Akron Central School District Administrative Guidelines for Implementation of Distraction-Free School Zone Policy (Use of Internet-Enabled Devices)

Pursuant to NYS Education Law Section 2803, Use of Internet-Enabled Devices During the School Day (adopted May 6, 2025; effective August 1, 2025), as mandated by NYS Gov. Hochul, these Guidelines outline the "bell-to-bell" restrictions on Smartphone use in schools. See Akron CSD Board Policy #7316: Use of Internet-Enabled Devices During the School Day

Purpose: The purpose of the legislation is to create optimal learning environments for all students, to ensure digital device use at school does not disrupt the educational environment, and to protect students' privacy and well-being.

Scope: These Guidelines apply to all Akron students in grades UPK-12.

Effective Dates: These Guidelines will be effective beginning August 1, 2025.

Prohibited Use: Students are prohibited from using personal internet-enabled devices during the school day (see Definitions below).

Permissible Use: Students may use internet-enabled devices on district transportation, provided such use is appropriate (see Code of Conduct for appropriate behaviors on the school bus). Internet-abled devices may be accessible during 9th period at the discretion of each individual teacher.

Device Storage During the School Day: Upon arrival, student devices must be secured as follows for the duration of the school day (bell-to-bell):

- Middle School/High School students are expected to store devices in their lockers
- Elementary students are expected to store devices in designated on-site storage areas during the school day. On-site storage areas may include, but are not limited to, designated storage lockers in classrooms or secure storage lockers in the school's main office.

Consequences: Violations of the internet-enabled device guidelines will result in the following:

- First Violation: Students will be issued a warning
- Second Violation: Students will be directed to place their internet-enabled devices in a storage locker, which will be secured in the Main Office. At the end of the instructional day, the device will be returned to the student. Assuming there are no further violations, students will be permitted to store their devices in their lockers again.
- Third Violation: Students will be directed to place their internet-enabled devices in a storage locker , which will be secured in the Greeter's Office. At the end of the instructional day of that violation, the device will only be returned to a parent or

guardian. Assuming there are no further violations, students will be permitted to store their devices in their lockers again.

Parent/Guardian Communication: Parents/Guardians needing to communicate with their children during the school day should follow these guidelines:

- For Emergencies/Urgent matters:
  - Please call the main office at:
    - ❖ High School: (716) 542-5030
    - ❖ Middle School: (716) 542-5040
    - ❖ Elementary School: (716) 542-5050

- For Routine matters (not urgent; such as dropping off lunches or instruments, or changes in pick up plans):
  - Please email:
    - ❖ High School: cbrandl@akronk12.org
    - ❖ Middle School: ekenline@akronk12.org
    - ❖ Elementary School:knorthem@akronk12.org

Parents and Guardians will also have access to two-way communication with their children in grades 6-12 using a secure messaging system. This system will only allow messages to go between approved guardians and their children. Students can access the messaging system on their Chromebook. Messages will arrive in a web-based software for parents as well as in their email. More detailed information will be provided by the Akron IT department.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities & Resources: Parents/Guardians are encouraged to discuss the appropriate use of digital devices with their children and remind them of the District Guidelines. Schools encourage open communication between parents and staff regarding any concerns related to digital device usage.

Akron UPK-12 families will be informed of these Guidelines in a number of modes, including District email and District Calendar. The Guidelines will also be posted on the District's website, and in the first Monthly Newsletters. Parents are also referred to the District website's Distraction-Free School Zones Resource Page for further information related to these state mandated Guidelines.

Exceptions: NYS Legislation and Board Policy provides for limited exceptions for the use of internet-enabled devices in schools. These exceptions include:

- Educational purposes, when approved by administration
- Health-related needs (monitoring a vital organ or any blood related disease), when approved by the District's Medical Director
- In the event of an emergency
- For translation services, when approved by administration
- Case-by-case caregiver responsibilities, when approved by school officials
- As required by law Note: Students are permitted to use internet-enabled devices as

specifically approved by their IEP (Individualized Education Program) or Section 504 Plan.

Parents/Guardians believing their child(ren) qualifies for an exception are directed to complete a "Request for Exception" form from the main office and return to the building principal for review. Please note that a request for consideration for a medical exemption must come from a prescribing medical profession (DO, NP, PA, MD) and may require further follow-up.

Definitions:

Internet-Enabled Devices: Includes any smartphone, tablet, smartwatch, or other device capable of connecting to the internet and enabling the user to access content on the internet, including social media applications; provided, however, that "internet-enabled devices" shall not include:

- Non-internet-enabled devices such as cellular phones or other communication devices not capable of connecting to the internet or enabling the user to access content on the internet; or
- Internet-enabled devices supplied by the school district, charter school, or board of cooperative educational services that are used for an educational purpose.

School day: The entirety of every instructional day; during all instructional time and non-instructional time, including but not limited to homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time.

School grounds: In or on or within any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a district elementary, intermediate, junior high, vocational, or high school, a charter school, or a board of cooperative educational services facility.