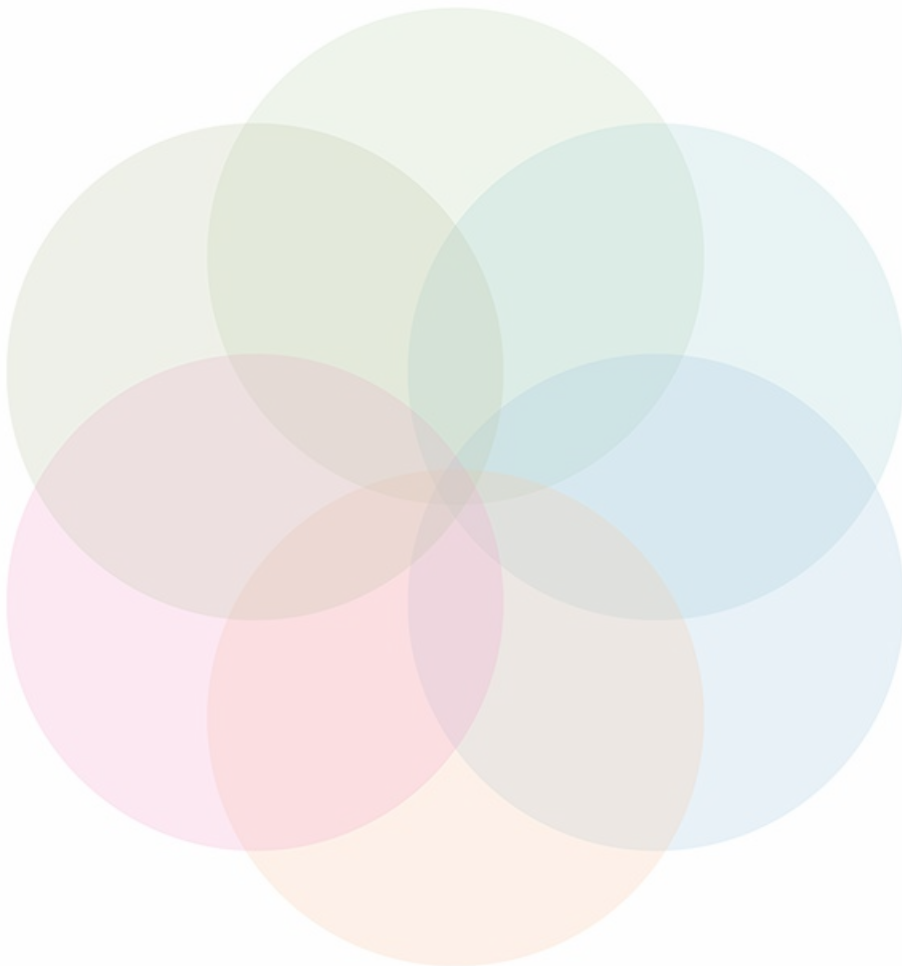


GEORGIA'S DISTRACTION-FREE EDUCATION ACT (HB340): A PLAYBOOK FOR K-8 IMPLEMENTATION

Support the student. Strengthen the routine. Keep learning moving.



INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND HOW TO USE THIS PLAYBOOK

This Bell-to-Bell K-8 Policy Implementation Playbook is a practical resource to help Georgia districts and schools establish and sustain schoolwide, bell-to-bell restrictions on personal electronic devices (PED) in grades K–8. Grounded in the Georgia Distraction-Free Education Act (HB 340), Georgia Department of Education guidance, and implementation experience, the playbook translates requirements into usable decisions, routines, communication tools, and continuous-improvement strategies.

The playbook is designed to support local decision-making while promoting clear expectations, consistent practice, student well-being, focused learning, and strong partnerships among students, families, and educators. It is not intended to replace district policy or legal guidance. Instead, it helps implementation teams move from policy requirements to day-to-day practices that are understandable, workable, and responsive to local context.

Teams may use the playbook as a complete implementation guide or begin with the section that best matches their current stage of work. Readers are encouraged to adapt the tools, scripts, checklists, and examples to local needs; engage stakeholders throughout the process; and use implementation data and feedback to refine practices over time.

Methodology: How This Playbook Was Developed

The Bell-to-Bell Policy Implementation Playbook was developed through a comprehensive review of research, policy, guidance, implementation resources, and stakeholder perspectives. The review began with a scan of legislation and policy activity in all 50 states to understand the national landscape related to student cell phone use. It also included targeted review of implementation approaches in selected large school districts nationwide and representative Georgia school districts.

To identify practical, adaptable strategies, the review examined implementation guidance from 12 states, one Canadian district, and the U.S. Department of Education. These resources helped identify effective and promising practices, common decision points, and considerations for supporting consistent implementation across schools.

The playbook also draws on lessons from Georgia's early implementation experience. This included two webinars led by Georgia school districts implementing bell-to-bell restrictions, as well as questions and discussions shared by participants. Additional insights came from 2025 data collected by Emory University from Georgia district administrators and interviews with Georgia Department of Education leaders involved in the statewide rollout.

Stakeholder perspectives were incorporated through a review of school- and vendor-produced videos featuring educator and student reflections on cell phone restrictions. These accounts offered insight into common concerns, implementation experiences, and perceptions that may change as new routines become established.

Together, these sources provide a balanced, practice-oriented foundation for the playbook. The resulting suggestions, practices, and tools are designed to help districts and schools make informed local decisions while grounding their work in Georgia requirements, implementation experience, and the voices of students, families, and educators.

How this Playbook Is Organized

The playbook is organized around six connected phases of effective schoolwide implementation: Planning, Engaging, Launching, Implementing, Supporting, and Improving. Although the phases are presented in sequence, implementation is not strictly linear. Schools and districts will return to earlier sections as they clarify expectations, respond to emerging needs, and strengthen routines.

Planning helps district and school teams understand legislative requirements, establish a shared vision, make key policy and operational decisions, and align bell-to-bell expectations with existing procedures.

Engaging provides strategies and tools for communicating with staff, students, families, and community partners. It emphasizes clear messaging, listening, trust-building, and shared understanding before and throughout implementation.

Launching offers practical guidance for preparing for the first day, first week, and early months of implementation. It includes quick-start tools, decision points, checklists, and communication supports that help schools begin with clarity and consistency.

Implementing focuses on daily operations, including student routines from arrival through dismissal, classroom and schoolwide expectations, instructional supports, non-digital engagement opportunities, and relationship-centered practices.

Supporting helps teams reinforce expectations with consistency, care, and graduated responses. It includes guidance for addressing exceptions, responding to concerns, strengthening staff alignment, and using instructional and restorative approaches that preserve student dignity and trust.

Improving frames ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement. It helps teams assess fidelity of implementation, review indicators of impact, gather stakeholder feedback, and revise plans based on evidence.

Each section includes short explanatory narratives along with ready-to-adapt tools such as talking points, checklists, scripts, tables, decision guides, and sample procedures. District leaders may find the Planning and Engaging sections especially helpful for establishing direction and communication systems. School leaders and implementation teams may rely most heavily on the Launching, Implementing, and Supporting sections to establish and reinforce daily routines. The Improving section helps all teams sustain the work through regular reflection and data-informed adjustment.

1. PLAN: A BELL-TO-BELL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

USE THIS SECTION alongside the Implementation routines in the Playbook. Local board counsel should review final policy language and local procedures before adoption or revision.

SECTION PURPOSE: This section helps teams establish a clear, legally aligned foundation before selecting procedures. The goal is not simply to restrict devices; it is to build a dependable school-day routine that strengthens attention, relationships, well-being, and coordinated safety response.

1.1. Legislative Context: The Common Floor

Georgia's Distraction-Free Education Act, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-324.8, establishes a statewide expectation for public-school students in kindergarten through grade eight. Its purpose is to promote a positive learning environment free from electronic distractions. Local planning is most effective when the district first identifies the statutory floor and then gives schools clear, workable ways to carry it out.

VISION: A bell-to-bell environment makes focused learning, meaningful interaction, and adult-guided safety response easier to sustain throughout the school day.

Core definitions to use consistently

Term	Planning meaning
Access	Viewing, holding, wearing, or otherwise using a device for communication, internet access, gaming, recording, music, or another common device function.
Bell-to-bell	From the first bell beginning instructional time through the final bell, including instruction, breaks, transitions, assemblies, and other school-related activities in that period.
Distraction-free education	A learning environment where access to personal electronic devices is restricted to minimizing distractions, improving academic outcomes, and increasing meaningful interactions and focused learning experiences.
Personal electronic device (PED)	A portable device capable of transmitting, receiving, or accessing communications, data, or media; examples include smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, e-readers, headphones, and similar connected devices.
School day	The bell-to-bell period for students receiving instruction on campus; it does not apply to virtual or remote instruction away from campus.
School equipment	District- or school-operated technology and communication systems remain available for educational purposes; the law does not prohibit their use.

K–8 requirements and timeline

Timeline authority. Use the dates stated in [GaDOE's Guidance to Support the Distraction-Free Education Act](#) (Fall 2025)* no later than January 1, 2026, and K–8 bell-to-bell implementation no

later than July 1, 2026. District teams should confirm current policy language through legal review and use the GaDOE guidance supplemented by suggestions as contextually applicable from this playbook for implementation planning.

**Updated Summer 2026 to include grades 9-10.*

Compliance tracker: keep the evidence together

A one-page tracker helps the district confirm that adoption, communication, training, and review are complete before and after launch. Update it at a standing implementation meeting; it is a management aid, not a substitute for legal review.

Requirement or action	District owner	Evidence to retain	Review date
Policy and procedures adopted; K-8 access restriction, storage, off-site procedures, communication, and progressive consequences addressed.	[role]	Board action; policy crosswalk; current procedure version.	[date]
Students, families, and staff informed through required and local channels.	[role]	Handbook/code update; web posting; translated notices; training or acknowledgement record.	[date]
Each school has an approved local operating plan within district guardrails.	[role]	School implementation charter; storage map; emergency-contact route; named lead.	[date]
Implementation, enforcement practice, and effectiveness reviewed regularly.	[role]	Fidelity dashboard; feedback summary; revision log; annual learning update.	[date]

USEFUL PRACTICE: Keep the tracker at the district level and use a shorter school-level version. This prevents schools from having to interpret legal requirements independently.

By when	Required planning outcome
January 1, 2026	Each local school system and public school adopts policies and procedures that: prohibit bell-to-bell access for K–8 students; establish storage; address off-site events and activities; establish family and emergency communication protocols; and provide progressive consequences consistent with the student code of conduct.
July 1, 2026	No public-school student in grades K–8 is permitted to access personal electronic devices during the school day, except as required by law.
Ongoing	Monitor and enforce the procedures; inform students and families through handbooks, codes of conduct, websites, and other channels; and regularly review effectiveness and adjust to stay aligned with educational goals and student well-being.

PLANNING NOTE: The statutory floor is a bell-to-bell access restriction—not a “during class only” rule and not a blanket prohibition on a student bringing a device to school. A complete local plan makes the approved storage method and the conditions for access unmistakably clear. It also covers transitions, lunch, assemblies, daily transportation, field trips, athletics, extracurricular activities, and other off-site instructional opportunities.

1.2. Rationale: Lead With What the Environment Makes Possible

A concise, shared rationale keeps the work student-centered and gives adults a consistent way to answer questions. The aim is to create conditions that support learning and belonging—not to frame the policy as a contest between adults and students.

Data overview

GaDOE’s guidance cites research indicating that the presence of a student’s own smartphone can reduce available cognitive capacity (Ward et al., 2017) and identifies research on the impact of mobile-phone use on learning (Kuznekoff & Titsworth, 2013). The guidance also points to concerns about notification pressure, online conflict, social disconnection, and student well-being. Use these studies to explain the rationale; avoid repeating unverified local impact claims before the district has its own data.

Planning lens	What a bell-to-bell routine can support	Useful local indicators
Learning and engagement	More protected attention for instruction, participation, and transitions; more opportunities for students to interact face-to-face.	Teacher pulse checks; student engagement feedback; classroom interruption patterns; time-on-task observations.
Whole child development	Practice with self-regulation, social connection, help-seeking, and balanced technology use within a supportive adult environment.	Student belonging and well-being measures; counselor trends; participation in lunch/recess or enrichment activities.
Climate and safety	Fewer opportunities for device-driven disruption during the day and clearer reliance on adult direction and official communication during an emergency.	Behavior and cyber-conflict patterns; fidelity checks; emergency-drill debriefs; family communication response time.
Consistent access	A consistent routine, paired with confidential documented supports and school-provided learning tools, reduces dependence on informal adult discretion.	Exception-process timeliness; access to school equipment; disaggregated referral, confiscation, and retrieval data.

Talking points for adults

- “During the school day, we are protecting students’ time to learn, connect, and get help from trusted adults.”
- “The expectation is consistent: personal devices are stored and inaccessible from the first bell to the final bell, including transitions and lunch.”

- “Families can still reach students through the school, and the school will use official channels for emergency updates.”
- “Students with documented educational or medical needs will continue to receive the support required by their plans.”

 **PITFALL TO AVOID:** Do not overpromise outcomes (“this will solve anxiety” or “this will eliminate bullying”). **Instead:** describe the policy as one part of a broader whole-child, climate, and safety strategy—and commit to reviewing local evidence.

1.3. Permissible Use Exceptions: Plan for Access with Dignity

The Act permits necessary access when a student’s IEP, Section 504 Plan, or medical plan explicitly mandates use of a personal electronic device for medical or educational purposes. The planning task is to translate that documented requirement into a routine that is prompt, discreet, and understandable to the adults who need to implement it.

Do	Avoid
Use the appropriate IEP, 504, medical-plan, accessibility, or legally required review process to determine access.	Making exception decisions in a hallway, classroom, or front-office conversation.
Create a confidential action summary: permitted device/function, when and where access is allowed, storage method, immediate-access procedure, and contact person.	Sharing diagnoses or asking a student to repeatedly explain an approved need.
Teach the student and relevant staff how the plan works; review it if the routine is not workable.	Treating documented access as a behavior violation or treating a violation as proof that a documented plan is invalid.
Identify a school-provided instructional alternative where it meets the need.	Assuming personal devices are required for routine classroom technology use.

 **STAFF SCRIPT:** “I want to support you without discussing personal information here. Let’s follow your plan, or I will connect you with [nurse/case manager/administrator] right away.”

1.4. Device Storage and Access Protocols

Storage is an operational decision, not a procurement decision alone. A method is ready only when students and adults can use it reliably at the busiest moments of the day. District guidelines should set approved models and minimum-security expectations; each school should document the specific location, staffing, and handoff routines that fit its building.

Storage Decision Checklist

Use this checklist to compare storage options against your school's operational realities, including security, cost, supervision, and student access needs. The strongest choice is one that staff can implement consistently across the full school day while maintaining clear, predictable procedures for students and families.

Storage option	Security Level	Cost Impact	Strengths	Planning questions
Lockable pouch	High	Moderate (Unit cost)	Consistent student-held routine; can reduce access while preserving student possession.	Where are unlocking stations? How are damaged or lost pouches handled? How is required immediate access provided?
Phone locker / secure cabinet	High	High (Capital outlay)	Centralized security and clear custody point.	Is there sufficient space, entry staffing, and time? Who manages late arrival, early dismissal, and device retrieval?
Designated classroom storage	Moderate	Low (Operational)	Can fit smaller schools or stable homeroom routines.	How will custody, theft/damage, substitute coverage, and transitions be managed?
Powered off in backpack	Low	None	Low-cost option that GaDOE identifies as acceptable when locally appropriate.	Can the school supervise access credibly during restroom use, transitions, lunch, and off-site events?

Storage Readiness Stress Test and Property Protocol

Before launch, test the selected method under realistic conditions. A storage plan is dependable only when it works at the busiest entrance, for a late arrival, after a schedule disruption, and for students with documented access needs.

Test step	What to check	Adjustment record
Run the routine	Use a representative group to simulate arrival, storage, late arrival, early dismissal, and final-bell release. Time the flow.	Time, location, condition, bottleneck.
Check readiness	Capacity; labels; privacy; accessibility; adult coverage; secure custody; damaged/lost-device reporting; and timely documented access.	Supply, staffing, training, or design change.
Retest	Confirm the adjustment works before the first day and after major schedule or enrollment changes.	Owner and retest date.

Minimum Device-Custody Record

The Minimum Device-Custody Record establishes a clear, factual chain of custody whenever a school takes possession of a student's device. It helps staff document:

- when and why custody began;
- the device's storage location and observable condition;
- required family notice and authorized return; and
- any loss, damage, support, or procedural follow-up.

Its purpose is to support consistent handling, protect students and staff, and make device return transparent and accountable—without examining device content.

Record	Include
When custody begins	Date/time, location, staff member, student identifier, and reason using neutral factual language.
Secure handling	Device/storage identifier, condition observed without searching content, and secure location.
Family notice and release	Required notice, authorized retrieval person, date/time of return, and staff initials or receipt.
Follow-up	Any damaged/lost-device concern, support referral, or procedure issue requiring review.

 **PITFALL TO AVOID:** Selecting a storage method because it appears simple, then asking teachers to solve capacity, custody, or late-arrival problems on the first day. **Instead:**

- Walk through arrival, late arrival, lunch, restroom use, transitions, assemblies, early dismissal, dismissal, and an off-site activity.
- Name the adult responsible for each handoff, release point, and back-up plan.
- Establish a property/custody process for confiscated devices, loss or damage concerns, and parent retrieval.
- Confirm discreet and timely access procedures for approved medical or educational needs.
- Test the routine with the grade levels, entrances, and transportation patterns that create the most pressure.
- Teach the routine explicitly; revisit it frequently during the launch period.

 **STUDENT-FACING SCRIPT:** *“Before the first bell, power your device off and store it in [location/method]. It stays inaccessible until [release routine] after the final bell. If you need help, tell an adult before you leave the storage area.”*

1.5. Emergency Communications: Coordinate, Do Not Improvise

The law requires emergency communication to be facilitated through school emergency communication management systems and coordinated by school personnel. It also requires families who need to communicate with a student during the school day to contact the school directly. This is a planning opportunity to strengthen—not replace—the school’s existing emergency response plan.

Scenario	Planned response
Routine family message	Family contacts the main office or published school contact. Office staff route the message through the designated adult and document urgent requests as locally appropriate.
Student needs to contact home	Student uses the established classroom/office process. Staff avoid sending students to retrieve a personal device for ordinary communication.
Emergency or crisis	School personnel coordinate response through the emergency management system and official district/school channels. Students follow adult direction; families receive verified updates and reunification directions through official communication.

Scenario	Planned response
Off-site event or transportation	Sponsor and school leaders pre-identify the staff communication device, parent-update channel, storage procedure, emergency contacts, and reunification/escalation protocol before departure.

Family message script

“If you need to reach your child during the school day, please contact [school number/contact]. In an emergency, the school will share verified information through [official channels]. Please wait for school or public-safety directions before coming to campus unless you are directed otherwise.”

 **PITFALL TO AVOID:** Do not rely on students’ personal phones as the emergency plan. During a crisis, unverified messages, ringing devices, network congestion, and unplanned arrivals can interfere with adult direction and public-safety operations.

1.6. Prohibited Waivers and Compliance Expectations

The Act is not subject to waiver under the strategic-waivers, charter-system, charter-school, completion-special-school, or other waiver provisions listed in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-324.8. Local flexibility belongs in the implementation design—such as storage method, staffing pattern, and communication workflow—not in whether the K–8 bell-to-bell access restriction applies.

Compliance expectation	Evidence to keep
Clear written policy and procedures	Board-approved policy/procedures; crosswalk to statutory requirements; revision history.
Family, student, and staff communication	Handbook/code-of-conduct updates; website posting; translated notices; staff acknowledgement or training record.
Monitoring and enforcement	Named implementation leads; periodic storage/fidelity checks; issue log; enforcement-practice review.
Continuous improvement	30/60/90-day review calendar; student, family, and staff feedback; data review that checks consistency and unequal impact.

1.7. Planning Structures: One District Floor, Workable School Routines

Implementation is most coherent when district leaders establish the non-negotiables and schools solve the local operational details within those guardrails. A small operational team should have the authority to make decisions quickly, while a broader advisory group can improve fit, communication, and trust.

District-level responsibilities

District Implementation Charter and Decision Log

Use this short charter at the outset and whenever a school requests a local adjustment. It preserves the common statutory and district floor while documenting why a local routine was selected, who was consulted, and when the decision will be revisited.

Field	Prompt for the team
Shared outcome	What learning, relationship, safety, and well-being conditions will this routine support?
Non-negotiables	Which state requirements and district policy provisions must be the same in every school?
Local decision	What may this school customize—for example, storage flow, activity menu, staffing pattern, or signage?
Consultation	Which students, families, staff, operations, safety, and support roles were consulted? What did they identify?
Decision and rationale	What will be done, why, and what evidence informed the choice?
Owner and review	Who is responsible? What will be checked by when? What would prompt revision?



PITFALL TO AVOID: Allowing a local workaround to become an informal exception. Local design can vary; the bell-to-bell access restriction and documented-access requirements do not.

Instead:

- Adopt a common policy framework, definitions, exception pathway, progressive-consequence expectations, and minimum emergency communication standards.
- Select or approve storage models; establish procurement, replacement, property, and funding guidance.
- Align handbooks, student code of conduct, transportation, field-trip, athletics, technology, emergency operations, and records/confidentiality procedures.
- Provide common family and staff messages, training expectations, and a process for reviewing implementation data across schools.
- Name a district owner who can resolve cross-school questions and maintain a current policy-and-guidance reference sheet.

School-level customization within district guidelines

- Name a school implementation lead and map the student journey for the actual bell schedule, entrances, grade span, staffing, and facility layout.
- Document the storage/release routine, late-arrival and early-dismissal procedures, office message route, and off-site sponsor procedures.
- Use student and family input to improve signage, traffic flow, transition supports, and engaging device-free options—without creating informal exceptions.
- Plan adult coverage and brief substitute/visitor guidance so that consistency does not depend on one person's memory or discretion.

Alignment check: policies and systems to review

Use this alignment check to identify where existing policies and operational systems may need clarification before implementation. Reviewing these connections early helps districts create a consistent, accessible approach that supports students, staff, and families across all settings.

System	Planning question
Student code of conduct	Does the progressive response align with local code language and a teaching-first launch approach?

System	Planning question
Special education, 504, health, and accessibility	Can documented needs be reviewed, communicated confidentially, and implemented without delay?
Emergency operations and communications	Are official channels, family routing, crisis messages, and reunification procedures aligned and rehearsed?
Transportation, field trips, athletics, and activities	Are sponsors and drivers clear about storage, family contact, emergency communication, and release procedures?
Instructional technology	Are school-provided tools available so routine learning does not depend on student personal devices?
Data, discipline, and consistency review	Will the district monitor fidelity, intervention patterns, and disparate impact—not only total violations?

1.8. Planning Huddle: A 45-Minute Decision Agenda

A planning huddle is a focused, time-bound working session in which the implementation team makes key decisions, tests practical routines, and assigns clear ownership for next steps. Using the agenda below, the team moves from shared requirements and the student experience to storage, exceptions, policy alignment, and a documented readiness plan.

Time	Decision or action	Output
5 min	Revisit the statutory floor and shared rationale.	Agreement on non-negotiables and language.
10 min	Walk the student journey at the busiest times.	List of locations, staffing needs, and points of failure.
10 min	Select/test the storage model and property process.	Named method, access/release steps, and contingency plan.
8 min	Confirm exceptions and emergency communication pathways.	Confidential access workflow; family/safety communication scripts.
7 min	Align existing policies and off-site procedures.	Crosswalk owner and needed revisions.
5 min	Assign owners, evidence of completion, and review date.	One-page readiness tracker and escalation contacts.



TEAM PROMPT: “Where will a student or staff member have to improvise? What would make the correct action easier at that moment?” Use repeated questions to identify system fixes before the launch.

Planning Summary

A strong bell-to-bell plan is clear enough for a family to understand, specific enough for a substitute to follow, and flexible enough for schools to solve real operational problems within district guardrails. Begin with the statutory requirements, lead with a student-centered rationale, design predictable storage and communication routines, protect documented access needs, and use monitoring to improve the system over time. The district's common floor can coexist with school-level routines that fit each community and building.

[1] Georgia Distraction-Free Education Act / House Bill 340. Primary statutory source for K–8 scope, definitions, permissible uses, policy duties, and waiver limitations. (2025).

[2] Georgia Department of Education. Guidance to Support the Distraction-Free Education Act (Fall 2025).

2. ENGAGE: BUILD STAKEHOLDER UNDERSTANDING & TRUST

USE THIS SECTION to build shared understanding, invite meaningful input, and strengthen the partnerships needed for a consistent, well-supported bell-to-bell implementation.

SECTION PURPOSE: This section turns the decisions made during Planning into communication, learning, and relationship practices that help staff, families, and students experience a bell-to-bell environment as predictable, supportive, and focused on student success.

A bell-to-bell environment is sustained through more than a written policy. It asks adults to explain the “why,” teach the routine, respond consistently, and make space for questions. Georgia’s Distraction-Free Education Act requires districts and schools to inform parents, guardians, and students through handbooks, student codes of conduct, public websites, and other common channels. The tools below help teams meet expectations while strengthening trust and partnership.

2.1. Start With a Shared Message

Use the same short, student-centered message across district, school, classroom, and family communications. While local leaders may customize examples, contact information, storage details, and approved supports, they should not dilute the bell-to-bell expectation or create conflicting rules.

Message element	Plain-language talking point
Purpose	<i>“We are protecting time for learning, relationships, and active participation throughout the school day.”</i>
Expectation	<i>“From the first bell to the final bell—including transitions, meals, assemblies, and other school activities—students do not access personal electronic devices unless an approved plan requires it.”</i>
Consistency	<i>“Every adult will teach and reinforce the same routine so students know what to expect wherever they are.”</i>
Support	<i>“We will respond with respect, teach the routine, and connect students to support when the transition feels hard.”</i>
Connection	<i>“Families can reach students through the school office; the school will use its established emergency communication system during an emergency.”</i>



TALKING POINT: This is not about taking connection away from students. It is about creating more opportunities during the school day for focused learning, face-to-face interaction, and adult-guided support.

2.2. Staff Communication and Training

Staff confidence is the foundation of consistent implementation. Before launch, give every adult—not only classroom teachers—a chance to practice the routine, learn the language, and know where to direct questions. Follow with short refreshers during the first weeks and after predictable pressure points such as schedule changes, field trips, or incidents.

Roles and responsibilities

Successful implementation depends on clear, shared responsibilities across every role that touches a student's day. This table outlines each group's core contribution and practical supports that help the bell-to-bell routine remain consistent, responsive, and student-centered.

Role	Core responsibility	Ready-to-use support
District leaders	Set the common message; provide policy-aligned training, materials, and a feedback path; monitor consistency across schools.	District FAQ, leadership talking points, translated family materials, and an escalation/contact map.
School leaders	Lead launch, model expectations, coordinate staff coverage and family communication, and remove implementation barriers.	Daily launch huddles; visible "who to call" plan; quick review of patterns and needed supports.
Teachers and support staff	Teach the routine, model device expectations, use consistent language, document and respond through local progressive-consequence procedures.	First-week lesson, classroom visual, and a brief response script.
Counselors, social workers, MTSS teams	Anticipate adjustment needs; teach coping and help-seeking skills; support relationship-centered responses.	Transition check-ins, small-group supports, and referral process.
Front office, transportation, and activity staff	Route family messages; apply the routine in transitions, transportation, and off-site activities; communicate with supervising adults.	Office message log; transportation/event protocol; family contact script.

Training sequence: teach, rehearse, reinforce

Effective implementation is strengthened when staff learn the routine before launch, practice it in real school-day contexts, and revisit it as needs emerge. This sequence organizes training into manageable phases so adults can respond consistently, confidently, and supportively across settings.

When	Focus	Practice prompt
Before launch	Policy floor, local storage/access routine, exceptions, family contact, emergency communication, progressive response, and documentation.	"A student says, 'My parent needs me now.' What do you say and do next?"
Launch week	Arrival, transitions, meals, classrooms, specials, transportation, and student questions.	Walk the actual route and identify where students or adults could be unsure.
Weeks 2–4	Patterns, consistency, relationship-centered responses, and staff needs.	Review anonymized examples: What was predictable? Where did we need a clearer routine?
Ongoing	New staff onboarding; event-specific expectations; refreshers after breaks.	Add the routine to substitute plans, staff handbook, and event briefings.

Build student trust: move from referee to coach

A referee mindset focuses narrowly on catching a violation. A coach mindset holds the expectation and helps a student succeed with it. The standard stays firm; the interaction stays calm, brief, private when possible, and focused on the next right step.

Instead of...	Try...
"You know the rule. Give it to me."	"Our routine is device away and off. Please put it in [storage location] now. If you need help, I can help you follow the next step."
"Why are you always on your phone?"	"I noticed your device is out. What do you need right now to return it to storage?"
Assuming defiance or a hidden need	Asking neutrally: "Is there an approved plan or a need I should help you route to the right adult?"
Correcting publicly	Using a quiet proximity cue or brief private redirect whenever it is safe and practical.

ASK, DON'T ASSUME: Separate the behavior from the story you might tell yourself about it. Ask a neutral question, protect privacy, and use the established pathway for IEP, Section 504, medical-plan, accessibility, or other legally required supports. Do not ask students to explain personal information publicly.

Staff-facing script

 **SCRIPT:** "Our school's bell-to-bell routine is in place to support learning, connection, and a calm school day. Please power devices off and store them in [location/method] before the first bell. If you need help, if you have an approved access plan, or if a family message is urgent, I will help you connect with the right person."

Staff launch checklist

- ☐ Every staff member has the policy/procedure, one-page FAQ, and school-specific storage and access map.
- ☐ All adults know how families contact students during the day and how the school communicates during an emergency.
- ☐ Teachers have a first-week lesson and visual reminder; office, transportation, cafeteria, and activity staff have parallel scripts.
- ☐ Counselors/social workers and MTSS teams have a planned response for adjustment, anxiety, or repeated difficulty.
- ☐ Leaders have a method to gather questions, spot inconsistent implementation, and share answers promptly.

2.3. Family Communication and Engagement

Families are essential partners in helping students arrive ready for a predictable, distraction-free day. Communicate early, more than once, and in formats that are accessible to families. Lead with the shared goal; pair every expectation with a practical answer about storage, routine contact, emergency communication, and approved supports.

Use a coordinated set of channels

Channel	Best use	Include
PTO/PTA, parent advisory group, or town hall	Listen, explain rationale, surface practical questions, and demonstrate the local routine.	Short presentation, Q&A, family contact process, storage demonstration, translated/accessible materials, and an optional device-free play, learning, mindfulness, or screen-free challenge activity.
Letter, email, or flyer	Provide a clear pre-launch reference and a take-home reminder.	What changes; start date; what devices are covered; storage; how to contact students; where to find FAQ and forms.
School website / parent portal	Maintain a single current source of truth.	Policy/procedure, FAQs, contact information, approved-support process, translations, and updates.
Back-to-school event and classroom communication	Connect the policy to a familiar adult and daily classroom routine.	Teacher script, visual, local storage details, and opportunities to ask questions.
Reminder channels	Reinforce launch and address recurring questions without repeating the full policy.	Brief message, one action families can take, link to the complete information.

Family letter template



TEMPLATE: Dear Families: Beginning [date], [School] will implement our bell-to-bell personal electronic device routine in alignment with Georgia's Distraction-Free Education Act and district procedures. Students in grades K–8 will not access personal electronic devices from the first bell through the final bell, including transitions, meals, assemblies, and other school-related activities during the school day, unless an approved plan requires access.

The purpose is to create more time for focused learning, meaningful interaction, and adult-guided support. Students will [power devices off/store them in ...]. If you need to reach your child during the school day, please contact [main office phone/email]. In an emergency, the school will share timely, coordinated information through [district/school emergency communication system].

We appreciate your partnership in helping students learn the routine. The attached FAQ explains storage, communication, and how to request consideration for a documented educational or medical need. Questions may be directed to [name/contact].

Frequently asked questions for families

The following sample questions and responses can help schools communicate clearly and consistently with families about the bell-to-bell routine. Schools should continue adding to the FAQ as questions arise, ensuring families have the information they need and staff have consistent reference points for responding.

Question	Response to customize locally
What is the bell-to-bell cell phone restriction, and what does it mean for my child?	It means students in grades K–8 do not access personal electronic devices from the first bell to the final bell. This includes breaks, transitions, assemblies, and other school-related activities during the school day. [School] will use [storage method]. Devices may remain with a student when they are powered off and stored as directed; access is not permitted unless an approved plan requires it.
How can I reach my student during the school day?	Contact the main office at [phone/email]. Staff will route the message using the school's established process. Please share predictable changes, such as transportation or dismissal changes, through the same school process rather than messaging a student directly.
What should I do in an emergency?	Call 911 for a life-threatening emergency. For a school-related emergency, follow directions from school and district communications. The school will communicate through [system] and coordinate information with public safety partners. Students should follow staff instructions; personal device use can interfere with safety communication and response.
What if my child has an IEP, Section 504 Plan, or medical plan that requires a device?	Students whose IEP, Section 504 Plan, or medical plan explicitly mandates a personal electronic device for medical or educational purposes may access it as necessary. Contact [case manager/504 coordinator/nurse] to use the established review process. Please do not ask classroom staff to make a plan change informally.
What devices are included?	The law defines personal electronic devices broadly. It includes smartphones, smartwatches, tablets, e-readers, headphones, and other portable devices that can communicate, access data/media, record, game, or connect to the internet. School-issued equipment used for educational purposes is not prohibited by the Act.
What happens if my child has a device out or accesses it during the school day?	Adults will first teach or re-teach the routine and respond calmly. When a violation requires a consequence, the school will follow the district-aligned progressive process in the student code of conduct, which may include a warning, secure custody of the device, family notification, and other appropriate actions. Families will receive the school's local procedure and contact information.

Forms families may need

Accessible family partnership kit

A coordinated communication plan makes the routine easier to understand and reduces avoidable day-of-launch questions. Use the same core message across channels, while adapting format, language, and contact details for the school community.

When	Message and engagement action	Quality check
30 days before launch	Post the overview and family FAQ; send letter/flyer; invite questions through a simple form or office contact.	Plain language; translation and accessible formats; current contacts.
Two weeks before launch	Share storage and family-contact routines; offer a live or virtual Q&A; provide a short home conversation guide.	Interpreter/access needs arranged; responses logged for FAQ updates.
First week	Send a brief reminder about reaching students through the school and official emergency channels.	Use the same wording in website, text, and social channels.
First month	Share one early strength, one adjustment, and the next feedback opportunity.	Avoid identifying students or staff; explain what changed and why.

Home conversation prompt

“What will you do with your device before the first bell? If you need to reach us during the day, which adult or school contact can help? What might make the new routine easier, and who at school could support you?”

Form	Purpose	Route
Family acknowledgement	Confirms receipt of policy, storage routine, family-contact process, and where to get help.	Include with annual handbook acknowledgement or registration materials.
Request for plan review	Directs a family to the appropriate IEP, Section 504, medical-plan, accessibility, or legally required process when a device may be needed.	Route to the named coordinator; do not promise approval in the form.
Device custody / retrieval record	Documents a device held under local progressive-consequence procedures and the authorized return process.	Use only if local policy calls for confiscation or parent retrieval.

Family acknowledgement mini template



Student name: _____ Grade/Homeroom: _____

Parent/guardian name: _____ Preferred contact: _____

☐ I received information about the bell-to-bell device routine, including storage, how to contact my child through the school, and emergency communication procedures.

☐ I know whom to contact if my child has a documented educational or medical plan that explicitly requires device access.

Question or support needed: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

2.4. Student Communication and Trust Building

Students are more likely to meet expectations they understand, can practice, and see adults uphold consistently. Introduce the routine as a shared commitment to learning and belonging—not as a surprise rule or a test of compliance. Give students clear steps, a voice in how routines are reinforced, and trusted adults they can approach for help.

Student-facing communication plan

Method	Purpose	Suggested lead
Kick-off assembly or grade-level launch	Explain the why, demonstrate storage/access routines, name trusted adults, and preview supports.	Principal with student leaders, counselor, and teacher representatives.
Daily announcements—launch week	Reinforce one expectation at a time: power off, store, how to get help, office contact, emergency communication.	School leadership or student news team.
Classroom/advisory lesson	Teach, model, role-play, and invite questions; connect routines to attention, relationships, and self-management.	Teacher, counselor, or advisory leader.
Posters, flyers, and school website	Make the routine easy to remember in high-traffic spaces and online.	School communication lead and student leaders.
Peer ambassadors / student leadership	Build relevance, identify friction points, and help create respectful reminders.	Student council, advisory board, or leadership group.

Explicit expectations students should be able to explain

- ☐ When the bell-to-bell routine begins and ends—and that it includes transitions, meals, assemblies, and other school-related activities during the day.
- ☐ Which personal electronic devices are covered in the local “off and stored” routine.
- ☐ Where the device goes; how the school handles an accidental forgotten device or a device that is out.
- ☐ How to ask for help, share a concern, or access approved support without disclosing private information in front of peers.
- ☐ How families reach students through the school office, and what students should do during an emergency: follow adult direction and wait for coordinated communication.
- ☐ What progressive consequences may look like under the local student code of conduct—and that adults will teach and support the routine.

Student FAQ and launch script

The following sample questions and responses can help schools communicate clearly and consistently with students about the bell-to-bell routine. Schools should continue adding to the FAQ as questions arise, ensuring students have the information they need and staff have consistent reference points for responding.

Student question	Plain-language answer
Why are we doing this?	The goal is to protect time to learn, participate, build relationships, and get help from adults. Your school day should have space for you—not just your screen.
Can I have my phone in my backpack?	[Insert school storage rule.] You may bring a device if your family allows it, but you must power it off and store it as the school directs before the first bell. You may not access it during the bell-to-bell period unless you have an approved plan.
What if I need to tell my family something?	Ask your teacher or another trusted adult for help contacting the office. Your family can also contact the school office directly.
What if there is an emergency?	Follow the adults who are responsible for safety. They will give you directions. The school will communicate with families through its emergency system, and you will have access to your device when it is safe and appropriate.
What if being away from my device feels hard?	Tell a trusted adult. We can help you use a coping strategy, connect with a counselor, or make a plan for the transition. Asking for help is a strength.
What happens if I forget or have my device out?	An adult will help you take the next right step: power it off, store it, and return to learning. If the pattern continues, the school will use the progressive response in the student code of conduct. You can ask for help at any point, especially if the routine feels difficult or you have a concern.



STUDENT KICK-OFF SCRIPT: *“Starting [date], we will practice a bell-to-bell device routine. Before the first bell, power your device off and store it in [location/method]. This helps us make room for learning, friends, movement, and support from adults. If something feels hard, ask—not because the expectation changes, but because we want to help you meet it. If you need your family, we will help you contact the office; if there is an emergency, follow adult directions and wait for the school’s coordinated communication.”*

Pitfalls to avoid

A strong launch anticipates common communication and implementation missteps that can undermine clarity, consistency, and trust. The following table pairs pitfalls to avoid with practical alternatives that help schools maintain a supportive, predictable routine for students, families, and staff.

Avoid	Use instead
Launching with one email or a single announcement.	Use repeated, coordinated communication before, during, and after launch across the channels families and students actually use.
Explaining the rule without the “why” or the “how.”	Pair rationale with a demonstration of storage, family contact, emergency communication, and help-seeking steps.
Using threatening, shaming, or debate-oriented language.	Use calm, matter-of-fact language: name the expectation, support the next step, and protect student dignity.
Treating accommodations or documented needs as public exceptions.	Use discreet, established review and implementation processes; share only what adults need to carry out the plan.

Avoid	Use instead
Letting a few adults create informal exceptions.	Create a clear question-and-escalation path so staff can maintain the common routine while students receive needed support.

2.5. Stakeholder Engagement Cycle

Student partnership cycle: listen, act, report back

Student voice is most useful when it helps improve real routines rather than simply collecting opinions. A small advisory group can test signs, common-area expectations, lunch options, and feedback questions; adults then close the loop by explaining what changed or why a request could not be adopted.

Step	Suggested practice	Visible product
Invite	Include students across grades, transportation patterns, support needs, and school experiences. Set a clear purpose and respectful discussion norms.	Membership and meeting dates.
Listen	Ask where the routine is clear, where it creates friction, and what device-free interaction would feel welcoming.	Theme summary without student names.
Co-design	Have students test signage, language, lunch/recess activities, and transition cues within district guardrails.	One prototype or recommended change.
Report back	Publish a short “You said / We did / We are still considering” update.	Student-facing update and next check-in.

Engagement is not a one-time launch activity. Teams can use a short cycle to keep communication accurate, learn from experience, and strengthen confidence without reopening the required bell-to-bell expectation.

Phase	Key actions	Evidence to review
Prepare	Map audiences, finalize common message, test translations/accessibility, train staff, and publish FAQs.	Materials are consistent; staff can explain storage, family contact, emergency communication, and support pathways.
Launch	Teach students, send family message, demonstrate routines, and hold daily staff huddles.	Questions received, observed routine gaps, attendance at engagement events, and student/staff pulse feedback.
Reinforce	Share reminders, celebrate strengths, correct misinformation, and offer targeted supports.	Patterns by setting/grade; family feedback; referral/support needs; response consistency.
Improve	Review implementation data and stakeholder input; revise local tools and retrain as needed.	Updated FAQ/scripts, documented decisions, and evidence that adjustments remain aligned with district policy and law.



ENGAGEMENT PROMPT “What question are people still asking? What routine is still unclear? Who needs a different format, language, or trusted messenger to receive the same information?”

Engaging Stakeholders Summary

A strong bell-to-bell environment depends on an informed, supported community. When staff share a consistent message, families know how to stay connected, and students can practice clear routines with trusted adults, the policy becomes a daily structure that supports focused learning, healthy relationships, school climate, and safety. Continue to listen, clarify, reinforce, and improve—while keeping the district's common expectations intact.

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- [2] Georgia Department of Education. Guidance to Support the Distraction-Free Education Act (Fall 2025).
 - [4] Connecticut State Board of Education position statement. Informed the balanced well-being, learning, and digital-citizenship framing. (2024).
 - [5] Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General toolkit. Informed community norms, model-policy considerations, family FAQs, and media-literacy connections. (n.d.)
 - [6] North Carolina Advisory Council best-practices guide. Informed policy development, stakeholder engagement, communications, implementation roles, and monitoring ideas. (2025).
 - [7] New Jersey Department of Education guidance. Informed storage options, age-appropriate considerations, exceptions, emergency communications, and graduated responses. (2026).
 - [8] New York implementation guide. Informed listening practices, consistent bell-to-bell routines, family communication, and implementation planning. (n.d.)
 - [9] Minnesota Cell Phone Toolkit. Informed staff/family messaging, storage and policy alternatives, and ready-to-adapt communication examples. (2024).
 - [10] Ohio Department of Education and Workforce model policy. Informed policy-language examples for exceptions, health needs, and discipline considerations. (n.d.).
 - [12] South Carolina Free to Focus administrator toolkit. Informed launch routines, FAQs, adult alignment, safety communication, and implementation supports. (2024).
 - [14] Virginia Department of Education guidance. Informed phased implementation, stakeholder listening, medical-access considerations, and emergency communication planning. (2024).

3. LAUNCH: ROUTINE PRACTICES

USE THIS SECTION WITH: the district policy and school procedures established in Planning, and the audience-specific messages and FAQs in Engaging Stakeholders. School teams should customize the tools below to local roles, bell schedules, storage methods, and emergency procedures—without changing district requirements or approved individual plans.

SECTION PURPOSE: Launching turns the decisions made in Planning and the relationships built through Engaging Stakeholders into a routine that students and adults can carry out consistently. The first weeks are a learning period: teach the routine, notice what is working, respond calmly when it is not, and remove barriers quickly. A predictable start protects instructional time and student dignity while building a shared culture of attention, connection, and safety.

3.1. Quick Start: The First 10 School Days

A strong launch is visible, teachable, and supported. Students should encounter the same essential message and routine at arrival, in classrooms, during transitions, and at dismissal. Keep the first ten days focused on fluency—not on catching mistakes.

Time	Primary aim	Actions that make the aim real	Evidence to watch
Before students arrive	Confirm readiness	Walk the student route; stage storage supplies; post contact and emergency information; test staff escalation and office logs; brief substitutes, bus staff, and visitors.	Every adult can state the routine and knows whom to call for help.
First day	Teach and demonstrate	Greet and coach at entry; demonstrate power-off and storage; deliver the why/how lesson; use calm reminders at transitions; send the same-day family reminder.	Students can explain where devices go, how to reach family, and where to get help.
Days 2–5	Build fluency	Re-teach in advisory/class; hold brief daily staff huddles; add adult presence at friction points; thank students for successful routines; resolve supply or staffing gaps.	Fewer prompts needed; questions and issues are captured by location/time.
Days 6–10	Stabilize and support	Review implementation patterns; provide targeted coaching; begin the district-aligned progressive response when instruction and support have been provided; recognize the first full week.	Routine is consistent across settings; supports are timely and discreet.

2.2. Launch Map and Decision Points

Emergency communications tabletop: 15-minute rehearsal

Practice the school-specific message route before the first day. The tabletop should reinforce the existing emergency operations plan, not create a separate one.

Ask the team	Evidence of readiness
How is an urgent family message received, documented, verified, and routed?	Office message log and named primary/backup roles.
What does a teacher say if a student asks to retrieve a device?	Shared calm script; student uses the established office/classroom communication route.
Who approves family-facing information and which channels are used?	Preapproved templates and emergency-plan alignment.
How will the school update affected families, reunify when needed, and debrief?	Current contacts, role cards, drill debrief, and improvement action.



TABLETOP SCENARIO: At 10:15 a.m., a family member calls with an urgent request to reach a student. Ten minutes later, school personnel receive information that requires an official safety update. Walk through the first message, decision points, staff language, approved channels, and debrief.

First year at a-glance

Use this map as a one-year-cycle management tool. At each checkpoint, ask whether the routine is clear, feasible, and consistently supported before adding new consequences or communications.

Check point	Focus and decision point	Team response
First day	Can every student complete the entry-storage routine with adult guidance?	Keep adults visible at arrival. If a step creates a queue or confusion, simplify the step, clarify signage, or shift staffing—not the expectation.
First week	Where are students or staff still having to improvise?	Review huddle notes and office questions. Re-teach the routine in the setting where it breaks down; use student and family questions to update reminders.
One month	Is implementation consistent across classrooms, transitions, meals, and transportation?	Conduct a brief fidelity walk. Coach adults privately, address uneven practice, and share one or two improvements with stakeholders.
Third month	Are repeated concerns concentrated by grade, setting, or time of day?	Review incident, support, and feedback patterns. Add targeted supports, adjust local logistics within district guidelines, and revisit documented plans confidentially.
Sixth month	Is the routine sustained without excessive adult effort or avoidable referrals?	Check storage condition, staff workload, family experience, and student engagement indicators. Refresh training and plan midyear onboarding for new students/staff.

Check point	Focus and decision point	Team response
One year	What should be retained, refined, or scaled for the next cycle?	Review baseline-to-current data and stakeholder feedback. Document improvements, update school tools, and build the next launch calendar with district leadership.



TEAM PROMPT: “What is the smallest change that would make the expected routine easier to do correctly at this moment?” This question keeps the team focused on improving the system rather than assigning blame.

3.3. Initial-Start Checklist

Complete and initial the items below before the first day. Mark any unresolved item with an owner and a completion time; a missing detail at launch becomes a confusing moment for students.

Ready?	Initial-start action	Owner / completion
☐	School implementation lead, administrator-on-call, counselor/support contact, and front-office contact are named for launch week.	
☐	Storage materials, labels, access points, and secure handling/log procedures are in place and tested.	
☐	The student journey is walked from arrival through dismissal, including meals, recess, specials, transitions, restrooms, and transportation.	
☐	Staff, substitutes, volunteers, and bus/cafeteria personnel have a one-page routine and help/escalation path.	
☐	Students with approved documented plans have discreet, actionable directions shared only with needed staff.	
☐	Family-contact and emergency-communication procedures are posted, tested, and reflected in launch messages.	
☐	First-day lesson, visual reminders, and daily announcements are ready in needed languages and accessible formats.	
☐	The district-aligned progressive response and device custody process are understood; staff know the learning phase expectations.	
☐	A simple issue log and daily huddle schedule are ready; baseline data and first-week measures are identified.	
☐	A plan exists to recognize early success and to communicate the first adjustment made in response to feedback.	

3.4. The Learning Phase: Teach Before You Escalate

During the opening weeks, treat the routine as a skill students are learning. The common expectation remains in place; the adult response emphasizes explicit teaching, corrective

guidance, and connection to support. This approach is especially important for students who experience anxiety, changing family circumstances, or difficulty separating from a device.

A dependable adult response

Dependable adult responses are essential to a successful launch because students and families build trust in the policy when expectations, support, and follow-through are consistent across settings and staff members. Preparing adults with shared language, clear procedures, and an escalation path helps them respond calmly and consistently while preserving student dignity.

Private student adjustment check-in and trusted-adult plan

Some students may need practical support as they adjust to a new routine. Treat adjustment as a support need, not evidence of misconduct. Use a private, voluntary check-in and connect the student to established school supports when needed.

Prompt	Response or next step
"What would help you feel ready to follow this routine today?"	Offer a reminder cue, trusted-adult check-in, quiet reset, family-contact request through the office, counselor conversation, or another appropriate support.
"Who is an adult you can go to if the routine feels hard?"	Name the adult, location, and a practical time for the check-in; notify only staff who need to know.
"What should we review if this plan is not working?"	Set a brief check-back. Route health, IEP, Section 504, or medical-plan questions through the appropriate confidential process.

 **STAFF RESPONSE:** *"Thank you for telling me. The routine still applies, and we will help you use one of these supports. I will connect you with [role] so we can make a plan for today."*

- Notice and ask: *"I see the device is still out. What made it hard to store it just now?"*
- Name the next step: *"The routine is to power it off and place it in [location]. I'll stay with you while you do that."*
- Connect to support when needed: *"If there is something urgent or this feels hard, let's involve [trusted adult/office/counselor]."*
- Document and follow the district-aligned response only as needed; avoid public correction, debate, or ad hoc exceptions.

 **STAFF SCRIPT:** *"Our expectation is the same for everyone: devices are powered off and stored from the first bell to dismissal, unless you have an approved plan. I am not here to embarrass you or argue with you. Let's take the next right step together. If there is a need behind this, we will help you connect with the right adult."*

3.5. First Day and First Week Operating Routines

Starting operating routines on day one helps students experience the policy as a predictable part of the school day rather than a rule introduced only when problems arise. Consistent practice throughout the first week gives adults opportunities to teach, reinforce, and adjust routines while students build confidence in how to store devices, seek help, and stay connected through approved school channels.

Setting	Adult moves	Student-facing language
Arrival	Welcome, observe, prompt once, and direct students to storage; position support near high-traffic entry points.	<i>"Good morning. Power off and store your device before you head to class. Need help? I can show you."</i>
Classroom / advisory	Teach, model, and practice the exact routine; post a simple visual; use a private redirect.	<i>"Show me where your device belongs during the school day. What can you do if you need to reach home?"</i>
Transitions / meals / recess	Maintain visible adult presence and the same expectation beyond the classroom; reinforce positive choices.	<i>"Bell-to-bell includes this time, too. Let's keep devices stored and stay present with one another."</i>
Student need or concern	Ask rather than assume; connect the student to the office, counselor, nurse, or trusted adult as appropriate.	<i>"Thanks for telling me. Let's get the right adult to help—there is a way to get support without handling this alone."</i>
Family contact / emergency	Use established school channels; never promise individual device access outside an approved plan; follow emergency directions.	<i>"The office can help connect you with home. In an emergency, follow adult directions and school communication."</i>

Daily staff huddle: 7 minutes

- What went smoothly yesterday that we should keep doing?
- Where did students or adults get stuck? Name the location and moment, not the person.
- What one adjustment will we make today, and who owns it?
- What message, recognition, or clarification do students and families need today?
- Which students may need a quiet check-in or additional support?

3.6. Common Launch Pitfalls—and Productive Alternatives

Early launch challenges are expected and provide useful information about where routines, communication, or support may need strengthening. The following table pairs common pitfalls with productive alternatives that help schools respond consistently, preserve student dignity, and improve implementation in real time.

Avoid	Use instead
Treating the first mistake as defiance.	Assume a need for clarity first. Re-teach, ask a brief question, and apply the established response consistently when support and instruction have been provided.
Letting each classroom create its own routine.	Keep district and school non-negotiables common. Adapt staff positioning or visual cues locally only when they preserve the shared routine.
Correcting students publicly or debating the rule.	Use calm, private, brief language. Name the expectation and next step; move a longer conversation to an appropriate adult or setting.
Waiting until a problem is widespread to communicate.	Use daily huddles and a simple issue log. Make small, transparent adjustments early and repeat the "why," "how," and help pathway.
Using an emergency concern to create informal exceptions.	Follow the school's established family-contact and emergency procedures. Ensure staff can explain them confidently and direct questions to the designated contact.

Avoid	Use instead
Measuring only violations.	Also notice routine completion, staff consistency, student help-seeking, family questions, and positive engagement in device-free settings.

3.7. A Simple Launch Dashboard

Use a light-touch dashboard during the first month. It is a learning tool, not a ranking system. Look for patterns that point to a routine, communication, or support need.

Measure	How to collect	Review cadence	What it can tell you
Routine completion	Brief arrival/transition observation or staff tally.	Daily in week 1; weekly thereafter.	Where steps are unclear or staffing/storage placement needs adjustment.
Questions and help requests	Office log, staff huddle notes, student/family feedback.	Daily in week 1; weekly thereafter.	Which message, language, or trusted messenger is missing.
Device-related incidents	District-aligned incident data, including setting and response.	Weekly; monthly pattern review.	Whether practice is consistent and where targeted coaching/support is needed.
Student and staff pulse	One- to three-question check-in; listening sessions.	End of weeks 2 and 4; at milestone reviews.	Whether students feel clear, respected, and supported.
Engagement / climate indicators	Existing attendance, referral, participation, or climate measures.	Monthly/semester, compared with baseline.	Possible broader effects to examine alongside implementation fidelity.

3.8. Milestone Messages and Recognition

Reaching and celebrating milestones recognizes collective effort, reinforces effective practices, and builds momentum for sustaining strong, supportive implementation.

First-week message to students

“Thank you for practicing our bell-to-bell device routine this week. Every time you power off and store your device, you are helping create more room for learning, conversation, movement, and support. We are still learning the routine together. If a step is unclear or feels difficult, ask a trusted adult—asking for help is part of doing this well.”

First-month message to families

“Thank you for partnering with us during the first month of our bell-to-bell device routine. We are encouraged by [specific strength or milestone]. We are continuing to refine [specific procedure] based on staff, student, and family feedback. Families can reach students through [school contact pathway], and our emergency communications will continue through [official system].”



RECOGNITION IDEA: Celebrate process, not perfection: acknowledge a grade level's smooth arrival, a student leadership team's helpful reminders, staff who strengthened a

transition, or the first full week of consistent routines. Avoid rewards that depend on publicizing individual accommodations or incident counts.

Launch Summary

A successful launch is not a single announcement or a perfect first day. It is a deliberate period of instruction, consistent adult practice, responsive problem-solving, and respectful communication. When schools keep the expectation clear, make the routine easy to follow, and respond to students as partners in learning, bell-to-bell implementation becomes a durable part of a supportive school environment.

CARRY FORWARD: At the end of the first month, transition to the Implement section: use the dashboard, review fidelity and stakeholder feedback, and sustain the routines, supports, and communication practices that are working.

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- [2] Georgia Department of Education. Guidance to Support the Distraction-Free Education Act (Fall 2025).
 - [3] U.S. Department of Education, Planning Together. Informed inclusive planning, stakeholder engagement, and student-centered policy-development practices. (2025).
 - [4] Connecticut State Board of Education position statement. Informed the balanced well-being, learning, and digital-citizenship framing. (2024).
 - [5] Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General toolkit. Informed community norms, model-policy considerations, family FAQs, and media-literacy connections. (n.d.)
 - [8] New York implementation guide. Informed listening practices, consistent bell-to-bell routines, family communication, and implementation planning. (n.d.)
 - [9] Minnesota Cell Phone Toolkit. Informed staff/family messaging, storage and policy alternatives, and ready-to-adapt communication examples. (2024).
 - [10] Ohio Department of Education and Workforce model policy. Informed policy-language examples for exceptions, health needs, and discipline considerations. (n.d.).
 - [11] Ohio Revised Code emergency-management provision. Reviewed as a comparative emergency-planning reference; Georgia districts should follow Georgia law and local emergency procedures. (2026).
 - [12] South Carolina Free to Focus administrator toolkit. Informed launch routines, FAQs, adult alignment, safety communication, and implementation supports. (2024).
 - [13] Texas Education Agency implementation notice. Reviewed as a comparative reference for storage, exceptions, discipline, and local policy execution. (2025).
 - [14] Virginia Department of Education guidance. Informed phased implementation, stakeholder listening, medical-access considerations, and emergency communication planning. (2024).

4. IMPLEMENT: THROUGH CONSISTENCY & RELATIONSHIPS

USE THIS SECTION as a practice guide for developing consistent routines, strong relationships, and meaningful offline connections.

SECTION PURPOSE: Planning establishes the common floor; engagement builds shared understanding; launch teaches the routine. Implementation is where those commitments become a calm, predictable part of every student's day. Use this section to align adult actions, strengthen learning experiences, and respond to needs without reopening the policy in each moment.

4.1. Daily School Operations: Make the Routine Visible

A bell-to-bell environment works best when students and adults can describe the same sequence from arrival through dismissal. The selected storage method may differ by district or school, but the expectation is stable: personal electronic devices are stored and inaccessible during the bell-to-bell period, except as provided through a documented plan or district procedure. Teach the sequence, practice it, and use feedback to make it easier to follow.

Student Journey Map: Arrival to Dismissal

Use this map to rehearse the student experience across the full school day. Replace bracketed details with the approved local routine, then test the map with students, staff, and transportation partners before launch.

Moment	What students do	What adults make clear	If help is needed
Arrival / first bell	Enter, power off and store the device using the approved routine; move to the first learning activity.	Greet, supervise entry and storage, and offer a calm prompt. Watch for congestion or confusion.	Direct the student to [storage support location] or the designated adult; log a system issue, not a public debate.
Class periods & transitions	Keep the device stored; use school-managed technology when directed; move through hallways ready to learn.	Use the same brief cue and visible supervision in every setting.	Privately reteach the routine; connect a concern to the office, counselor, nurse, or administrator as appropriate.
Restroom, nurse, counseling & office	Follow the school pass and support procedures; use approved access only through the documented process.	Protect privacy and use the established communication route rather than informal device access.	Implement an approved plan or route the concern promptly to the designated support adult.
Lunch, recess & common areas	Keep the device stored and take part in available conversation, movement, clubs, quiet options, or other offline activities.	Offer welcoming choices and maintain the same expectation beyond the classroom.	Use a calm prompt; invite—not pressure—students into connection or a support option.

Moment	What students do	What adults make clear	If help is needed
Dismissal / final bell	Retrieve or reactivate the device only at the approved time and place; follow transportation directions.	Supervise release and use established channels for transportation changes.	Use [late-dismissal/retrieval process]; record any device handoff when required.

 **Practice prompt:** “At each moment, can a student name the routine, the adult who can help, and the approved way to contact home?”

Bell-to-Bell Student Routine and Adult Practice Guide

This table maps the student and adult actions that make the device-free routine predictable across the full school day. It helps staff anticipate key decision points, use consistent responses, and maintain a supportive focus on learning, privacy, and student connection.

Moment	Student routine	Adult practice / decision point
Arrival / first bell	Enter, complete the approved “off and stored” routine, and transition to the first learning activity.	Greet and supervise the approved storage flow; notice bottlenecks. A device not yet stored is a prompt to teach the routine, not a public debate. The focus is on inaccessible storage during the school day, not on publicly questioning whether a student brought a device.
Class periods & transitions	Keep devices stored; use district-managed instructional technology when directed. Move through halls ready to learn and connect.	Use common language and visible presence. Redirect briefly; avoid checking bags or asking students to explain confidential needs.
Restroom, nurse, counseling, office	Follow the school’s pass and support routines; access an approved device only through the documented procedure.	Route health, IEP/504, or urgent concerns to the designated adult. Preserve privacy and respond promptly.
Lunch / recess / common areas	Participate in available activities, conversation, movement, clubs, or quiet options; keep device stored.	Create welcoming choices, supervise consistently, and invite—not pressure—students into connection.
Dismissal / final bell	Retrieve or reactivate device only at the approved time and location; follow transportation directions.	Release devices consistently; staff high-traffic areas and respond to transportation changes through established channels.
Off-site / extended day	Follow the school-specific procedure for trips, activities, and transportation.	Use the pre-established storage, emergency, and family-contact protocol; do not create informal exceptions.

 **Implementation check.** If the routine cannot be explained on a substitute card or observed in a five-minute walk-through, simplify it. Consistency comes from a small number of clear actions—not from longer reminders.

4.2. Classroom Implementation Expectations

Classrooms are where students experience the policy most often. Teachers are not expected to serve as investigators or disciplinarians for every device concern. Their central roles are to teach the procedure, model calm consistency, recognize success, and connect students to support when a routine is not working.

Every classroom practice	What it looks like in action
Begin with the routine	At the start of class, use the same brief cue: "Devices remain stored; materials out; let's begin." Teach and practice the cue until it is automatic.
Protect instructional access	Plan lessons around district-provided or approved tools. Do not assume students can use a personal device for research, translation, timing, or response systems.
Use a low-key redirect	Address a device quietly and briefly. Name the expectation, offer a next step, and return attention to learning. Escalate through the school procedure only when needed.
Know the access path	Honor confidential implementation summaries. If a student says there is an approved need and the plan is unclear, contact the designated person rather than deciding in the moment.
Model the norm	Use personal devices only for legitimate work, safety, or instructional needs. When visible use is necessary, make the purpose clear when appropriate.

A three-step classroom response

Step	Adult language	Goal
1. Notice	<i>"I see the device is out. Our routine is to keep it stored during the school day."</i>	State the observable fact and common expectation.
2. Ask and support	<i>"What made it hard to store it just now? Let's take the next step together."</i>	Learn whether there is a barrier, confusion, or support need.
3. Redirect or refer	<i>"Please place it in [approved location] now. If you need help with access, I'll connect you with [role]."</i>	Restore the routine without a prolonged exchange.



Avoid:

- Turning a correction into a class-wide confrontation or using sarcasm to gain compliance.
- Negotiating an undocumented exception in public or asking a student to disclose a diagnosis.
- Using a personal device as a routine instructional substitute when a school-provided option is needed.
- Allowing repeated classroom-by-classroom variation that asks students to guess which rule applies.

4.3. Schoolwide Implementation Expectations

Whole-day operations quick reference

Post or distribute this matrix as an adult quick guide. Each school should replace bracketed details with its approved routine and provide the same summary to substitutes, coaches, sponsors, front-office staff, and transportation partners.

Setting or condition	Adult action
Late arrival / early dismissal	Use [location] for storage or release; record the handoff; do not send the student to locate a device independently.
Testing / assemblies / common areas	Maintain the same inaccessible-storage expectation; identify the staff member who handles a support or family-contact need.
Health office / counseling	Use the established communication route; implement documented access privately when required.
Substitute coverage	Provide the one-page routine, support contacts, and a calm prompt; assign a nearby adult for questions.
Buses / field trips / athletics / activities	State storage, release, family-contact, and emergency-message procedures in sponsor/driver materials; align with district policy.
School-issued instruction	Use district-approved equipment and alternatives; do not require personal devices for response systems, translation, research, or accessibility.

Students should not have to re-learn the rule at each doorway. Schoolwide routines coordinate classrooms, hallways, offices, lunchrooms, buses, events, and substitutes. The principal or implementation lead should use short walk-throughs, and staff huddles to identify a system adjustment before relying on a stronger consequence.

Schoolwide Device Routine Coordination Check

Setting	Non-negotiable routine	Owner / support
Entrances & arrival	Storage occurs through the approved method; late arrivals receive the same instruction and support.	Arrival team / assigned administrator
Hallways & transitions	Devices remain stored; adults use a consistent, brief cue and supervise known trouble spots.	All staff / transition leads
Office & family contact	The office receives urgent messages, maintains property custody when applicable, and follows the published family-contact route.	Front office / administrator
Nurse, counseling, student services	Documented access is implemented discreetly; urgent needs have a rapid route to an appropriate adult.	Nurse, counselor, case manager
Lunch, recess & activities	Students experience engaging offline options and the same storage expectation across common areas.	Lunch team / activity sponsors
Substitutes & visitors	A one-page procedure card names the routine, scripts, contacts, and emergency process.	School operations lead

Schoolwide fidelity huddle: 10 minutes weekly

- Review one observable strength: Where is the routine working smoothly, and what made that possible?
- Name one friction point by location and time (for example, “eighth-grade lunch release”), not by student or staff member.
- Decide one small test, owner, and check-back date.
- Check whether prompts, referrals, or device retrieval requests suggest unequal burden for a group of students.
- Share one clarification or appreciation with staff and students.

4.4. Teach the Skills: Digital Citizenship and Character Education

K-8 digital citizenship and media-literacy scope and sequence

Use short recurring lessons to strengthen the skills that make a device-free school day more meaningful. Adapt examples to local curriculum and student development; do not depend on students' personal devices for the activities.

Grade band	Focus areas	Simple learning experience
K-2	Attention and self-regulation; asking a trusted adult for help; kind in-person communication; safe use of school tools.	Practice a “pause, ask, choose” routine and role-play how to get an adult’s help.
3-5	Online privacy; digital footprint; recording and consent; balanced use; responding to unkind online behavior.	Sort everyday scenarios into “pause, protect, ask for help,” then create a class help-seeking map.
6-8	Media literacy and misinformation; notification pressure; cyberbullying; consent and recording; responsible school-issued technology use.	Analyze a sample claim for source and evidence; rehearse a bystander/help-seeking response.

PROMISING PRACTICE. Connect each lesson to a real school routine—transitions, lunch, group work, or help-seeking—so students practice the skill in context.

The environment is strengthened when students understand both the procedure and the capacities it supports. Short, recurring lessons help students connect device-free time to attention, self-management, relationships, integrity, and help-seeking. These lessons should invite reflection and practice; they should not treat students as problems to be fixed.

Lesson focus	Learning target	Suggested 10–15 minute activity
Digital citizenship: attention and notifications	Students can describe how notifications, media, and multitasking can shape attention and choices.	Attention audit: students identify common attention pullers and choose one strategy for protecting focus during school.
Digital citizenship: communication and media	Students can distinguish urgent communication from routine communication and identify trusted school channels.	Scenario sort: “text a friend,” “family emergency,” “unsafe situation,” “need nurse.” Match each to the appropriate adult or channel.

Lesson focus	Learning target	Suggested 10–15 minute activity
Character: self-management	Students can use a pause, plan, and ask-for-help strategy when they feel an urge to check a device.	Practice the three steps with low-stakes role cards; students create a personal “when I feel pulled...” plan.
Character: respect and responsibility	Students can explain how consistent routines support fairness, learning time, and others’ right to engage.	Community commitments: draft two specific actions that make class discussion and transitions more respectful.
Character: belonging and courage	Students can invite peers into offline activities and seek adult support without stigma.	Connection challenge: practice a simple invitation, such as “Want to join our game?” or “Can I sit here?”

 **Talking point for students.** *“This routine is not a judgment about whether you can use technology responsibly. It protects shared learning time and creates more room to practice focus, connection, and asking for help. We will teach the routine, listen when it is difficult, and support you in meeting it.”*

4.5. Lunch as a Relationship-Building Opportunity

Lunch is often the most visible test of a bell-to-bell environment. A successful lunch plan offers choice, belonging, and manageable ways to participate. The goal is not to fill every minute or require social interaction; it is to make non-digital connection and calm engagement easy to choose.

Design principles for lunch

- Offer a menu of options: conversation, movement, games, creative activities, service, clubs, library or quiet-space choices.
- Use student input to select, host, and refresh activities; student leadership should be meaningful but supported by adults.
- Place adults as welcoming facilitators, not monitors waiting for a mistake. Learn names, join briefly, and notice who may be on the margins.
- Keep participation voluntary and accessible. Provide sensory-considerate and low-pressure choices alongside active options.
- Start small and repeat successful activities; a reliable weekly routine is more useful than a complicated calendar no one can staff.

Month / theme	Examples of non-digital lunch options	Relationship-building purpose
August: Welcome & belonging	Table conversation cards; “find your lunch buddy” seating choice; staff name-game visits	Make invitations and adult introductions routine.
September: Play & teamwork	Board/card games; cooperative puzzles; lunchtime walking club	Practice turn-taking and low-stakes teamwork.
October: Creativity & expression	Sketch station; poetry prompts; music-free rhythm or art club	Offer ways to contribute without needing to perform.
November: Gratitude & service	Thank-you notes; peer shout-out wall; school service mini-project	Notice contributions and strengthen community care.

Month / theme	Examples of non-digital lunch options	Relationship-building purpose
December: Calm & reset	Mindful coloring; quiet reading; puzzle tables	Normalize restorative, low-demand downtime.
January: New connections	Cross-grade game tables; "try something new" activity cards	Expand peer networks after the break.
February: Kindness & inclusion	Compliment challenge; cooperative games; student-hosted welcome table	Practice inclusive invitations and empathy.
March: Curiosity & making	STEM challenges; trivia; maker materials	Build shared interests and conversation starters.
April: Movement & wellness	Dance-free movement stations; recess games; walking conversation pairs	Support energy, play, and positive peer contact.
May: Celebrate & reflect	Student-choice activity day; gratitude board; year-end showcase	Recognize growth and identify what to continue.

Adult invitation scripts

Situation	Script
Student is alone	<i>"You are welcome to stay here, and you are also welcome to join the puzzle table. Would you like me to walk over with you?"</i>
Peer group is closed off	<i>"I'm looking for one more person for this activity. Who could help welcome someone new?"</i>
Student declines	<i>"Thanks for letting me know. You do not have to join. I'll check back later—there are quiet options, too."</i>
Conflict during activity	<i>"Let's pause. What happened from each point of view? What would help everyone rejoin or choose a different activity?"</i>

4.6. From Referee to Coach: A Relationship-Centered Mindset

Consistency and care reinforce each other. A coach mindset does not make expectations optional; it helps adults teach the skill behind the expectation, understand a barrier, and preserve a student's connection to school. The central question shifts from "How do I catch this?" to "What will help this student return to the routine and stay connected to learning?"

Referee reflex	Coach move	Result
<i>"You know the rule—hand it over."</i>	<i>"The expectation is clear. What got in the way, and what is the next step?"</i>	Maintains the boundary while inviting problem-solving.
Assume defiance	Ask before assuming: "Is there something you need help resolving?"	Surfaces anxiety, transportation, access, or routine confusion.
Correct only the behavior	Teach and practice the procedure; give specific feedback when it goes well.	Builds fluency instead of repeated correction.
Escalate a recurring pattern immediately	Check the setting, storage access, adult cue, and support plan; then follow the progressive response process.	Uses data to improve the system and address individual needs.



When a student is distressed: Use a calm tone, reduce the audience, and connect the student to the designated support. *"I can see this feels important. You are not in trouble for telling me. Let's move to the next step and get the right person to help."* Follow the school's crisis, health, and documented-access procedures whenever they apply.

4.7. Daily Implementation Checklist

Before students arrive	During the day	End of day / weekly
☐ Storage locations and supplies are ready. ☐ Assigned adults know their posts and backup. ☐ Substitutes have the procedure card. ☐ Staff know how to reach the office, nurse, counselor, and administrator.	☐ Adults use common cues and brief redirection. ☐ Documented access is supported discreetly. ☐ Lunch and common-area options are welcoming and staffed. ☐ Concerns are logged by location/time, not as vague impressions.	☐ Dismissal/retrieval is supervised. ☐ Property custody records are complete, if applicable. ☐ Team recognizes successes and addresses one friction point. ☐ Leaders review patterns and adjust supports as needed.

Implementation Summary

The daily routine is successful when it becomes familiar rather than forceful: students know what to do, adults know how to respond, families know how to reach help, and school spaces offer genuine opportunities for focus and connection. Keep the shared expectations firm, teach them repeatedly, and treat recurring friction as information for improving the system. That combination—consistent routines, welcoming relationships, and purposeful offline experiences—helps make a bell-to-bell environment.

[3] U.S. Department of Education, *Planning Together. Informed inclusive planning, stakeholder engagement, and student-centered policy-development practices.* (2025).

[4] Connecticut State Board of Education position statement. *Informed the balanced well-being, learning, and digital-citizenship framing.* (2024).

[5] Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General toolkit. *Informed community norms, model-policy considerations, family FAQs, and media-literacy connections.* (n.d.)

[6] North Carolina Advisory Council best-practices guide. *Informed policy development, stakeholder engagement, communications, implementation roles, and monitoring ideas.* (2025).

[7] New Jersey Department of Education guidance. *Informed storage options, age-appropriate considerations, exceptions, emergency communications, and graduated responses.* (2026).

[8] New York implementation guide. *Informed listening practices, consistent bell-to-bell routines, family communication, and implementation planning.* (n.d.)

[9] Minnesota Cell Phone Toolkit. *Informed staff/family messaging, storage and policy alternatives, and ready-to-adapt communication examples.* (2024).

[12] South Carolina Free to Focus administrator toolkit. *Informed launch routines, FAQs, adult alignment, safety communication, and implementation supports.* (2024).

[14] Virginia Department of Education guidance. *Informed phased implementation, stakeholder listening, medical-access considerations, and emergency communication planning.* (2024).

5. SUPPORT: LEARNING, WELL-BEING, & SAFETY

USE THIS SECTION to strengthen routines, relationships, and responsive supports that help students learn, protect their well-being, and stay safe in a bell-to-bell environment.

SECTION PURPOSE: Planning establishes the common floor; engagement prepares people; launch teaches the routine; and implementation makes it visible each day. Supporting helps adults sustain the routine when it feels difficult. It combines clear boundaries with proactive teaching, respectful problem-solving, and the right level of support so students can remain connected to learning.

5.1. Frame Support Through Well-Being and Safety

Staff personal-device and instructional-substitution norms

Adults model the routine while retaining the tools needed for work, safety, and student support. Clarifying these boundaries prevents mixed messages and keeps instruction accessible without relying on student-owned devices.

Use case	Shared norm
Legitimate staff or safety use	Staff use personal or district-issued devices according to local expectations for work, emergency, health, safety, and family communication; avoid visible non-work use while supervising students.
Classroom instruction	Plan with district-approved devices, printed options, translation supports, and accessible materials. Do not make students' personal devices necessary for participation.
Modeling and language	When redirecting a student, state the routine and offer support rather than making comparisons or debating individual adult use.

A bell-to-bell environment is strongest when it is understood as a support for the conditions in which students learn and thrive. The expectation remains firm: personal electronic devices are stored and inaccessible during the school day unless a documented plan requires access. The adult response should also be firm and caring—briefly restore the routine, look for a barrier when one is present, and connect the student to the appropriate support without turning a routine concern into a public conflict.

Adult responses through a support lens check

Support lens	What adults protect	What it sounds like
Focused learning	Attention, instructional time, and access to school-provided learning tools.	<i>"Let's get the device stored and return to the lesson. I can help you with the next step after class."</i>
Connection and belonging	Face-to-face interaction, trusted-adult support, and a student's dignity.	<i>"You are not alone in this. What would help you follow the routine today?"</i>
Emotional well-being	A calm transition for students who experience stress, worry, or a strong pull to check a device.	<i>"It makes sense that this may feel difficult. We can use a coping strategy and connect you with support."</i>

Support lens	What adults protect	What it sounds like
Coordinated safety	Adult-directed emergency response and verified family communication through school systems.	<i>"For safety, follow the adults in charge. We will use the school's communication process to keep families informed."</i>

 **Core point:** Support is not a softer version of the expectation. It is the set of predictable adult actions that helps students meet the expectation, preserves dignity, and keeps learning and safety at the center.

5.2. The Learning Phase: Teach Before You Escalate

New routines take practice. GaDOE guidance notes that schools may benefit from a designated learning phase in which adults provide clear, consistent instruction; specific positive feedback; corrective guidance; and proactive supports. A temporary increase in reminders or questions does not necessarily mean the policy is failing. It may mean the system is becoming visible and students are still developing fluency.

Suggested learning-phase commitments

- Teach and practice the same storage, access, family-contact, and help-seeking routines in each setting—not only in classrooms.
- Increase adult visibility at predictable pressure points: arrival, late arrival, transitions, lunch, restroom requests, dismissal, and off-site events.
- Use immediate, specific acknowledgement when students follow the routine: "Thank you for having it stored before the bell."
- Treat recurring patterns as system information. Check staffing, signage, storage access, and adult scripts before relying on a stronger consequence.
- Review daily during the first week and weekly thereafter; communicate any procedural adjustment quickly and consistently.

First support move matrix

When you notice...	First support move	Team question
Many students are late to store devices	Reteach and physically rehearse the arrival sequence; adjust adult coverage.	Is the storage route easy enough at the busiest entrance?
One class or setting is inconsistent	Offer a brief, non-evaluative coaching check and refresh the shared script.	Do adults have a clear handoff point and backup?
A student becomes anxious or shuts down	Lower the audience, use a calm check-in, and connect to the designated counselor, social worker, nurse, or administrator as appropriate.	What coping, relationship, or routine support would help the student return to learning?
Repeated access occurs in one location	Observe the routine and strengthen the system; document facts by time and place.	Can students reach devices without a clear adult cue or supervision?

5.3. Tiers of Support: Match the Response to the Need

The four tiers below provide a practical support framework. They do not replace the local student code of conduct or an approved discipline matrix. Instead, they help teams ask: What has been taught? What barrier is present? What level of support is needed now? Students may move between tiers as their needs and response to support change.

Response Decision Tree: Choose the Next Right Support

Use this decision tree before selecting a consequence. It helps adults distinguish an approved access need, a safety concern, a routine that needs reteaching, and a repeated or serious concern that requires a district-aligned response.

Step	Ask	If yes	If no
1	Is there an immediate health or safety concern?	Follow crisis, health, safety, or administrator procedures; preserve privacy and document as required.	Go to Step 2.
2	Is there a documented IEP, Section 504, or medical plan that requires device access?	Implement the approved plan discreetly; contact the designated coordinator if clarification is needed.	Go to Step 3.
3	Is this a first or routine difficulty during the learning phase?	Reteach the routine, use a calm private prompt, and check whether the storage or support system needs adjustment.	Go to Step 4.
4	Is there a repeated pattern or a barrier affecting participation?	Use Tier 2 or 3 supports: check-in, trusted adult, targeted reteaching, family problem-solving, or MTSS connection.	Go to Step 5.
5	Does the local code of conduct call for a progressive discipline response?	Apply the district-aligned discipline ladder, device-custody process, documentation, and family-contact procedure.	Return the student to learning; record the observation and monitor for a system issue.



Core point: Use facts, not labels. Note what happened, where, when, and what support or routine was already in place.

Using a tiered system of support, schools can provide practical, graduated support to help students build and maintain healthy device-free routines. Support begins with clear, universal practices for all students and becomes more targeted as needs become more persistent, individualized, or urgent. This is not a discipline ladder. Instead, it helps schools match support to student needs, use evidence to determine whether interventions are effective, and connect students with existing school, family, and community resources when appropriate.

Tier	Primary aim	Examples of supports	Evidence to review
Tier 1: Universal routine support	Build fluency for every student.	Explicit instruction; visual cues; daily practice; calm prompts; positive, specific feedback; predictable storage and office-contact routines.	Walk-through notes, staff/student pulse checks, location/time patterns.
Tier 2: Targeted adjustment support	Address a repeated or situational difficulty before it becomes entrenched.	Brief check-in/check-out; trusted-adult storage option where locally approved; reteaching; coping strategy; counselor or MTSS referral; family communication.	Frequency and setting of concerns; student feedback; response to the selected support.
Tier 3: Individualized support plan	Coordinate supports for a persistent pattern that affects learning, relationships, or routine participation.	Student/family problem-solving meeting; individualized goals; planned adult check-ins; revised arrival or transition support; linkage to existing school supports.	Plan fidelity, student experience, progress toward goals, and any access barriers.
Tier 4: Intensive or urgent support	Respond promptly when a concern involves significant distress, safety, or a complex need.	Follow crisis, health, threat-assessment, special education/504, or district procedures; involve the appropriate qualified staff and family communication process.	Safety-plan or service-plan implementation, follow-up, and whether the device concern reflects a broader need.

Important distinction. A support tier is not a label for a student and is not a discipline consequence. The purpose is to organize timely assistance. When an action is also required under the code of conduct, use the local progressive-discipline process and ensure it remains aligned with documented student plans.

5.4. The Discipline Ladder: Predictable, Graduated, and Instruction-Focused

The Act requires progressive consequences consistent with the local student code of conduct and identifies verbal warnings, confiscation, parent notification, and other appropriate actions as examples. It does not prescribe one statewide sequence. Districts should define the local ladder in advance, apply it consistently, and pair each step with teaching and support. Keep responses

proportionate, preserve instructional access whenever possible, and avoid informal, classroom-by-classroom consequences.

Ready-to-Adapt Discipline Ladder

This sample sequence should be aligned with the district student code of conduct and communicated before launch. Move up only when the local procedure and the facts of the situation support it; a safety concern may require a different response.

Use this companion matrix to specify the district-approved response, escalation threshold, documentation, and support at each level.

Level	Adult response	Escalate when...	Documentation / support
1. Prompt and reteach	State the expectation, direct approved storage, and acknowledge follow-through. Use a private, low-key correction when practical.	The student refuses, cannot complete the step, or the pattern repeats.	Brief classroom note only if required locally; consider whether the routine needs reteaching.
2. Secure and document	Follow the approved custody process; tell the student what will happen next; notify the designated administrator or support person.	There is a repeat incident, refusal, or related behavior/safety concern.	Property/custody record and incident facts; check for an access-plan question or barrier.
3. Family partnership	Communicate using the published procedure; review the pattern and invite problem-solving about routines, stressors, and support.	The pattern persists, family retrieval is required by local policy, or the student needs a coordinated plan.	Family contact log; agreed next steps; counselor/MTSS connection as appropriate.
4. Individualized response and code-of-conduct action	Convene the appropriate school team, implement supports, and apply further consequences only as specified by local policy and student plans.	There is persistent noncompliance, a significant safety concern, or a need for formal plan review.	Support plan; follow-up date; review for equitable application and plan alignment.

IMPORTANT: The ladder is a planning tool, not a substitute for district policy, the student code of conduct, or required safety procedures.

Guidelines that keep the ladder credible

A learning-centered discipline ladder is more credible when property handling and adult responses are consistent. Keep custody records factual, protect student privacy, and look for system conditions that may create unequal burden.

- Do not skip directly to a stronger response because a situation is frustrating; follow the local procedure unless an immediate safety concern requires a different response.
- Do not negotiate or announce an undocumented exception in front of peers. If a student identifies an approved need, route it privately to the designated person.
- Do not use loss of learning, humiliation, or public confrontation as a routine response. Keep the correction brief and return the student to instruction.

- Use the same thresholds, custody steps, and family-contact process across classrooms and grade levels. If a local adjustment is needed, make it as a team and communicate it to all staff.
- Review patterns for unequal burden. Ask what in the adult response, setting, or access to storage may be contributing—not only what students are doing.

Device custody and consistent-response review

Practice	How to carry it out
Custody begins and ends clearly	Use the district-approved log and receipt. Secure devices without searching content unless another lawful, district-authorized process applies. Return devices through the approved authorization process.
Family notification is predictable	Communicate the relevant rule, retrieval process, and available support in clear, accessible language.
Monthly consistency review	Review district-approved patterns by grade, setting, and relevant student groups. Look first at adult prompts, storage access, communication, and support availability before attributing patterns only to students.
Act on patterns	If one group or setting is overrepresented, conduct a short listening and walk-through review; test a practical system adjustment and check whether the pattern changes.

5.5. Exceptions: Honor Documented Access with Dignity

Georgia law permits access when a student's IEP, Section 504 Plan, or medical plan explicitly mandates use of a personal electronic device for medical or educational purposes. The decision belongs in the appropriate documented-plan process, not in a hallway or classroom debate. Staff should know the minimum action needed to implement an approved plan and whom to contact when unsure; they do not need a student's diagnosis or full plan details.

Exceptions prompts

Situation	What staff do	What staff avoid
Student has a documented plan requiring device access	Implement the confidential action summary: when and where access is allowed, storage method, and designated contacts. Teach the student the routine privately.	Asking the student to repeatedly explain the reason; drawing attention to the plan; changing access conditions without the plan team.
Student says they need a device for health, learning, or another concern but no plan is known	Respond calmly, ensure immediate health/safety needs are routed promptly, and contact the nurse, case manager, 504 coordinator, or administrator through the established pathway.	Promising an exception, denying an urgent health concern, or asking for confidential details in public.
A family requests access outside a documented plan	Thank the family, explain the review route, and connect them with the appropriate school or district contact.	Treating a family request as an automatic classroom exception or asking teachers to make the decision.
Student misuses a device that is part of an approved plan	Follow the documented plan and involve the plan team as needed; distinguish necessary access from behavior that needs support.	Applying a standard response in a way that conflicts with the IEP, 504 Plan, medical plan, or other legal requirement.

 **Confidentiality script:** “I want to make sure you get the right support. I do not need you to explain this here. I’m going to connect you with [role], and we will follow the school’s process.”

5.6. Consistency and Compliance: Monitor the System, Not Just Students

The Act requires appropriate monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. Examples named in the statute include designated personnel, periodic storage audits, and regular review of enforcement practices. The goal of monitoring is not surveillance for its own sake; it is to verify that the agreed routine is functioning, that students receive consistent support, and that the school can make timely adjustments aligned with educational goals and student well-being.

Monitoring consistency: check, frequency, and use

What to monitor	Example evidence	Review rhythm	Use the finding to...
Fidelity of daily routines	Arrival coverage, storage readiness, substitute-card availability, walk-through observations.	Daily during launch; weekly after stabilization.	Fix coverage, supplies, scripts, or procedures before increasing consequences.
Operations and communication	Late-arrival volume, device-custody records, family-message response time, lost/damaged-device reports.	Weekly.	Improve handoffs, office capacity, property processes, and family instructions.
Student support and climate	Repeat concerns, counselor/MTSS referrals related to adjustment, student pulse feedback, common-area observations.	Weekly/monthly	Target coping, belonging, adult connection, or activity supports.
Consistency of access	Prompts, referrals, custody, or family retrieval analyzed using district-monitored student groups; access-plan implementation feedback.	Monthly or district schedule.	Examine response thresholds, adult practice, storage access, and support pathways for unequal burden.
Effectiveness and improvement	Student, family, and staff feedback; evidence of learning conditions and relationship opportunities.	30/60/90 days and annually.	Continue, adjust, test, or stop a local procedure while maintaining the statutory floor.

10-minute support huddle

- Name one implementation strength to protect.
- Review one recurring issue using facts: what happened, where, when, and under what routine conditions?
- Check whether the issue calls for a Tier 1 system adjustment, targeted student support, a plan review, or a code-of-conduct response.
- Assign one owner, one action, and one check-back date.
- Share a brief, consistent clarification with the adults and students who need it.

5.7. Ready-to-Use Scripts

Moment	Suggested language
Routine prompt	<i>"Our bell-to-bell routine is device off and stored. Please place it in [approved location] now, and we'll get back to learning."</i>
Ask, do not assume	<i>"I noticed the device is out. Before we decide the next step, is there a support need I should help you route to the right adult?"</i>
Student feels anxious	<i>"I can see this is hard. The expectation still applies, and we can take the next step together. Would a brief check-in with [trusted adult] help?"</i>
Family concern	<i>"I hear that staying connected feels important. During the school day, please use [office contact]. We will make sure urgent messages are routed and will use official channels for emergency updates."</i>
Staff consistency reminder	<i>"Please use the shared routine and handoff process. If something does not fit the procedure, send it to [implementation lead] rather than creating a one-time exception."</i>
Restorative follow-up	<i>"Let's look at what made the routine difficult and plan for tomorrow. What cue, support, or adult connection would make the next step more manageable?"</i>

5.8. Supporting-Phase Checklist

Learning and well-being	Progressive response	Exceptions and consistency
☐ Learning-phase expectations and review dates are shared with all staff. ☐ Students have practiced storage, help-seeking, and family-contact routines. ☐ Counselors, social workers, nurse, and MTSS team know the referral and support pathway. ☐ Adults use relationship-centered prompts and positive, specific feedback.	☐ Local progressive-discipline ladder aligns with the code of conduct. ☐ Custody, documentation, family notification, and return procedures are clear. ☐ Staff know the classroom handoff point and when to call for support. ☐ Team reviews repeat patterns for system fixes and targeted supports.	☐ Confidential action summaries are current for approved plans. ☐ Staff know whom to contact when an access question arises. ☐ Walk-throughs, storage audits, and enforcement reviews occur on schedule. ☐ Data are reviewed for consistency, access, and unequal burden. ☐ Adjustments are documented and shared without changing the common floor.

Supporting Summary

A sustainable bell-to-bell environment is both consistent and supportive. Students benefit when adults teach the routine, respond calmly, protect documented access, and use progressive consequences as one part of a broader support system. By monitoring the routine, listening for friction, and making timely adjustments, schools can maintain compliance while strengthening the learning, relationships, well-being, and safety that the Distraction-Free Education Act is intended to support.

- [1] Georgia Distraction-Free Education Act / House Bill 340. Primary statutory source for K–8 scope, definitions, permissible uses, policy duties, and waiver limitations. (2025).
- [2] Georgia Department of Education. Guidance to Support the Distraction-Free Education Act (Fall 2025).
- [5] Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General toolkit. Informed community norms, model-policy considerations, family FAQs, and media-literacy connections. (n.d.)
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- [12] South Carolina Free to Focus administrator toolkit. Informed launch routines, FAQs, adult alignment, safety communication, and implementation supports. (2024).
- [13] Texas Education Agency implementation notice. Reviewed as a comparative reference for storage, exceptions, discipline, and local policy execution. (2025).
- [14] Virginia Department of Education guidance. Informed phased implementation, stakeholder listening, medical-access considerations, and emergency communication planning. (2024).

6. IMPROVE THROUGH MONITORING & EVALUATION

USE THIS SECTION to monitor implementation, evaluate impact, and make timely, evidence-informed adjustments that strengthen the bell-to-bell environment over time.

SECTION PURPOSE: Improving turns daily experience into useful learning. It helps district and school teams verify that the bell-to-bell routine is being carried out as intended, understand what is changing for students and adults, and make disciplined adjustments without weakening the required K–8 access restriction.

Planning established the common floor; Engaging Stakeholders built shared understanding; Launching taught the routine; Implementing made it visible in daily practice; and Supporting helped adults respond consistently and respectfully. This section closes the loop. It treats evidence as a way to protect what is working, notice barriers early, and improve the system with students, families, and staff—not as a search for blame.

6.1. Start With Two Different Questions

Strong review cycles distinguish fidelity from impact. A routine may be implemented consistently before its full benefits are visible; conversely, a positive outcome claim is difficult to interpret if implementation varies widely. Review both questions together and avoid using one as a proxy for the other.

Review question	What the team is learning	Examples of evidence
Fidelity: Are we doing what we said we would do?	Whether the agreed routines, communications, supports, and enforcement practices are consistently in place.	Arrival and transition walk-throughs; storage checks; staff procedure cards; custody records; training completion; implementation logs.
Impact: What is changing, for whom, and under what conditions?	Whether the environment is supporting learning conditions, relationships, well-being, safety, and equitable access.	Student/staff/family pulse feedback; engagement observations; behavior and climate trends; lunch participation; emergency-drill debriefs; disaggregated support data.



TALKING POINT: “We will monitor the adult systems we control, listen to the experiences of the people affected, and use evidence to make the next improvement—not to overpromise or to assign blame.”

6.2. Monitoring for Fidelity of Implementation

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-324.8 requires appropriate monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The statute identifies examples such as designated personnel, periodic audits of device storage, and regular review of enforcement practices. A useful fidelity system is brief, predictable, and focused on the conditions adults create: clear cues, accessible storage, consistent handoffs, confidential documented access, and reliable family communication.

A practical monitoring rhythm

When	Fidelity checks	Who reviews	What happens next
Daily during launch; then as needed	Arrival, late-arrival, transition, lunch, dismissal; staffing and supply readiness; substitute coverage.	School implementation lead and designated supervisors.	Correct immediate operational gaps; share one clear reminder at huddle.
Weekly	Storage readiness/capacity; custody and property process; common locations and times; staff questions; family contact pathway.	School implementation team.	Assign one owner and check-back date; reteach or refine a routine.
Monthly	A short cross-setting walk-through; enforcement practice review; documented-access implementation; patterns by grade, setting, and district-monitored student groups.	Principal/designee with district support as appropriate.	Determine whether the issue is a system adjustment, targeted support need, policy clarification, or code-of-conduct issue.
30/60/90 days and annually	Full fidelity and impact review; stakeholder feedback; plan and communications audit.	District and school teams with student/family input.	Continue, adapt, test, or retire a local practice while retaining the statutory floor.

Minimum measurement plan and data dictionary

Use a small data set that answers a decision question. Set a baseline before or at launch where possible, identify an achievable target, and keep interpretation cautious: a single trend does not establish cause.

Measure	Baseline / target	Rhythm	Decision rule
Fidelity: storage, arrival, transition, common-area, substitute readiness	Record launch baseline; set a routine-specific threshold.	Daily during launch; weekly after stabilization.	If below threshold twice, adjust the adult system before escalating consequences.
Experience: student, family, and staff pulse	Use 3-5 recurring items and an optional open response.	30/60/90 days; then quarterly.	If a group reports a persistent barrier, hold a short listening session and report the response.
Impact: learning, climate, and support indicators	Use existing data and describe context.	Monthly or each grading period.	Use patterns alongside fidelity; do not claim causation from one change.
Consistency: prompts, referrals, custody, and access-plan feedback	Review district-approved groups and grade/setting patterns.	Monthly.	If patterns differ, review adult prompts, storage access, communication, and support.

Fidelity walk-through: five-minute check

Expectation

- ☐ Adults at the location can state the storage and handoff routine in the same terms.
- ☐ Storage is available, functional, appropriately supervised, and sufficient for the number of students using it.
- ☐ Students receive a calm prompt and a prompt return to learning; adults avoid public debate or unnecessary delay.
- ☐ Staff know the confidential route for a health, IEP, Section 504, or other documented access question.
- ☐ Office and classroom staff can explain how a family reaches a student and how official emergency information is shared.
- ☐ The same expectation is visible during transitions, lunch, assemblies, and other school-related activities—not only during class.
- ☐ A substitute or newly assigned staff member has the information and materials needed to carry out the routine.

CHECK DESIGN TIP: Record observations by time, place, and routine condition. “North entrance had one adult and 110 students at 7:40 a.m.” is actionable; “students were noncompliant” is not.

6.3. Evaluate Impact: Indicators and Methods

Impact evaluation asks whether the environment is helping create the conditions intended by the Act: focused learning, meaningful interaction, coordinated safety, and student well-being. Use a small, balanced set of indicators. Pair numbers with brief feedback and observations so the team can understand both the pattern and the experience behind it.

Outcome area	Potential indicators	Methods and sources	Interpret with care
Learning and engagement	Time-on-task or interruption observations; student participation; teacher perceptions of attention and transitions.	Brief classroom/common-area observation tool; teacher pulse check; existing engagement data.	Do not attribute academic outcomes to one change alone. Compare context, grade span, and implementation fidelity.
Relationships, belonging, and well-being	Student reports of peer/adult connection; use of lunch activities; counseling/support themes; student sense of belonging.	Anonymous student pulse; focus groups; participation counts; existing climate/well-being measures.	Keep questions developmentally appropriate. A change in help-seeking can indicate growing trust, not a new problem.
Climate and safety	Device-related disruptions; cyber-conflict patterns that affect the school day; emergency-drill communication and reunification feedback.	Existing behavior records; drill debrief; staff/family feedback; incident pattern review.	Separate device access incidents from broader safety or behavior concerns; follow established safety protocols.

Outcome area	Potential indicators	Methods and sources	Interpret with care
Consistency of access	Prompts, referrals, custody, family retrieval, and support tiers by district-monitored student groups; timeliness of documented-plan support.	Existing discipline/support data; plan-implementation review; family/student experience feedback.	Numbers alone do not establish cause. Ask whether storage, adult response, communication, or support pathways create unequal burden.
Operations and trust	Family contact response time; lost/damaged-device reports; staff confidence; clarity of messages and procedures.	Office logs; short staff/family surveys; issue log; training feedback.	A rise in early questions may show that communication channels are working. Look for patterns over time.
Fidelity confidence	Percentage of settings meeting the fidelity standard; staff confidence that they can follow the routine; timely completion of improvement actions.	Fidelity walk-throughs; brief staff pulse checks; improvement log and follow-up review.	Do not interpret outcome trends without checking whether the routine was consistently in place. Stronger fidelity can be a necessary condition for interpreting longer-term changes.

Suggested pulse questions

Use a consistent 4-point scale (for example, strongly disagree to strongly agree) plus one open response. Keep surveys brief, anonymous when appropriate, and accessible in the languages used by the school community.

Audience	Sample items	One open question
Students	"I know what to do with my device during the school day." "I know how to get help from an adult when I need it." "I have opportunities to talk, play, or participate without a device during the day."	"What helps the school-day routine work well? What would make it easier?"
Staff	"I know the common routine and my role." "I can access support when a student has a documented or emerging need." "The response process is clear and workable."	"Where does the routine create friction, and what is one practical improvement?"
Families	"I know how to reach my child during the school day." "I understand how the school communicates during an emergency." "The expectation and support process are clear."	"What information or support would help your family understand the routine?"



PITFALL TO AVOID. Do not rely only on incident counts. A lower count may reflect better routines—or less reporting. Read it alongside walk-through data, feedback, and the consistency of adult practice.

6.4. Use Data for Decisions, Not Just Reporting

A concise dashboard gives teams a shared view without creating an unmanageable data burden. Review the dashboard at a standing meeting, name one strength to protect, choose one priority to improve, and document the change you will test. Use existing systems whenever possible; new forms should answer a specific decision question.

If the evidence shows...	Ask before acting	Possible improvement move
Different routines across classrooms or grade levels	Have adults received the same training, visuals, substitute guidance, and leadership support?	Refresh common scripts; provide a brief coaching check; clarify the handoff point; increase leader visibility.
Repeat access in a predictable location or time	Is storage close enough, supervised, and available when students need it?	Adjust coverage, storage location/capacity, flow, or cues; rehearse the routine at the pressure point.
Rising family questions or missed contacts	Are the school contact route and emergency messages clear, current, and accessible?	Reissue a concise family message through multiple channels; verify office capacity and translations.
A student or group experiences repeated difficulty	What support has been taught and offered? Is a documented-plan or access question involved?	Use the four-tier support framework; coordinate with the appropriate team; review equitable application.
Positive results in one setting	Which routine conditions made the success possible, and can they be adapted elsewhere?	Document the practice; invite peer observation; scale carefully with staff input.

A 20-minute improvement huddle

Minutes	Facilitator prompt	Output
2	"What is one implementation strength we want to preserve?"	Named bright spot.
5	"What do the walk-throughs, logs, and pulse feedback tell us—by time, place, and group?"	One clearly defined pattern.
5	"Is this primarily a fidelity, access/support, communication, or impact question?"	Shared problem statement.
5	"What is the smallest change we can test while keeping the bell-to-bell expectation intact?"	Test with owner, site, and start date.
3	"What evidence will tell us whether to keep, adapt, or stop the change?"	Check-back date and measure.

6.5. Continuous Improvement: Revise the Plan with Care

Continuous improvement is a disciplined cycle, not a series of informal exceptions. Teams may refine local procedures—such as storage design, staffing, visuals, communication, training, activity options, or support pathways—while preserving the statewide requirement that K–8 students not access personal electronic devices during the school day except as required by law.

Cycle step	Team action	Evidence to carry forward
Plan	Name the problem, identify the population/setting, set a small aim, and select a change that stays within district guidelines.	Baseline data, stakeholder input, statutory/policy guardrails, and anticipated consistent access considerations.
Do	Test the change on a manageable scale. Teach adults and students the adjusted routine; ensure materials and backup coverage are in place.	Implementation log: who, where, when, and what was changed.
Study	Review whether the change was carried out and whether the intended condition improved. Seek the perspectives of those using the routine.	Walk-through notes, relevant dashboard measures, and short feedback.
Act	Adopt, adapt, or discontinue the change. Update the written procedure, training, and communication only when the team is ready to sustain it.	Decision record, owner, effective date, and next review date.

Plan-revision decision rules

- Revise an operational procedure when evidence shows the routine is unclear, impractical, inconsistently supported, or producing an avoidable barrier.
- Elevate proposed policy, code-of-conduct, special-program, health, accessibility, or emergency-protocol changes through the district's established review route; do not solve those questions informally at the school level.
- Maintain a simple revision log: what changed, why, who approved it, whom it affects, how it will be communicated, and when it will be reviewed again.
- Re-teach every meaningful change to students and staff, including substitutes and front-office personnel. A revised procedure that is not communicated is not yet implemented.



SCRIPT FOR LEADERS: *"The expectation remains the same: devices are inaccessible throughout the K–8 school day except as required by law. What we are improving is the way adults make that expectation clear, workable, supportive, and consistent."*

Before changing a local procedure

Decision Point Considerations

- ☐ The team has named the specific evidence and setting that prompted the review.
- ☐ The proposed change preserves district policy, statutory requirements, and documented student access rights.
- ☐ Student, staff, and/or family perspectives have been considered when they are directly affected.
- ☐ The owner responsible, needed materials, and staff coverage are identified.
- ☐ The message, training, and effective date are ready for all affected groups.
- ☐ The team has identified how it will check implementation and impact after the change.
- ☐ The decision and next review date are entered in the revision log.

Best and promising practices

Practice	Why it strengthens improvement
Use existing data with a clear purpose	It reduces burden and keeps attention on decisions, not collection for its own sake.
Invite student voice early and often	Students can identify friction points, unintended effects, and relationship-building opportunities adults may not see.
Make implementation visible and non-evaluative	Short routine checks normalize learning and surface system fixes before problems become disciplinary patterns.
Disaggregate and discuss	Looking across district-monitored student groups helps teams notice unequal burden and improve access to supports.
Share back what was heard and changed	Closing the feedback loop builds trust and makes participation feel meaningful.

6.6. Tools for Communicating the Improvement Cycle

Quarterly implementation learning update

Share a brief, public-facing learning update each quarter or semester. It should protect privacy while showing the community that feedback and evidence are being used responsibly.

Include	Starter language
Strength to protect	<i>"This quarter, our routine was strongest in [setting], where [brief evidence]."</i>
What we learned	<i>"Feedback and walk-throughs showed a barrier at [time/place]."</i>
What will change	<i>"Beginning [date], we will test [small procedure adjustment] while keeping the bell-to-bell expectation in place."</i>
How to contribute	<i>"Students, families, and staff may share feedback through [process]. We will review it on [date]."</i>

Stop / start / continue protocol

At each improvement huddle, name one practice to stop because it adds burden without helping, one small practice to start, and one effective practice to continue. Record the owner, affected setting, communication plan, and review date in the revision log.

Brief staff update template

SAMPLE. *"Thank you for the consistency you are building. This month's walk-throughs show that [strength]. We also noticed [specific pattern] at [setting/time]. Beginning [date], we will test [small adjustment]. Please use [script/material]. We will check in on [date] using [evidence]. If you notice a barrier, send it to [role/process] so we can improve the system together."*

Brief family/student update template

SAMPLE. *"Our bell-to-bell routine remains in place to support learning, connection, well-being, and coordinated safety. We listened to feedback about [operational topic] and are improving [procedure] beginning [date]. Families can continue to reach students through [school contact]. Students who need help with the routine may speak with [trusted adult/role]."*

Improving checklist

Action

- ☐ Review fidelity and impact on the published rhythm; do not wait for a major concern to look at the routine.
- ☐ Keep monitoring focused on systems, supports, and adult practice as well as student outcomes.
- ☐ Use a balanced evidence set: observations, operational data, feedback, and consistency/access review.
- ☐ Discuss results with the people closest to the work, including students and families when appropriate.
- ☐ Select one manageable improvement test; identify owner, start date, and check-back measure.
- ☐ Document and communicate revisions consistently across affected settings.
- ☐ Review enforcement practices for consistency, dignity, and alignment with local policy and documented plans.
- ☐ Celebrate progress and name the next learning question.

Improving Summary

A strong bell-to-bell environment improves because adults stay curious about how the system is working. Fidelity checks ensure that routines, storage, communication, and support are dependable. Impact measures help teams understand whether students and adults are experiencing the learning, connection, well-being, and safety conditions the work intends to support. By reviewing evidence with care, listening to stakeholders, and making small, well-communicated adjustments, districts and schools can sustain compliance while continually strengthening the experience of school for every student.

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- [2] Georgia Department of Education. Guidance to Support the Distraction-Free Education Act (Fall 2025).
 - [3] U.S. Department of Education, Planning Together. Informed inclusive planning, stakeholder engagement, and student-centered policy-development practices. (2025).
 - [4] Connecticut State Board of Education position statement. Informed the balanced well-being, learning, and digital-citizenship framing. (2024).
 - [5] Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General toolkit. Informed community norms, model-policy considerations, family FAQs, and media-literacy connections. (n.d.)
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 - [8] New York implementation guide. Informed listening practices, consistent bell-to-bell routines, family communication, and implementation planning. (n.d.)
 - [9] Minnesota Cell Phone Toolkit. Informed staff/family messaging, storage and policy alternatives, and ready-to-adapt communication examples. (2024).
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 - [14] Virginia Department of Education guidance. Informed phased implementation, stakeholder listening, medical-access considerations, and emergency communication planning. (2024).

ENDNOTES

Bracketed numbers in the phase source notes identify the materials below. Endnotes describe how each source informed this playbook; full APA citations appear in the Reference List.

- [1] Georgia Distraction-Free Education Act / House Bill 340. Primary statutory source for K–8 scope, definitions, permissible uses, policy duties, and waiver limitations.
- [2] Georgia Department of Education guidance. Primary implementation guidance for Georgia districts, including the state timeline, communication suggestions, and supporting rationale.
- [3] U.S. Department of Education, Planning Together. Informed inclusive planning, stakeholder engagement, and student-centered policy-development practices.
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- [14] Virginia Department of Education guidance. Informed phased implementation, stakeholder listening, medical-access considerations, and emergency communication planning.

REFERENCE LIST

The references below are formatted in APA style. Project drafts and other unpublished materials are identified as such.

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The *Distraction-Free Learning: A Playbook for K-8 Implementation* was developed in collaboration with and for the Georgia Department of Education's Office of Whole Child to provide Georgia districts and schools actionable steps in developing and implementing local plans aligned to The Georgia Distraction-Free Act (HB 340) (2025) legislation and the Georgia Department of *Education Guidance to Support the Distraction-Free Act* (Fall 2025) by the Southeast Comprehensive Center.

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