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GOVERNOR

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SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAIʻI
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

May 18, 2026

Aloha Parents and Guardians,

Supporting safe, focused and engaging learning environments for our students is always a top priority. As cell phone use has become more common among students, schools are seeing the challenges that constant digital access can create during the school day. We are taking steps to help students stay focused in class and strengthen in-person connections at school.

Beginning with the first day of instruction for the 2026-27 school year, all Hawaiʻi State Department of Education schools will implement a new statewide cell phone policy adopted by the Hawaiʻi State Board of Education (Board). This means:

- **For elementary and middle/intermediate schools:** Cell phones must remain off and away during the entire school day — from the first bell to the last bell. Phones should be stored in student backpacks or designated classroom storage areas.

- **For high schools:** Cell phones must remain off and away during instructional time. High school administrators may allow use during non-instructional periods, such as lunch and passing periods. During class time, phones should be stored in backpacks or designated classroom storage areas.

As outlined in the Board policy, exceptions will be made for documented medical or educational needs, reporting emergencies, perceived safety threats, or instructional purposes approved by a teacher or administrator.

Parents and guardians may continue to contact the school's main office for urgent messages or family matters, and staff will ensure important information is relayed to students.

We ask for your partnership in discussing these upcoming changes with your child and supporting responsible technology habits that aim to improve academic focus and support student well-being.

Additional school-specific guidance and procedures relating to this change will be shared prior to the start of the new school year. Mahalo for your support and understanding.

Sincerely,

Keith T. Hayashi
Superintendent

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