SUBJECT: USE OF INTERNET-ENABLED DEVICES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

As required by New York State law, Southern Westchester BOCES (SWBOCES) consulted with local stakeholders including employee organizations, parents, and students to develop this policy to prohibit the use of Internet-enabled devices by students during the school day on school grounds. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students remain focused on their academic responsibilities throughout the school day.

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

a) "Internet-enabled devices" means and includes, but is not limited to, 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;

"Internet-enabled devices" does not include:

1. 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

2. Internet-enabled devices supplied by SWBOCES that are used for an educational purpose.

b) "School day" means the entirety of every instructional day as required by subdivision 7 of Education Law Section 3604 during all instructional time and non-instructional time, including but not limited to homeroom periods, lunch, recess, study halls, and passing time.

c) "School grounds" means in or on any building, structure, athletic playing field, playground, or land contained within the real property boundary line of a SWBOCES facility.

Although students are generally prohibited from using personal Internet-enabled devices during the school day anywhere on school grounds, students may be authorized to use an Internet-enabled device during the school day on school grounds:

a) If authorized by SWBOCES, a SWBOCES principal, or a SWBOCES teacher for a specific educational purpose;

b) Where necessary for the management of a student's health care;

c) In the event of an emergency;

d) For translation services;

e) On a case-by-case basis, upon review and determination by a school psychologist, school social worker, or school counselor for a student caregiver who is routinely responsible for the care and well-being of a family member; or

f) Where required by law, or where the use is included in the student’s Individualized Education program (IEP), or Section 504 Plan.

On-Site Storage of Internet-Enabled Devices Including Cell Phones

Students must store their Internet-enabled devices in designated on-site storage areas during the school day. On-site storage areas may include, but are not limited to, student lockers, designated storage bins in classrooms, or secure storage areas in the school's main office. The designated on-site storage areas must be easily accessible to students and provide adequate security to ensure the safekeeping of the students' devices. SWBOCES will communicate the procedures for storing and retrieving devices at the beginning of each school year, ensuring that students understand their responsibilities in using the on-site storage facilities provided.

Methods for Parents to Contact Students During the School Day

To accommodate necessary communication, parents or persons in parental relations may use the following methods to contact their student during school hours while adhering to this policy:

a) School Office Phone: Parents or persons in parental relations may call the school's main office, and the office staff will relay messages to the student or call the student to the office to speak with their parent or person in parental relation.

b) Designated Contact Email: Schools may provide a designated email address for parents and persons in parental relations to send messages. These emails will be monitored by school staff who can then pass the messages on to the students.

c) Classroom Intercom System: In case of an emergency, the school's main office can use the classroom intercom system to notify students directly or ask them to come to the office.

d) Written Notes: Parents or persons in parental relations can drop off written notes at the school's main office, which can then be delivered to the student by school staff.

Parents and persons in parental relations will be notified in writing of the methods that are available for contacting their student during school hours upon enrollment and at the beginning of each school year. This information will also be posted on the appropriate SWBOCES web pages.

Student Discipline for Accessing Internet-Enabled Devices During the School Day

Generally, discipline will be progressive and will include equitable and age-appropriate remedies and procedures that make appropriate use of prevention, education, intervention, and discipline. Specific disciplinary actions and consequences are outlined in the SWBOCES Code of Conduct. As per New York State law, SWBOCES is prohibited from suspending a student from school solely for accessing internet-enabled devices in violation of this policy.

Posting and Translation of Policy

As required by New York State law, SWBOCES will post this policy in a clearly visible and accessible location on its website. Translations of the policy into the 12 most common non-English languages spoken by limited-English proficient individuals in the state will be provided upon request by a student or other persons in parental relation to a student.

Reporting and Mitigation Action Plan

As required by New York State law, beginning September 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, SWBOCES will publish an annual report on its website detailing enforcement of this policy within SWBOCES in the prior school year. This report will include non-identifiable demographic data of students who have faced disciplinary action for non-compliance and analysis of any demographic

disparities in enforcement of this policy. If a statistically significant disparate enforcement impact is identified, the report will include a mitigation action plan.

Refer also to:

SWBOCES Code of Conduct
Education Law Section 2803