



## **Manalapan-Englishtown Middle School**

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Welcome to an exciting new school year! I hope this letter finds you well. As we begin the year, I want to remind you of our cell phone policy, which requires all students to turn off and store their cell phones in lockers during the school day ("off and away"). This policy also applies to all personal electronic devices, including smartwatches and wireless earbuds such as AirPods. Our goal is to maintain a learning environment focused on academic growth and free from the distractions these devices can create. We kindly remind you that all electronic devices must be "off and away" during the school day. If students are found using these devices the devices may be confiscated, and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with District Policy 5516 - Use of Electronic Communication and Recording Devices.

One of the major distractions caused by cell phones is social media. We would also like to highlight that social media platforms like Snapchat and Instagram require users to be 13 years or older, in compliance with The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998. If you have chosen to allow your child to use these platforms, despite this age restriction, we strongly encourage you to establish parental controls and monitor their online activity. Research shows that social media can distract students from their schoolwork and may affect their academic performance. Given that middle school students are the fastest-growing group of social media users, it is crucial that we work together to direct their focus toward academic achievement and classroom engagement.

Our greater concern is the impact of social media and cell phone usage on student well-being. The Cyberbullying Research Center reports a significant increase in cyberbullying, with over 54.6% of students experiencing it. Additionally, research from the American Academy of Pediatrics has found that adolescents who spend more than three hours per day on electronic devices are 34% more likely to experience suicidal thoughts. Social media often exacerbates

feelings of inadequacy by encouraging constant comparisons with others, which can have serious consequences.

To support a positive and productive learning environment, we urge you to discuss the importance of following this policy with your child. Ensuring compliance is a shared responsibility essential to the academic success and well-being of our students. Should you have any questions or need further clarification, please feel free to contact the school office.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in helping us create a safer, more focused learning environment for all students.

Sincerely,  
*Michael Fiorillo*