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# Experts: No more school day scrolling, what the new bell-to-bell ban entails

Submitted

Tue, Aug 12th 2025 04:25 pm

## ***New York schools go bell-to-bell without smart devices – UB experts dissect new policy***

*By the University at Buffalo*

Aug. 1 marked the deadline for all publicly funded schools to adopt a policy supporting the state's "bell-to-bell" smart device restriction, approved as part of New York state's annual budget.

The new policy restricts the use of smartphones, tablets, smart watches, or any other internet-connected personal device on school grounds from the first bell of the day to the last (bell-to-bell). But what does this mean for students, parents, teachers, administrators and school personnel?

We asked a panel of University at Buffalo experts from the [Graduate School of Education](#) to talk about what the new law entails, and what its implications might be. The panel consists of faculty members [Stephanie Fredrick](#), [Katheryne Leigh-Osroosh](#) and [Amanda Nickerson](#), and school psychology graduate student Sarah Woyken.

### **What exactly does the new law require of districts?**

In addition to restricting smart devices, [New York state](#) now requires all districts, charter schools, and boards of cooperative services to develop a policy that:

- √ Permits schools to have flexibility in storing said devices, with \$13.5 million of funding set aside to purchase device storage.
- √ Provides parents/guardians a means to contact their children during the school day if needed.
- √ Requires consultation with students, parents and teachers in local policy formation.
- √ Requires annual reporting of policy enforcement and disciplinary action.

### **Are there any exemptions to the policy?**

- √ For a specific educational purpose, school personnel – including teachers and principals – can authorize smart device use.
- √ Use is permitted when required as part of a student's individualized education program (IEP), to manage a student's health, for emergencies, for translation services, on a case-by-case basis as determined by a school psychologist/social worker/school counselor, or when deemed legally necessary.

## **What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of restricting smart devices “bell-to-bell?”**

In implementing these restrictions, the rationale is to create a “distraction-free learning environment,” helping kids become less dependent on their phones and more in-tune with their surroundings during the school day. The state [lists numerous benefits](#), ranging from academic and instructional (more efficient use of class time), to social-emotional and mental health-based (decreasing cyberbullying and increasing socialization). There are also a number of perceived educator benefits, such as less time spent monitoring phone use and better-quality interactions between students and teachers.

In addition to potential benefits, there are multiple concerns associated with implementing such a strict policy. Losing the ability to contact their children directly, parents are worried about student safety and communication in emergency situations. Infringing on student rights is an issue, particularly with the removal of a student’s smart device from their person. Restricting smart devices outright can also limit opportunities that infuse technology into instruction and teach students how to use smart devices responsibly.

## **What does the research say about smartphone restrictions in schools?**

According to the state website created to assist with policy implementation, New York is the largest state by population to enact such restrictions. Statewide smart device restrictions are [growing in popularity](#) as it becomes evident that [excessive phone use in youth](#) is a growing problem. However, the effects of school smartphone restrictions, studied in other parts of the world, are less straightforward. In fact, most large-scale studies published within the last five years comparing strict and less-strict policies argued that stricter policies had no significant effect on students [academically](#), and either minimal or non-significant improvements in measures like [overall well-being](#) or [reduced bullying](#).

Those in support of widespread restrictions tend to argue for bans using the former – studies that show effects of problematic use in youth – without citing the latter – the unclear or insignificant effects of blanket school restrictions. More rigorous research, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs), is needed to more effectively evaluate policy impacts. Based on current findings, schools are encouraged to consider additional factors – such as online safety, mental health, and bullying prevention programming – alongside smart device restrictions to support students’ social, emotional, and academic well-being.

## **What are the implications for the upcoming school year and beyond?**

While many schools and districts already have policies in place, those previously allowing phones to be kept with students could experience the greatest immediate shift. However, for students struggling with this transition, it is important to note that those who violate the policy cannot be suspended strictly for failing to comply during the school day. The policy also states that students can keep non-internet-connected phones. Smart devices officially part of students’ learning, such as school-owned laptops, are also permitted.



New York state has published a [toolkit](#), as well as a list of [frequently asked questions](#) to guide schools in creating policies that comply with this new law and its exceptions.

Longer-term implications of this statewide policy are less clear. As [Dr. Katheryne Leigh-Osroosh argues](#), simply restricting smart devices is not enough. The schools most successful in navigating this change in their technological landscape will be those that fill the cellphone void with innovative alternatives, perhaps through helping kids engage with each other face-to-face or by learning how to critically examine their media intake and online presence.

Regardless of how schools and districts ultimately decide to implement their restrictions, only time will tell if this policy works the way it is intended to for students across the state.

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## Hometown News



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Aug. 11th, 2025 3:20 pm



### Planes & helicopters to drop rabies vaccine over Erie County

Aug. 11th, 2025 11:25 am



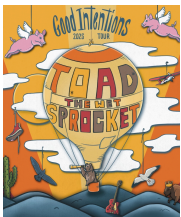
### Pysanky egg artist wins Best in Show at Lewiston Art Festival

Aug. 10th, 2025 4:00 pm



### Freer Fritz & The Tantrums look to have fun at Artpark

Aug. 8th, 2025 11:00 am



### Toad the Wet Sprocket has 'Good Intentions' for summer tour, Artpark stop

Aug. 8th, 2025 11:00 am



### Grand Island: Potential community center site ID'd

Aug. 8th, 2025 11:00 am



### Full free edition: The Tribune-Sentinel/Dispatch for Aug. 8, 2025

Aug. 8th, 2025 7:00 am



## Niagara County recognizes Purple Heart recipients

Aug. 8th, 2025 7:00 am



## Wheatfield looking into lead

Aug. 8th, 2025 7:00 am



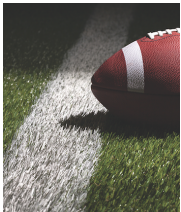
## Tops teams with National Buffalo Wing Fest for 'Win Free Frank's RedHot for Life' sweepstakes

Aug. 7th, 2025 12:40 pm



## Hochul: Discovery law 'improvements' to take effect this week

Aug. 6th, 2025 3:55 pm



## ESPN to acquire NFL Network

Aug. 5th, 2025 8:15 pm



## North Tonawanda's credit rating upgraded by Moody's

Aug. 4th, 2025 10:15 am



## Photos: Blackberry Smoke, Mike Campbell & The Dirty Knobs perform at Artpark Outdoor Amphitheater

Aug. 1st, 2025 10:10 am



## Full free edition: The Tribune-Sentinel/Dispatch for Aug. 1, 2025

Aug. 1st, 2025 7:00 am



### LCA thanks DiMino for free BPO performance in Lewiston

Aug. 1st, 2025 7:00 am



### Lewiston Town Board sends 5/4 President's Park question to Ethics Board

Aug. 1st, 2025 7:00 am



### Intandem crew helps keep park clean after 'Music Mania Mondays'

Jul. 30th, 2025 9:40 pm



### Aquarium of Niagara holds birthday-themed 'Party on the Plaza'

Jul. 30th, 2025 9:40 pm



### UB announces lineup for 2025-26 Distinguished Speakers Series

Jul. 30th, 2025 9:35 pm



### Buffalo Sabres announce 10-year extension of arena naming rights deal with KeyBank

Jul. 30th, 2025 9:55 am



### Hochul urges New Yorkers to prepare for multiple days of extreme heat

Jul. 29th, 2025 2:15 pm



### Buffalo's Outer Harbor: Grand opening of Wilkeson Pointe includes expanded waterfront activities

Jul. 28th, 2025 4:15 pm





## Niagara County to host Purple Heart ceremony Sunday, Aug. 3

Jul. 28th, 2025 4:15 pm



## CentsLess Racing to make waves at Thunder on the Niagara

Jul. 25th, 2025 11:00 am



## Lewiston gifts Piper final resting place

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## Full free edition: The Tribune-Sentinel/Dispatch for July 25, 2025

Jul. 25th, 2025 7:00 am



## Q&A: Kingdom Bound artist Riley Clemmons shares life, hope, joy with new music

Jul. 25th, 2025 7:00 am



## Q&A: Kingdom Bound 'Counting My Blessings' to have Seph Schlueter part of concert lineup

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## Hochul signs legislation at Buffalo Bills training camp for schools to have cardiac emergency plans

Jul. 24th, 2025 11:55 am

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