



YESHIVAH OF FLATBUSH ישיבת פלטבוש

HOULLOU ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

בית הספר היסודי על שם משפחת כלו

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Lower School Policy for Cell Phone Use and Ownership

At Yeshivah of Flatbush, we prioritize creating a secure and optimal environment for learning and socialization for all students. Research continues to show that the increased use of smartphones by elementary-aged children has contributed significantly to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, as well as long-term declines in academic performance. The research goes so far as to conclude that even the presence of a smartphone in the proximity of a classroom leads to higher rates of distractibility and lower academic achievement and performance. Empirical observations within our own school setting clearly highlights these challenges. Students' eagerness to engage with gaming and messaging apps during arrival and dismissal times results in easy distractions. This behavior significantly detracts from the serious learning environment we strive to maintain and encourages negative social behaviors towards both students and staff members.

In order to ensure a safe and conducive social and educational environment for all students, Lower School students are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

For Lower School Students in Grades 1-4:

- All YOF students entering 4th grade and younger may not own their own personal smartphone or smartwatch at home or school. Our expectation is that this policy will be in effect until they reach 8th grade.
- Parents who wish for their child to have a means of communication in their possession while traveling to and from school should consider purchasing a smartphone-alternative device (recommended options are listed [here](#)). Parents who wish to be able to locate their child on their way to or from school should consider purchasing an [Airtag](#) or [Tile](#).

For Lower School Students in Grade 5:

While we recognize that a significant number of students in our population may already own and use smartphones in Grade 5, Yeshivah of Flatbush strongly discourages this practice. Instead, we encourage parents to collectively work towards delaying smartphone ownership until children have the cognitive and emotional maturity necessary to handle the challenges that come with owning a smartphone. However, if a parent chooses to allow a Grade 5 student to own a smartphone, the following guidelines must be adhered to. The policy has been designed to align with our Middle School policy as part of our continuous efforts to streamline the transition process between 5th and 6th grades.

- Students who own smartphones and bring them to school must power off the phone PRIOR to entering the building. They are not to use any kind of cell phone at any time during the school day on school property, including when entering or exiting the building during arrival and dismissal hours.
- Students must turn their phones in at the beginning of their first class of the day. The phones will be collected and stored securely during the school day and will be returned to students at the start of dismissal.
- If a student does not hand in their phone at the start of the school day and is found in possession of it, the consequence can be in the form of suspension for the student and loss of privilege to bring the phone to school in the future.

For All Lower School Students:

- Students may not use any privately-owned devices with cameras, internet access, social media, or games at any time during the school day.
- In the event that a student needs to call home during the day, permission must be obtained from a classroom teacher to use a supervised office phone.
- Parents who need to get their child a message during the school day may email LSoffice@flatbush.org.
- Students who use any type of phone or electronic device to cause harm to other students, engage in cheating, bullying, harassment, take photographs or videos without consent, share screenshots, or create pseudonyms for inappropriate purposes will be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension. Additional disciplinary action may lead to expulsion of students even if it occurs off of school grounds.

A strong parent-school partnership is crucial to the success and well-being of our students. We share a collective responsibility to provide all students with a safe and focused learning environment that nurtures their social skills, fosters learning and engagement, and promotes healthy interpersonal relationships. With this policy, we aim to prioritize the mental health and development of our children. By working together, we can ensure that all children receive the best possible opportunities to grow socially, emotionally, and academically.

For more information about delaying smartphone use and ownership, and how to safely introduce them to your children, you may find the following resource helpful: [Wait Until 8th](#).