of the school wide policy within the same school year where repeat violations shall increase in severity and shall, in the school district's discretion, include the possibility of the most severe disciplinary action available under the school district's discipline code or policy; and be it further

RESOLVED, that CEC31 calls on New York City Mayor Adams and NYC Public Schools Chancellor Aviles-Ramos to design both the uniform city wide cell phone and discipline policies with input from parents, educators, students, and other stakeholders by establishing a citywide working group prior to the 2025-2026 school year; and be it further

RESOLVED, that CEC31 strongly encourages NYC Public Schools to provide training and support to teachers and staff to ensure they are aware of all aspects to the policy, understand its importance, and acknowledge the expectation that all school buildings will comply with its terms and conditions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that CEC31 strongly encourages NYC Public Schools to consider exceptions to school-wide policies for when a pupil shall not be prohibited from possessing or using a cell phone under any of the following circumstances:

⁵<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-unveils-plan-restrict-smartphone-use-schools-state-wide-and-ensure-distraction>



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(1) Before and after School Hours, or during emergency situations, as determined by the school principal or in response to a perceived threat of danger.

(2) When a teacher or administrator of the school district grants permission to a pupil to possess or use a cell phone, subject to any reasonable limitation imposed by that teacher or administrator.

(3) When a licensed physician and surgeon determines that the possession or use of a cell phone is necessary for the health or well-being of the pupil.

(4) When the possession or use of a cell phone is required in a pupil's individualized education program.

RESOLVED, that CEC31 believes that the most effective school policies governing cell phone use in the classroom are paired with other strategies to support student mental health and prepare students to develop digital media healthy habits and responsible digital citizenship skills

RESOLVED, that CEC31 supports a policy model where Elementary school students are encouraged not to bring cell phones at all, but if they do so, phones are required to be turned off and kept in backpacks. At the district's middle school and high schools, phones should be at least turned off and stored in backpacks, lockers, or alternative storage as determined by the school and district leadership.

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