Akron Central School District Internet-Enabled Device Policy Development

by Andrea Kersten

State Mandate Overview

Policy Adoption

All school districts must adopt a written policy by August 1, 2025 that prohibits student use of internet-enabled devices during the entire instructional day.

Partner Consultation

Policy development must include input from parents, students, employee labor unions, teachers, and administrators.
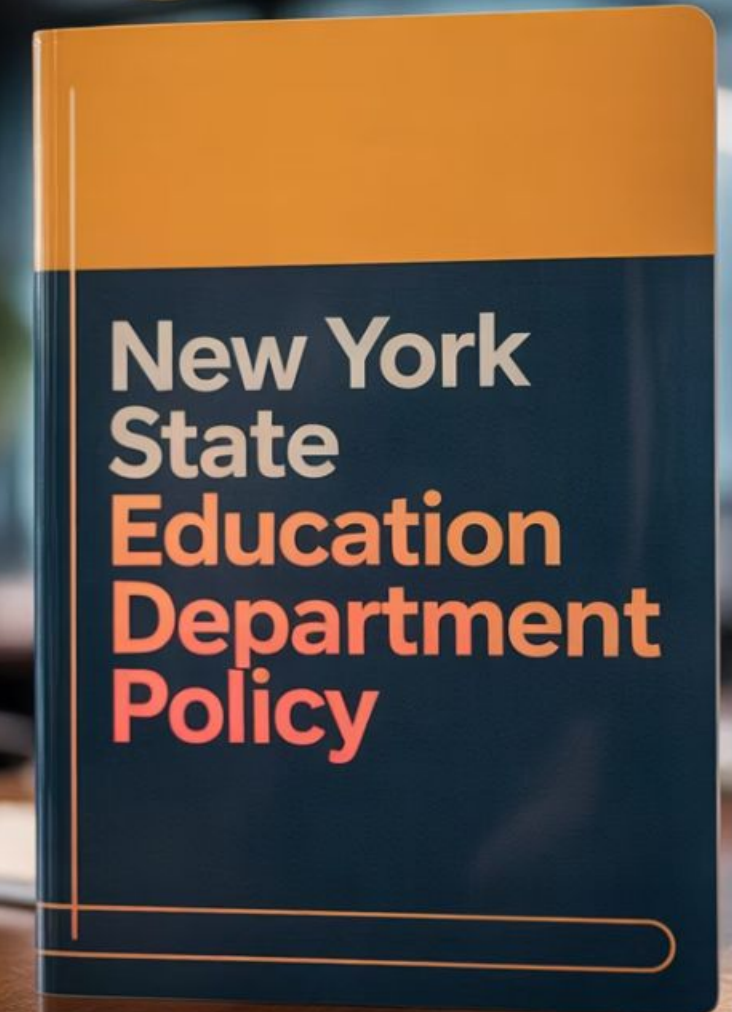
Accessibility

Final policy must be posted on the district website and translated upon request into the 12 most common non-English languages.

Storage Requirement

Must include at least one method for onsite device storage (e.g., lockers, phone pouches).

This policy will impact the entire school day, including lunch periods, homeroom, and passing times between classes.

Permissible Exceptions

Educational Purposes
Devices may be permitted for specific learning activities when authorized by educational staff. This allows for technology integration when it enhances the learning experience.

Medical & Emergency Use
Students with medical conditions that require monitoring or those facing emergency situations will be permitted appropriate device access to ensure safety and well-being.

Translation Services
English language learners may use devices for translation purposes to support their educational needs and facilitate communication in the school environment.

Student Caregivers
Students who serve as primary caregivers may be granted exceptions after review by school counselors, social workers, or psychologists to maintain family responsibilities.

The policy must include important safeguards to ensure equity and address legitimate needs. Students with IEPs or 504 plans will maintain all accommodations, and no student can be suspended solely for violating the cell phone policy.

Implementation Considerations

Storage Options

Exploring secure device storage solutions including existing lockers, Yondr pouches, classroom collection systems, and other secure storage methods.

Parent Contact Protocols

Developing clear procedures for emergency parent-student communication through school offices and designated contact points.

Enforcement Guidelines

Creating consistent, fair procedures for policy enforcement that respect student dignity while maintaining compliance.

Researching Digital Alternatives

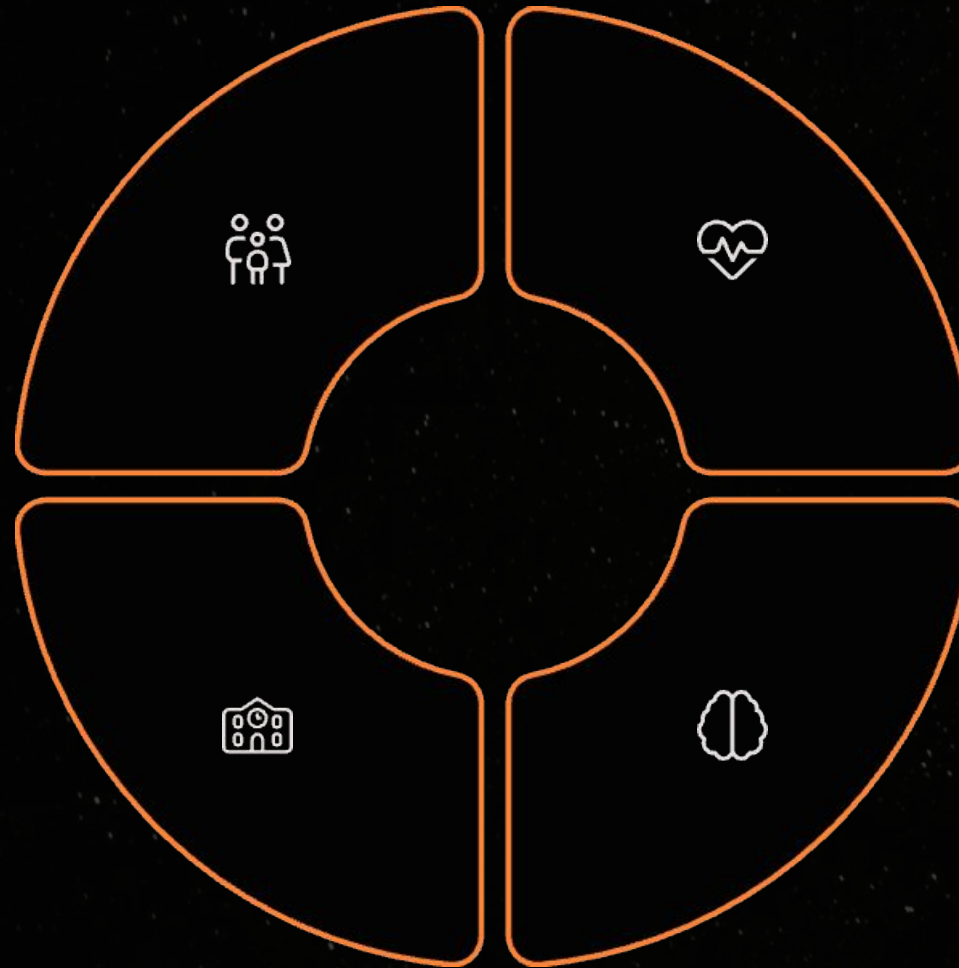Implementing Chromebook-based messaging (Parent/Guardian) and other solutions for after-school coordination needs.

Community Concerns

Family Responsibilities

Students with after-school caregiver duties for younger siblings may need modified protocols to maintain family communication.
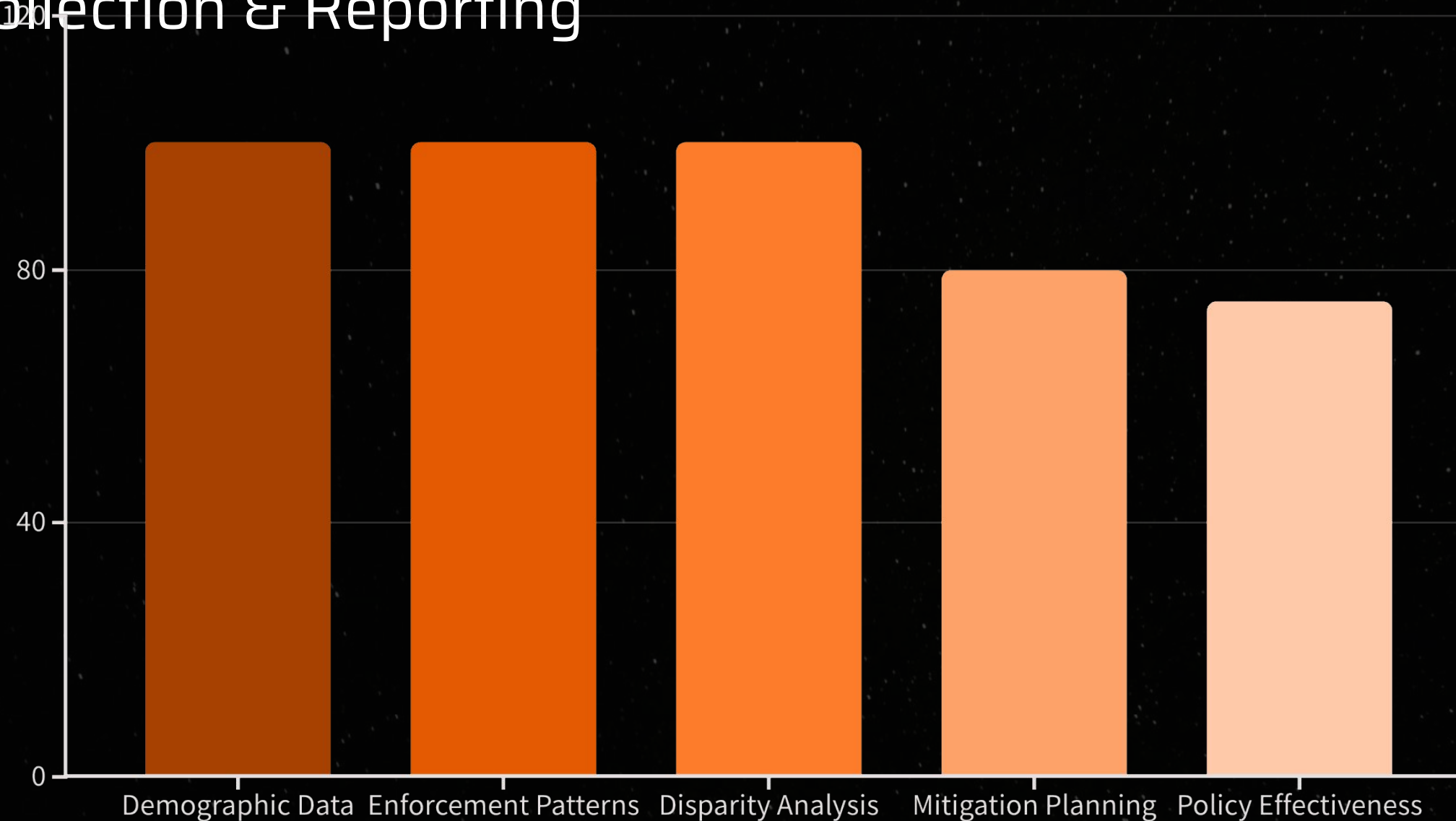
Health Monitoring - Student Privacy

Students using devices for health monitoring (diabetes, etc.) need appropriate accommodations while maintaining policy compliance.

Staff Enforcement

Clarifying teacher and staff roles in policy enforcement while minimizing classroom disruption and maintaining positive relationships.

Anxiety & Well-being

Addressing potential device separation anxiety and mental health impacts through counseling resources and gradual implementation.

We recognize the legitimate concerns raised by various community partners.

Data Collection & Reporting

Beginning September 1, 2026, districts must submit annual reports summarizing enforcement data with non-identifying demographic information. These reports must analyze any enforcement disparities across student populations and include mitigation plans if statistically significant disparities exist.

Community Engagement Timeline

Parent/Community Survey

An electronic survey will be distributed in the next Akron Connected Newsletter, addressing implementation ideas, concerns, and overall community sentiment toward the mandate. This input will form the foundation of our approach. This will also guide District Advocacy efforts.

Policy Advisory Committee Meeting

Scheduled for June 16 in the Library Media Center @2:45 This meeting will bring together representatives from all school community groups to review survey feedback and begin developing our district's draft policy.

Community Town Hall and Comment Period

Once a draft policy is developed and shared at the June 25th Board Meeting, we will begin our "Open Comment" period. We will also host a community-wide town hall meeting to share the proposed policy, answer questions, and gather additional feedback before Board of Education final approval.

Next Steps & How to Contribute

Board Policy Adoption

2nd Reading July 9

Community Feedback Integration

Refining draft policy based on community input

Open Comment Period begins June 25; Town Hall Anticipated July 8

Draft Policy Development

Creating initial policy framework - PAC Meeting June 16

First Reading - June 25 BOE Meeting

Community Engagement Survey

Gathering diverse perspectives - Survey Opens June 2

For questions or to express interest in serving on the Policy Advisory Committee, please contact the district office at (716) 542-5006 or email bjames@akronk12.org. We value your input!!

Questions?