



GOWANDA CENTRAL SCHOOL

Preparing our students to be leaders and citizens who are ready to be successful and embrace a changing world.

August 2025

Dear Gowanda Families,

The start of a new school year is a great time to help students reset and focus on learning. To that end, we're writing to you about an important change in New York State law that will help our students be fully present, engaged, and free from the constant pressures of being "online" all day.

This new law, New York State Education Law 2803, was signed into effect in May 2025 and prohibits the use of personal internet-enabled devices during the school day and on school grounds. As a result, and like every public school district in New York, the Gowanda Central School District has adopted Board Policy #7316 to comply with the new law.

We know that smartphones and other devices can sometimes be helpful. Still, in our classrooms and common areas, these devices have increasingly become a distraction that interrupts focus, interferes with learning, and creates added stress for our students. The goal of this law—and our district's policy—is to give students the space to connect with their peers and teachers in person, without the distractions of social media and online pressures. To support this, our staff will also model these expectations by keeping personal devices silent and out of sight during instructional time.

We recognize this change may be an adjustment for students and families, yet we believe it is a critical step toward improving student focus, reducing stress, and maximizing learning for everyone.

What Is an Internet-Enabled Device?

“Internet-enabled devices” are defined as **any personal device capable of connecting to the internet**, including but not limited to:

- Smartphones and cell phones
- Smart watches or AI glasses (e.g., Ray-Ban Meta Wayfarer Glasses)
- Personal laptops, Chromebooks, or tablets (not school- or BOCES-issued devices)

When Are Devices Prohibited?

- High School & Middle School: 7:30 AM – 2:07 PM
- Elementary School: 8:45 AM – 3:15 PM

This includes all instructional and non-instructional periods, such as:

- Classes
- Homeroom/Check & Connect
- Lunch
- Study halls, JOM, LPP
- Passing time

Devices must be powered off and stored in lockers or another approved location for the entire school day.

Students may use personal devices:

- **Before school** (before 7:30 AM MS/HS; before 8:45 AM ES)
- **After dismissal** (after 2:07 PM MS/HS; after 3:15 PM ES)
- **While on the bus to and from school**

“Phone breaks” during the day are not permitted.

Parent-Student Communication During the Day

Because student devices will remain off and away, families may contact students through the following channels:

1. **Schoology Messages (preferred):** Parents may message students directly through their Schoology parent account.
2. **Main Office Landline:** Students may request to call home from the office phone.
3. **Call the Main Office:** Parents can call the school office to relay urgent messages to students.
4. **Email the Main Office:** Parents can email the building office to have a message delivered.
5. **Drop-Off Note:** Parents may drop off a written note for delivery to a student.

Exceptions & Emergencies

- **Emergencies:** Students may use devices in urgent safety or medical situations.
- **Special Education/Medical Accommodations:** Students with approved IEP/504 accommodations may receive permanent authorization for specific use.
- **Educational Purposes:** Teachers may request administrative approval for supervised use (e.g., field trips, college registration, or specialized apps).

Consequences for Violations

Any student found with a powered-on device during the school day will be considered in violation of policy.

1. **First Offense:** Device confiscated for the day. Parent notified. Student picks up the device at dismissal.
2. **Second Offense:** Device confiscated. Parent/guardian must pick up the device in the main office during school hours.
3. **Third Offense:** Student required to check in/check out their device daily with the office for the remainder of the semester. If a third violation occurs within the final five weeks of a semester, the requirement extends into the next semester.

Refusal to comply may result in additional disciplinary action under the District Code of Conduct.

Storage Options

- Student's assigned locker (with school-issued lock)
- Main Office lockbox (monitored by camera)

The district is **not responsible** for lost or stolen devices.

Resources for Parents

We know this change may feel challenging for students and families. To support you, we encourage visiting <https://parentguidance.org/>, which offers free parent courses such as:

- *How Digital Media is Changing Our Children's Mental Health*
- *10 Ways to Teach Children How to Use Social Media Responsibly*
- *Effects of Screen Time*

For further building specifics and guidance, please get in touch with your child's school.

Thank you for your partnership in implementing this new state law. By working together, we can help students stay focused, reduce stress, and make the most of their learning opportunities.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Anderson, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools
Gowanda Central School District