

IMPORTANT UPDATE:

STUDENT CELL PHONE AND SMART DEVICE POSSESSION AND USE IN SCHOOLS



As you may have already heard, on May 31, Governor Glenn Youngkin signed legislation **mandating bell-to-bell cell phone-free education** in Virginia.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM THE EXECUTIVE ORDER LAST YEAR?

Executive Order 33 (July 2024) directed the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to craft guidance for "cell phone-free education" during instructional time. **It encouraged but did not require school divisions to adopt bell-to-bell policies.**

New Legislation (HB1961/SB738, signed May 2025) transforms that guidance into state law, mandating that all public K-12 schools **must enforce a bell-to-bell cellphone ban** throughout the school day.

Last school year, RCHS students demonstrated strong compliance with the cell phone policy, limiting their device use to lunchtime. **However, now that it is signed into law, we must enforce the bell-to-bell cellphone ban during SY25-26.**

RCES, which already had a bell-to-bell restriction in place, will continue this practice.



CELL PHONE FREE, BELL-TO-BELL

"Bell to bell" means after the first bell rings at the start of the school day to begin instructional time until the dismissal bell rings at the end of the school day. **"Bell to bell" includes lunch and time in between class periods.**



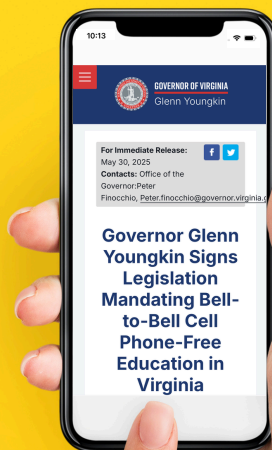
INCLUDES ALL SMART DEVICES

"Smart device" means any personal electronic device that can connect to the internet and wirelessly collect, process, and transmit data, including smart watches and tablets.



STUDENT EXEMPTIONS

Any student who, pursuant to an Individualized Education Plan, Section 504 Plan, individualized health care plan, or Limited English Proficiency plan, is permitted to possess and use a cell phone or smart device on school property, including in the classroom, from bell to bell to monitor or address a health concern or as an accommodation or assistive technology support.



More information will be forthcoming from the schools about appropriate storage of cell phones and personal devices during the school day.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we implement this state requirement together.