



Distraction-Free School Policy

Purpose

This policy establishes clear guidelines regarding the use of internet-enabled devices on school grounds during the school day, in alignment with the New York State Fiscal Year 2026 Budget directive. The policy is designed to minimize distractions, promote student well-being, and create equitable learning environments.

Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled in Grand Concourse Academy Charter School and is enforceable across all school grounds during the instructional day, including before school and lunch periods.

Policy Statement

Effective August 1, 2025, students are **prohibited from using internet-enabled devices** during the school day **anywhere on school grounds**, including classrooms, hallways, restrooms, cafeterias, and outdoor areas.

Permitted Exceptions

Use of internet-enabled devices is only permitted under the following exceptions:

1. **Healthcare Management**

Required to monitor or support student health (e.g., diabetes monitoring apps).

2. **Emergency Situations**

Students may contact parents by using a staff cellphone for communication in the event of a verified emergency.

3. **Legal Requirements**

As required by state or federal law.

4. **IEP or 504 Plans**

When internet-enabled devices are included in a student's individualized education plan or 504 plan.



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Family Communication Options

To ensure ongoing communication between families and students, the following contact methods will be provided:

- **Main Office Phone Line:** Parents/guardians may contact the school office and/or administration to relay messages to their child.
- **Emergency Protocols:** Families will receive direct communication in emergency cases via school notification systems such as Jupiter ed and/or Messenger.

All administrator contacts are found on the school website page at www.gcacs.org under the Department tab.

On-Site Device Storage

Students who bring internet-enabled devices to school must turn it in to their teacher before the school day begins.

- **Turn-In Policy:** Students are mandated to turn in all electronic devices including cellphones, EarPods, smartwatches, meta glasses, etc. All devices must be turned off and given to their teacher.

Devices must remain off and out of reach throughout the school day unless one of the permitted exceptions applies.

Disciplinary Approach

Students will **not** be suspended **solely** for violations of this policy. Progressive discipline and restorative practices will be used. Responses may include:

- Verbal warning / Parent/guardian notification
- Temporary loss of privilege to bring devices to school
- Permission removed to bring electronic devices to school
- Detention / Suspension

Policy Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed annually by the school leadership team and local stakeholders to ensure effectiveness, fairness, and compliance with state guidelines.