

## **ENGAGE U.S. and Global Trips Phone Policy**

Valley Christian Schools has been leading short-term mission trips since 2016, and one of our priorities has always been to help students remain fully present in the work God has called them to do. Technology can be both helpful and distracting, so in order to balance safety, communication, and focus on ministry, we have developed the following Phone Policy for all ENGAGE trips:

**Summary** - Students may carry and use their phones during airports, layovers, long travel times, or other circumstances where staff determine that phones are needed for safety, communication, or the possibility of group separation.

### **1. Travel Use**

- Students may carry and use their phones during airports, layovers, and long travel times.
- Phones may be used for communication with family, navigation of travel logistics, and personal entertainment while en route.

### **2. Ministry Opportunities**

- To ensure students are fully engaged and distraction-free, phones will be collected by chaperones during all ministry activities, outreach times, team times, and evening debriefs.
- This allows students to focus on serving others, building relationships, and hearing from the Lord without distraction.

### **3. Daily Collection and Return**

- Each day, chaperones will collect phones prior to ministry activities and store them securely.
- Phones will be returned during designated travel times or free time at the discretion of the leadership team.

### **4. Emergencies**

- In the event of an emergency, trip leaders will ensure that communication with the ENGAGE office happens promptly. The ENGAGE office will then be in immediate contact with parents.
- Parents can also contact the ENGAGE office, which will then be in direct contact with each team throughout the duration of the trip.

## **5. Heart Behind the Policy**

This policy is not meant to deprive students but to protect the unique purpose of these trips. When students set aside their devices, they are free to:

- Be present with the people they serve
- Build deeper bonds with teammates
- Engage in the trip more clearly without constant digital noise

We believe this balance—allowing phones for travel but limiting them during ministry—honors both safety and the spiritual formation of our students. Thank you for reiterating both of these priorities with your students as they prepare for their Engage participation, and thank you for partnership with VCS.