



BROCKPORT

Central School District

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Dear Brockport Middle School and High School Students and Families,

In 2020, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 77 percent of U.S. schools had moved to prohibit cellphones for nonacademic purposes. Michael Rich, an associate professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and an associate professor of social and behavioral sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, says that phones and school don't mix: Students can't meaningfully absorb information while also texting, scrolling, or watching YouTube videos. "The human brain is incapable of thinking more than one thing at a time," he said. "And so what we think of as multitasking is actually rapid-switch-tasking. And the problem with that is that switch-tasking may cover a lot of ground in terms of different subjects, but it doesn't go deeply into any of them." A 2016 study on the impact of cell phones on students' academic performance reported that when cell phones were banned from classrooms, standardized test scores went up approximately 6% on average and more than 14% for low-achieving students.

Cell phone usage both in and out of the classroom is also having a significant detrimental effect on our students' mental health. Teenagers in the United States who spend 3 hours or more a day on electronic devices are at a 35% higher risk of suicide than those who spend less than one hour on them per day. Additionally, recent studies suggested that the presence of cell phones and related technologies in classrooms contribute to higher rates of cyberbullying with roughly 33% of teens reported being cyberbullied which can have severely negative, even tragic, effects on student mental health and safety.

Understandably, it is common for parents and students to express concerns regarding prohibitive cellphone policies, in particular, related to access to devices in case of an emergency, like a school shooting, health-related episode or natural disaster. Ken Trump, president of the school safety consulting firm National School Safety and Security Services, says students' focus should not be on their phone during a potential school emergency. "The general rule is, when you're in a lockdown, educators and safety officials don't want kids on the phones because you want their full 100 percent attention on the teacher or other educators," A phone can make unwanted noises, and in a silent lockdown, even a vibration could be too loud. Depending on their age, kids might also be tempted to post about an ongoing incident to social media, which Trump said could both inspire other potential gunmen seeking fame or reveal details about their location. Even the ability to call 911 isn't a good reason, because an entire school full of people calling at once could overload a switchboard.

Throughout the 2022-2023 year, our Brockport High School Behavior Team and Oliver Middle School Core Values Team have been discussing the impact cell phones have on our

learning environments and what interventions we might implement in order to ensure all students have optimal opportunities for learning. Additionally, feedback in the recent BCSD Thought Exchange indicated cell phones and their impact on learning to be a significant concern for many school community members. Attached you can read the **Brockport Secondary Schools Comprehensive Electronic Device Policy**. This document is intended to communicate to all students, families, and staff at Oliver Middle School and Brockport High School our expectations, practices, and policies for cell phone use in our building and instructional spaces. This policy has been created in collaboration with our students, parents, and staff to proactively support focused and safe academic learning environments. We appreciate your support in this policy.

Should you or your student need support in managing personal technology, please contact a Brockport High School or Oliver Middle School counselor, social worker, or addiction prevention counselor. We also recommend families consider use of applications like Google Family Link, Screen Time for iPhone, the Android Parental Control App or any similar application that can allow parents to restrict content, approve or disapprove apps, set screen times, and more.

Sincerely,



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