# South Jersey schools tighten cellphone rules to curb distractions from 2025



In a decisive move aimed at minimising classroom distractions, two South Jersey school districts, Deptford and Moorestown, are implementing stricter cellphone policies starting in the 2025-2026 school year. Deptford's School Superintendent, Kevin Kanauss, announced an "Off and away during the school day" policy that obliges students to keep all electronic devices turned off and stored away during school hours. This policy is particularly noteworthy as it reflects a growing trend among educational authorities to address concerns related to the impact of cellphone use on student focus and mental health.

The initiative by Deptford follows a comprehensive survey involving parents, students, and staff, which revealed significant frustrations among teachers regarding non-compliance with previous, less stringent cellphone rules. Notably, one frustrated teacher shared insights, stating that students often disregarded classroom etiquette, exacerbating the learning environment. Kanauss noted, “It became very apparent that we needed to come up with something a little more strict. It’s no longer going to be a distraction to the learning day.” Under the new guidelines, students can retrieve their devices only after school hours or when they are on the bus, allowing for limited flexibility while maintaining a focus on academic engagement.

Moorestown's approach will mirror that of Deptford, requiring K-8 students to securely store their phones during school hours, with high schoolers permitted to use their devices between classes and during lunch. This balancing act is designed to cater to the needs of modern adolescents who regularly rely on technology, whilst also facilitating a conducive learning environment. Superintendent Courtney McNeely emphasised the importance of creating a space in classrooms where students can "focus, engage, and thrive."

As these districts take action, they are not operating in isolation. The New Jersey Legislature is currently considering a statewide policy to restrict cellphone use in classrooms, a proposal put forth by Governor Phil Murphy as part of a broader initiative to address youth mental health and enhance the learning environment. Should the legislation pass, it will require all school districts in New Jersey to create policies that align with the state’s guidelines concerning cellphone and social media usage.

Various other school districts across New Jersey, including Cherry Hill and Woodbury, have already adopted or are exploring similar restrictions. Reports indicate that Woodbury, which has implemented a complete cellphone ban, has experienced markedly fewer disciplinary issues and an overall improved school climate, further substantiating the potential benefits of such policies.

However, the move has not been without controversy. A segment of parents has expressed concerns about the implications of a widespread ban, particularly in emergencies such as school shootings. In response to such fears, Kanauss reassured parents that students would not be required to surrender their phones entirely; they may keep them on their person and access them via designated school offices if necessary. This compromise aims to ensure student safety while upholding a strict policy designed to enhance educational outcomes.

In this evolving landscape, schools are grappling with how best to integrate technology into learning while safeguarding the educational environment. With initiatives like the one laid out by Kanauss, there is hope that the balance between technology use and maintaining focus will lead to significant improvements in student engagement and learning outcomes acrossNew Jersey.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.inquirer.com/education/south-jersey-schools-cellphone-policies-20250607.html), [[2]](https://www.inquirer.com/education/south-jersey-schools-cellphone-policies-20250607.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.inquirer.com/education/south-jersey-schools-cellphone-policies-20250607.html), [[5]](https://www.inquirer.com/education/cherry-hill-schools-cell-phone-ban-policy-20240816.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.inquirer.com/education/south-jersey-schools-cellphone-policies-20250607.html), [[3]](https://www.njsba.org/news-information/school-leader/cell-phone-use-restrictions-are-coming-what-you-need-to-know-as-a-board-member/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.inquirer.com/education/cell-phone-bans-schools-policies-20241220.html), [[7]](https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562025/approved/20250219a.shtml)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S4000/3695_S2.HTM), [[4]](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S4000/3695_S2.HTM)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.inquirer.com/education/south-jersey-schools-cellphone-policies-20250607.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.inquirer.com/education/south-jersey-schools-cellphone-policies-20250607.html> - Deptford and Moorestown school districts in South Jersey are implementing stricter cell phone policies to reduce classroom distractions. Deptford's new policy, effective from the 2025-2026 school year, requires students to keep electronic devices turned off and stored away during school hours. Moorestown is also revising its policy to enforce similar restrictions. These actions coincide with New Jersey's legislative consideration of a statewide cell phone ban in schools.
3. <https://www.njsba.org/news-information/school-leader/cell-phone-use-restrictions-are-coming-what-you-need-to-know-as-a-board-member/> - The New Jersey School Boards Association discusses the impending requirement for school districts to adopt cell phone and social media usage policies. Governor Phil Murphy has proposed a statewide ban on cell phones in classrooms, aiming to address youth mental health issues and improve learning environments. The proposal includes a $3 million budget allocation to support schools in implementing these policies. ([njsba.org](https://www.njsba.org/news-information/school-leader/cell-phone-use-restrictions-are-coming-what-you-need-to-know-as-a-board-member/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S4000/3695_S2.HTM> - Senate Bill No. 3695 in New Jersey mandates the Department of Education to develop guidelines for student use of cell phones and social media platforms. The bill requires school boards to adopt policies consistent with these guidelines, addressing issues such as prohibiting non-academic use during classroom instruction and permitting use in emergencies. ([pub.njleg.state.nj.us](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/S4000/3695_S2.HTM?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.inquirer.com/education/cherry-hill-schools-cell-phone-ban-policy-20240816.html> - Cherry Hill School District is implementing a new policy banning cell phones and wireless communication devices during class sessions. The policy aims to enhance student wellness and mental health by reducing distractions. Exceptions are made for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or 504 Plans, and devices can be used during study hall, lunch, and recess. ([inquirer.com](https://www.inquirer.com/education/cherry-hill-schools-cell-phone-ban-policy-20240816.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.inquirer.com/education/cell-phone-bans-schools-policies-20241220.html> - New Jersey schools, including Cherry Hill and Cinnaminson, are adopting cell phone restrictions to curb classroom distractions. Woodbury School District reports positive outcomes since implementing a cell phone ban, citing fewer disciplinary issues and improved school climate. The state is considering legislation to require all districts to adopt similar policies. ([inquirer.com](https://www.inquirer.com/education/cell-phone-bans-schools-policies-20241220.html?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562025/approved/20250219a.shtml> - Governor Phil Murphy visited Woodbury Junior-Senior High School to promote support for phone-free schools. He announced a proposed $3 million investment in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget to assist school districts in transitioning to phone-free learning environments. The initiative aims to reduce classroom distractions and improve student learning. ([nj.gov](https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562025/approved/20250219a.shtml?utm_source=openai))