

The 2026 Parent Guide to School Tech Policy

Phones, AI and your child's school in Connecticut and New York

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Almost every school now has a phone rule. AI is a different story: only 18 percent of teachers in a 2026 Gallup survey said they had formal AI guidance from school leaders. This guide helps you find your school's phone rule and set AI rules at home.

Updated September 2026. School policies are still changing, so check your district's current handbook before relying on any detail here.

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Connecticut and New York, side by side

Two neighboring states took two different paths. Here is what each one requires as of September 2026.

	Connecticut	New York
Statewide phone rule?	No. A bell-to-bell bill passed the House 117 to 31 in April 2026, but the Senate never voted on it.	Yes. Bell-to-bell limits have been required in every school since the 2025-26 school year.
Who decides	Each district. The State Board of Education strongly recommends bell to bell (guidance adopted August 5, 2026).	The state sets the rule. Each district picks its storage method.
When phones are off limits	Set by your district.	The whole school day, including homeroom, lunch, recess, study halls and passing time.
Required exceptions	State guidance says policies should include exceptions for IEPs, 504 plans, health plans and other documented needs.	Schoolwork a staff member allows, health needs, emergencies, translation, family caregiving, IEPs and 504 plans.
Reaching your child	Set by your district.	Every policy must explain how parents can reach students during the day.
Screen time on school devices	Guidance asks districts to adopt "purposeful screen time" policies and review their educational technology.	Not covered by the phone law.
AI in schools	AI guidance published by the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology. No state requirement for district AI policies.	No state requirement for district AI policies.
Where to look it up	Your student handbook or district website.	ny.gov/phonefree has a searchable list of school policies.
What to watch	State leaders have signaled plans to bring the bell-to-bell bill back in 2027.	Schools must report each year on enforcement, starting September 1, 2026.

Why Connecticut siblings may have different rules

70% of CT elementary schools had bell-to-bell rules	71% of CT middle schools had bell-to-bell rules	31% of CT high schools had bell-to-bell rules	Every school in New York is required to limit phones bell to bell
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Connecticut figures are from a January 2026 state scan cited in the State Board's August 2026 guidance. Some high schools, including Greenwich and New Canaan, tightened their rules for 2026-27.

Questions to ask your school

Check off what you already know. Bring the rest to back-to-school night, a parent-teacher conference or a short email.

The phone rule

- ☐ Is the rule for class time only, or the whole day, from the first bell to the last?
- ☐ Does it cover lunch, study hall and passing time?
- ☐ Where do phones go: a backpack, a locker or a locked pouch?
- ☐ Do smartwatches, earbuds and tablets count?
- ☐ What happens the first time a student breaks the rule? The second time?

Exceptions

- ☐ Which exceptions does the policy list?
- ☐ If my child has an IEP, a 504 plan or a health plan, how is device use handled?
- ☐ Who do I talk to if my child needs a device for a documented need?

Staying in touch

- ☐ How do I reach my child during the school day?
- ☐ How will the school contact families in an emergency?

AI and schoolwork

- ☐ Does the district have an AI policy? Where is it posted?
- ☐ Does each course syllabus say whether AI is allowed?
- ☐ If AI is allowed, what can students use it for?
- ☐ Should students tell the teacher when they used AI? How?
- ☐ What happens if a teacher thinks work was written with AI?

School devices

- ☐ How much of homework happens on a school-issued laptop?
- ☐ Does the school limit screen time or block certain sites?

A good place to start: the phone rule is usually in the student handbook. AI rules, if they exist, are often in each course syllabus. If a syllabus says nothing, a short email to the teacher early in the year can clear it up.

Our school's rules, on one page

Fill in one sheet for each child. Keep it on the fridge or in your phone's notes.

Child's name and grade	
School and district	
Type of phone rule	☐ Class time only ☐ Bell to bell ☐ Locked storage ☐ Not sure yet
Where the phone goes	☐ Backpack ☐ Locker ☐ Pouch ☐ Other:
Exceptions that apply to my child	
How to reach my child during the day	
Where I found the policy (link or page)	
District AI policy?	☐ Yes, posted at: ☐ No ☐ Not sure yet

AI rules by class

Class	AI allowed?	Allowed for what?	Where it says so

Tip: write "not stated" when a syllabus says nothing. That tells you which teachers to ask.

Our family AI agreement

If your child's classes don't spell out AI rules, set your own at home. Fill this in together. Your child's teachers always have the final say for their classes.

AI is OK for schoolwork when I use it to...

- ☐ Brainstorm ideas before I start
- ☐ Explain something I don't understand after I have tried it myself
- ☐ Quiz me so I can practice
- ☐ Check my work for mistakes I can then fix myself
- ☐ Something else: _____

AI is not OK for...

- ☐ Writing any part of work I turn in as my own
- ☐ Tests, quizzes or take-home exams
- ☐ Any class where the teacher says no
- ☐ Something else: _____

Before and after I use AI, I will...

- ☐ Check the syllabus or ask the teacher first
- ☐ Tell my teacher when I used it, if the class asks
- ☐ Show a parent what I asked and what it said, if they ask
- ☐ Something else: _____

We will look at this agreement again on: _____

Student

Parent

Date

Next week on our blog, we get specific about AI and homework in a two-part series. Find it at [successfulstudyskills4students.com](https://www.successfulstudyskills4students.com).

Where to find local policies

What these districts had published as of September 2026. Your current handbook is always the final word.

Greenwich	"No Cell Bell to Bell" across elementary, middle and high school. District page
Darien	Middle school phones off and in lockers all day. High school grades 9 to 11 use locked pouches. District page
Westport	Staples High School moved to a bell-to-bell rule with lockers in November 2025. Westport Journal
New Canaan	New Canaan High School is a fully phone-free campus for 2026-27, using locked pouches. District article
Fairfield and Southport	Phones secured from the first bell until dismissal. District FAQ
Chappaqua	Policy 5031 prohibits internet-enabled devices during the school day. Board policy
Scarsdale and Armonk	Look up the current policy in New York's statewide list. ny.gov/phonefree

Phone rules remove one distraction. Focus is a skill.

Planning, getting started without reminders and staying on task can all be taught. S4 Study Skills helps students in Fairfield County and Westchester build those habits through executive function coaching and tutoring. [Book a consultation](#) or call 203-307-5455.

Sources

NCSL, Enacted State Legislation: Cellphone Use in Schools (updated July 15, 2026). CT Mirror, April 27, May 6 and August 5, 2026. Connecticut State Board of Education, Position Statement and Policy Guidance: Personal and Purposeful Technology Use (August 5, 2026). New York State Phone-Free Schools Law, governor.ny.gov. AI for Education, State AI Guidance (October 2025). K-12 Dive, July 9, 2026. Gallup and Walton Family Foundation teacher survey (May 2026). District pages and local news as linked above.

This guide is for general information and is not legal advice. Policies can change during the school year.