

BHSEC-M Cell Phone Policy - Fall 2025

Effective: September 2025

To foster a distraction-free academic environment and comply with Chancellor's Regulation A-413 and New York State Education Law 2803, Bard High School Early College Manhattan has implemented the following cell phone and electronic device policy. The purpose of this policy is simple but powerful: to create a focused and productive learning environment where students can engage without distraction, think critically, and prepare for both college and life beyond.

This policy was developed in collaboration with the School Leadership Team and will undergo annual review.

Overview

- All student cell phones and smartwatches will be collected by school personnel when students arrive at the school building each morning.
- Devices will be collected and securely stored for the duration of the school day.
- Devices will be returned to students at the end of each student's instructional day, or at 3:30 PM, whichever comes first.
- Devices will not be returned for outside lunch or any other time during the school day.

Personal Electronic Devices Subject to Collection

- Personal cell phones
- Smartwatches (e.g., Apple Watch, Samsung Galaxy Watch)
- Other internet-enabled personal electronic devices not being used for academic purposes

Storage

- Student devices will be securely stored in individually labeled bins (each student will be assigned their own 7.5" x 4" bin—see the Portable Bin Organizer image on the following page).
- There will be one portable bin organizer per grade.
- Once all phones are collected, the 4 portable bin organizers will be secured in the 2nd floor storage closet.
- The closet will remain locked for the duration of the school day.
- Bins and portable bin organizers will be monitored by school personnel during all arrival and dismissal times.

Portable Bin Organizer, 1 per grade



Procedure

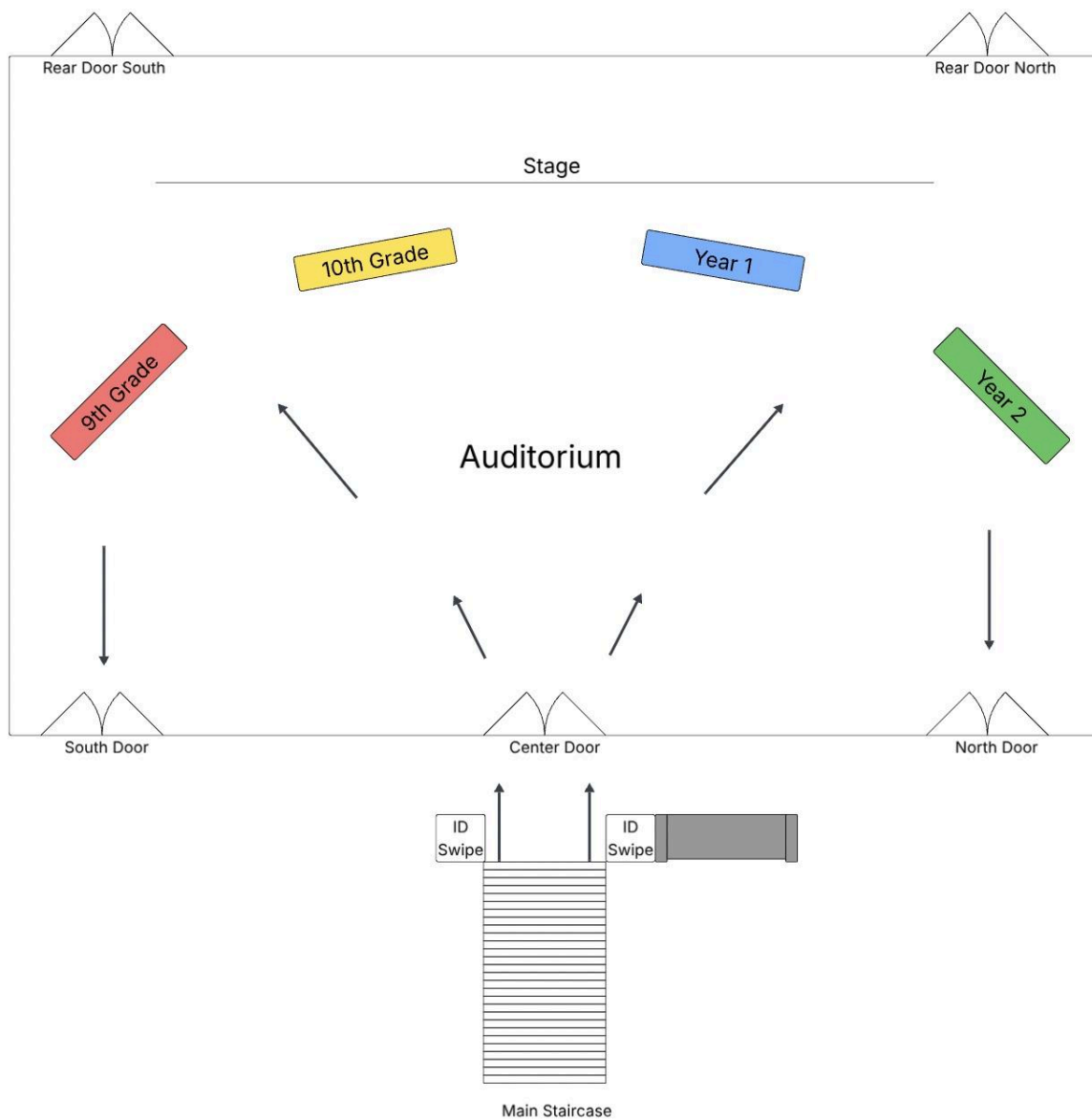
Arrival

- Students enter the main entrance on Mangin Street and proceed up to the 2nd floor via the main staircase.
- After swiping their IDs at the CAASS terminal, students will enter the auditorium through the center doors and find their grade's portable, color-coded, bin organizer.
 - Red: 9th grade
 - Yellow: 10th grade
 - Blue: Year 1
 - Green: Year 2
- Students place their cell phones and/or smart watches in their individually labeled bins
- Students exit the auditorium through the north or south doors and proceed to breakfast or class.
- Students who voluntarily arrive to the building before the start of their instructional day must submit their devices upon arrival.
- Students who arrive late to school will submit their devices upon arrival. Devices will be placed in students' individual bins by school personnel and returned following normal protocols.

Dismissal

- After their last scheduled instructional period, students may enter the auditorium through the north or south doors, retrieve devices from individually labeled bins, and exit through the center doors.
- Students with no scheduled 8th period class may retrieve their devices at the end of 7th period, but they must leave the building immediately.
- Students with no scheduled 8th period class who wish to remain in the building, must wait to retrieve their devices until 3:30 PM, the end of 8th period.
- All remaining devices will be returned at the end of the instructional day at 3:30.
- Students are permitted to have their devices with them during after school activities.

Device Collection Schematic



Device Use During Non-Instructional Times

Students will not have access to their devices at any point during the school day. This includes passing periods (the 4 minutes between each class), study periods (AKA free periods), or lunch. Students who choose to leave the school building to get lunch off campus will not have their phones returned to them for their trip outside of the school building.

Emergency Contact

To ensure that students and families can reach each other in cases of emergency, school landline phones are available throughout the school building.

Parents calling to reach their student

Parents can call the school's main phone line at 212-995-8479 to request to speak with their student. In most cases, a callback number will be requested and students will return their parents' phone call as soon as possible.

Students calling their parents

Students may request the use of a landline phone to call their parents during the school day. This should occur during a study or lunch period, or with written permission from a teacher. In cases of emergency, students will be permitted to use the phone in the Main Office or the nurse's office immediately.

Landline Phone Availability (will be updated)

Landline phones are available upon request in the following school spaces

| Room Number | Staff Name | Staff Role |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 204 | Jasmine Coombs | Smart Scholars Director |
| 205 Book Room | Betty Zeneli | School Aide |
| 207 | Nurse's Office | School Nurse |
| 209 | Sylvie Epstein | Admissions Director |
| 209 | Beth Cheikes | Director of College Transfer Office |
| 209 | Val Thomson | Senior Advisor to the Principal |
| 228 Main Office | Carol Turitz | Parent Coordinator |
| 228 Main Office | Zayra Taveras | Administrative Assistant |
| 332 | Stacie Millman | Guidance Counselor (students L-Z) |
| 405 | Clare Nolan | Librarian |

| | | |
|------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 407A | Bill Hinrichs | Dean of Academic Life |
| 407B | Adeodat Ilboudo | Dean of Studies |
| 422 | Jess Chock-Goldman | Director of Clinical Services |
| 526 | Anna Azeglio-Stranahan | Guidance Counselor (students A-K) |

Medical, IEP, and 504 Accommodation Related Exceptions

All requests for exceptions will be submitted to the Main Office using the [BHSEC Cell Phone Policy Exception Request](#) form. Requests will be reviewed by appropriate school staff and will be approved or denied by the principal. Requests that do not receive approval may be resubmitted once per marking period.

Medical Exceptions

Students with medical needs may be permitted to carry and use personal internet-enabled electronic devices during the school day when absolutely necessary for healthcare management. A licensed medical provider must confirm in writing that the device is medically necessary to monitor or alert the student regarding a medical condition. Students with a documented medical exception may use the device only as specified in the approved plan—for example, to receive alerts from a glucose monitor or insulin pump. All other policy rules remain in effect.

IEP and 504 Accommodation Exceptions

Students may be eligible for an exception to the school's personal device policy if:

- The student's IEP or 504 Plan explicitly authorizes the use of a personal device for medical or instructional purposes.
- The use of the personal device is essential for the student to access the curriculum, communicate, or manage a documented medical condition.

School personnel will prioritize issuing school tablets and laptops to students with IEP or 504 related needs.

Response to Policy Violations

When a student does not follow this policy, our primary goal is to guide behavior in a supportive and respectful manner. If students are seen with phones or smartwatches in the school building, school personnel will simply help the student be in compliance with the policy. This means that the student's device will be put in its designated bin until the end of the school day, at which time the device will be returned to the student following normal protocols. Students will not be suspended solely for cell phone policy violations.

Consistent with the NYC DOE's [Citywide Behavioral Expectations](#) and the school's commitment to restorative practices, our responses are designed to promote accountability, rebuild trust, and strengthen our learning community.

All incidents of non-compliance will be addressed using a progressive, developmentally appropriate approach. In addition to the approach stated above, this may include:

- Gentle reminders and redirection
- Private conversations to reflect on the impact of the behavior
- Guidance conferences involving the student, and when appropriate, a parent or caregiver
- Collaborative problem-solving or the development of a behavioral agreement
- Restorative practices, such as community circles or structured dialogue with peers and staff

In rare cases where device misuse persistently disrupts the school environment, more formal corrective actions may be considered in accordance with the NYC DOE Discipline Code, ensuring that all steps are aligned with the principles of fairness, dignity, and student growth.

Throughout this process, our focus remains on supporting a productive learning environment, learning from mistakes, and fostering the habits of self-regulation and responsible decision-making. Families are viewed as essential partners in this work and will be engaged early and meaningfully.

Conclusion

This policy reflects our shared commitment at BHSEC Manhattan to creating a learning environment where every student can thrive—an environment rooted in respect, focus, and intellectual curiosity. In alignment with New York City regulations and New York State education law, this policy ensures that our school remains a safe and supportive place for deep learning and academic risk-taking.

As part of the Bard College network, BHSEC is guided by the belief that high school students are capable of college-level work when they are given the structure, trust, and freedom to engage fully in their studies. By setting clear expectations around the use of personal devices, we are safeguarding the time and space needed for meaningful dialogue, rigorous scholarship, and authentic community building.

Anticipated Questions

Q: Can students still have personal computers or tablets in school?

The state and city level policies state that “Students may not use personal internet-enabled electronic devices during the school day.” School administration is considering options to allow students to use their personal tablets or laptops for academic purposes only. Classroom teachers and other support personnel can more easily monitor students’ use of tablets and computers in class than cell phones.

Based on our experience with this policy in the Fall Semester, this may be a part of the policy that is revised.

Q: How will students who experience negative emotional responses (i.e. separation anxiety, loneliness, isolation, disconnection from peer groups) be supported?

BHSEC's Social Worker (Dr. Jess Chock-Goldman) and Guidance Counselors (Anna Azeglio-Stranahan students A-L; and Stacie Millman, students M-Z) are highly qualified mental health professionals who are prepared to respond to students' social and emotional needs. Additionally, the BHSEC faculty and staff are all caring individuals who can support students with whom they have good relationships. Students should speak up and ask for support if they are struggling.

Additionally, in most of our classes, teachers utilize student discussion as part of their instructional method. Structured discussion is a productive way for students to practice and develop social skills independent of their cell phone use. Through this method, many students make positive connections to their peers, often leading to friendships.

While students' needs may be varied and unpredictable, our staff is prepared to respond to the needs of our students when they arise. These thoughtful responses will be planned collaboratively among staff and as best practices are identified, staff will receive relevant training.

Q: How will school officials respond to computer or tablet misuse?

School officials will adhere to the NYCPS [Citywide Behavioral Expectations to Support Student Learning](#) (AKA The Blue Book), which states that in all situations of misbehavior schools should adhere to a "progressive discipline" model (see page 29 in the Blue Book). This approach to behavior correction requires school officials and students to:

- understand why the behavior is not aligned with behavior standards and the harm it has caused;
- understand what they could have done differently in the same situation;
- take responsibility for their actions;
- be given the opportunity to learn pro-social strategies and skills to use in the future; and
- understand the progression of more stringent responses if the behavior reoccurs.

BHSEC administration will adhere to this approach and will focus on supporting students to follow school rules; in cases where unwanted behavior continues, BHSEC administration will engage in progressive discipline. A more detailed description of possible behavior responses will be outlined in the Student and Family Handbook.

Q: How will school officials respond to students who are dishonest about having a phone in school or sneak a phone past school officials?

When students are dishonest about their use of prohibited devices this will be considered a violation of school rules and the behavior correction method—outlined in the section above—will be utilized.

Q: If a student violates this policy, will their parents be notified?

Yes, parent involvement will occur at the discretion of school personnel and will likely be used when students repeatedly violate the cell phone policy.

Q: Will students be safe leaving campus for lunch without a phone?

Leaving campus without a phone is a choice that families must make with their students.

In the event of an emergency, there are several nearby locations where students can go for help:

NYCPS Schools within walking distance:

- NEST+m (111 Columbia St)
- P.S. 188 The Island School (442 E Houston St)
- Marta Valle High School (145 Stanton St)
- Seward Park Campus (350 Grand St)

Other locations where students can go in the event of an emergency:

- NYPD 7th Precinct (19½ Pitt St)
- Hamilton Fish Recreation Center (128 Pitt St)
- FDNY Ladder 18 / Engine 15 (25 Pitt St)
- Seward Park Library (192 E Broadway)
- Tompkins Square Library (331 E 10th St)
- Ottendorfer Library (135 Second Avenue)

We encourage all students to engage in behaviors that promote safety in everyday life:

- Remain aware of surroundings
- Avoid speaking to strangers or unknown persons
- Use the buddy system and travel in groups when possible
- Stay in well-lit, populated areas
- If you feel unsafe, go to one of the safe places listed above
- Trust your instincts—when possible, remove yourself from unsafe situations

Q: If a major city emergency occurs when students are off campus for lunch, what should students do and what will the school do?

School Actions

- Request NYPD support.
- Contact all parents via email to communicate what the emergency is and how the school is responding.

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- Use the CAASS system (computer terminals where students swipe their ID cards when entering and leaving the building) to identify which students are inside and outside of the building.
- Conduct phone outreach to parents of students who are outside of the building.
- Contact safety locations listed above to alert personnel at these locations of the emergency and notify them that students may be seeking safe haven.
- Remain present in the school and in communication with parents, emergency services, and safe haven personnel until all students are accounted for.
- When safe, school personnel will survey the neighborhood for BHSEC students by visiting the safe haven sites and other local businesses.

Student Actions

- Go to one of the safe havens identified above
- Request access to a phone to call their parents
- Await direction from NYPD or school personnel

Students, parents, and staff who read this policy are welcome to submit additional questions, which may be added to the list above.