June 23, 2026

Subject: Implementation of Rhode Island General Law 16-21-43 Regarding Cell Phone Use in Schools

Dear Parents, Guardians, Students, and Staff,

Rhode Island General Law 16-21-43, effective August 1, 2026, requires all school districts to establish and enforce policies limiting student access to personal electronic devices during the school day. The purpose of this law is to reduce distractions, improve student engagement, and promote a positive learning environment.

In accordance with Rhode Island General Law 16-21-43 and Warwick Public Schools policy, students may not use personal electronic devices, including cell phones, smartwatches, earbuds, and similar technology during the school day. Devices must remain silenced and stored during the school day, and may not be used in classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, restrooms, or other school settings without permission. "The district shall make exceptions for student personal device use that provide access to assistive technology necessary to comply with individualized student 504 plans, individualized education plans (IEP), medical needs such as glucose monitoring, and/or a plan to support emergent multilingual learners (MLL) students with appropriate language access programs and services to ensure the provision of appropriate, meaningful public education. The allowable exceptions shall be written into the student's identified plan and approved by the appropriate team or coordinator. Students provided an exception to this policy shall not be segregated from students without such exception. Exceptions shall also be made in the event of an emergency." (Rhode Island General Law 16-21-43)

To ensure consistency across Warwick's secondary schools, the following progressive consequences will be implemented:

- **First and Second Offenses:** Device confiscated and held in the main office until the end of the school day.
- **Third Offense:** Device confiscated and must be picked up by a parent/guardian and/or released to the student at the end of the day after a parent conference (phone, virtual, and/or in person)
- **Subsequent Offenses:** Parent meeting and progressive disciplinary measures, which may also include a cell phone behavior plan and loss of privileges.
- Students who refuse to surrender a device when directed by a staff member will be subject to additional disciplinary action.

We recognize that families often rely on cell phones to communicate with their children. If there is an urgent need to contact a student during the school day, parents and guardians should continue to call the school's main office. Students may also request permission to use a school phone when necessary in the main office area.

Our goal is to comply with Rhode Island law while creating learning environments where students can fully engage in instruction, collaborate with peers, and develop healthy technology habits. Research continues to show that reducing cell phone distractions leads to improved academic performance, increased attention, and stronger school communities. We appreciate your partnership and support as we implement these requirements. Additional school-specific procedures will be shared by building administrators before the start of the school year. If you have any questions, please contact your student's principal.

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Warwick Public Schools

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WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOLS DO NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF AGE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, RACE, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, COLOR, OR DISABILITY IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS.