

# BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY

## INFORMATIONAL REPORT

### RECOMMENDATION ON

### PROPOSED REVISIONS TO BOARD POLICY

### 06-0005-000 PORTABLE COMMUNICATION DEVICES

JANUARY 22, 2024

#### **Background Information:**

The Board maintains a manual which sets forth the various policies of the Harford County Public Schools (“HCPS”). The manual contains policies which are either required by federal and state law and regulation or which are, in the Board’s judgment, necessary and appropriate for the school system to operate in a lawful, appropriate, and effective manner.

#### **Discussion:**

In June of 1990, the Board adopted a Portable Communication Devices policy, which was most recently amended in July of 2013. Since 2013, the types of devices, and the capacity for use of those devices has changed dramatically. For example, the recent pandemic, and the rise in school shooting incidents, have school systems across this nation reevaluating the use of portable communication devices, and the impact of those devices on education.

In June of 2023, the office of Strategic Initiatives conducted focus groups regarding student cell phone use in schools with teachers, parents, students and school and community leaders. The report was released on hcps.org, provided to the Board, and listed in the Superintendent’s Bulletin, the 411 and the Board Weekly Update at the end of August and in the first week of September 2023. The focus group series asked questions regarding the role of HCPS in navigating the advantages and disadvantages of cell phones for students, and productive policies for managing cell phones in schools. The Student Cell Phones Strategic Focus Group Report includes collected data from the process, various recommendations by participants, gathered feedback and recommendations from the exercise. This report was provided to the Office of Secondary Education for review. A writing team of school-based administrators was created to analyze stakeholder feedback, review policies from school districts around the country, and analyze exemplars from our own district, specifically at C. Milton Wright High School. The writing team helped to develop a draft policy and received feedback from all secondary schools, members of Senior Staff, and members of the Instructional Leadership Team.

The Board Policy Review Committee met and reviewed a proposed, revised policy to include the recommendations from the focus group.

#### **Attachments:**

1. Current Board Policy 06-0005-000 entitled Portable Communication Devices.
2. Proposed, revised Board Policy 06-0005-000 entitled Portable Communication Devices.

#### **Superintendent’s Recommendation:**

For the foregoing reasons, the Superintendent recommends that the Board review the proposed, revised policy entitled 06-0005-000 Portable Communication Devices for approval at a subsequent Board meeting.

POLICY TITLE: <b>Portable Communication Devices</b>		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: 6/11/1990	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED: 7/29/2013	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED:
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: School Management		

### I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria regarding student use of portable communication devices as defined herein.

### II. Policy Statement

In order to maintain a secure and orderly learning environment, student use and possession of portable communication devices, as defined herein, shall be subject to the rules and regulations set forth herein.

### III. Definitions

- A. Portable Communication Device (PCD) means any electronic or battery powered instrument which transmits or receives voice, text, data or information in any form including, but not limited to, cell phones, laptop computers, smart phones, tablets, electronic readers or language translators and which is not owned by Harford County Public Schools (HCPS).
- B. Regular School Day means the time when students are required to be in homeroom to the time of dismissal.

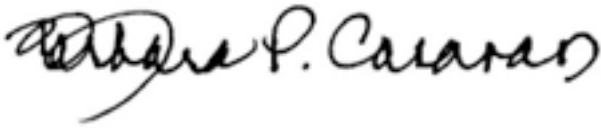
### IV. Rules

- A. Students enrolled in Harford County public schools are not permitted to possess or use any PCD except as provided by this policy.
- B. Students may possess or use a PCD on school grounds and buses under the following circumstances.
  - 1) Students in any grade may possess and use a PCD on school grounds and buses when authorized to do so pursuant to the student's Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan.
  - 2) Teachers may allow students to use a PCD in the school building for an instructional purpose if the teacher has received

authorization from an administrator and the usage follows the Acceptable Use Policy for Students.

- 3) Students in high schools may possess a PCD on school grounds and buses during the regular school day provided:
    - a) The student keeps and maintains the PCD so it cannot be seen by others;
    - b) The student does not use or activate the PCD in any fashion.
  - 4) Students in middle school may possess a PCD on school grounds during the regular school day provided the PCD is kept and maintained in the student's locker and is deactivated.
  - 5) Students in elementary school may possess a PCD on school grounds during the regular school day provided the PCD is kept and maintained in the student's backpack or cubbie and is deactivated.
  - 6) Students enrolled in any grade may use PCDs on school grounds before the regular school day and after the regular school day.
  - 7) Students in any grade may use PCDs on school buses before or after the regular school day provided:
    - a) students may not use PCDs for conversation, calls, photographing or videoing;
    - b) such use does not include implementation of the audio component of the PCD unless the student uses ear buds.
- C. Students' possession or use of PCDs permitted under this policy shall not:
- 1) disrupt the educational environment;
  - 2) violate federal or state law or regulation;
  - 3) violate Board policy and procedure including Board policy and procedure relating to student conduct and harassment; or
  - 4) invade the privacy of other students.
- E. Students and their parents are responsible for any theft of, loss of or damage to the student's PCD in accordance with general HCPS policy set forth in the Student Handbook/Calendar.

Board Approval Acknowledged By:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara P. Canavan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'B'.

---

**Barbara P. Canavan, Secretary and Treasurer**  
Board of Education of Harford County

Policy Action Dates					
ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE
Adopted	6/11/1990	Amended	11/26/2001		
Amended	7/8/1991	Amended	8/14/2006		
Amended	6/10/1996	Amended	7/29/2013		
Amended	6/9/1997				

Responsibility for Policy Maintenance & References		
LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER NAME: <b>Patrick Spicer</b>		JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: <b>General Counsel</b>
PERSON RESPONSIBLE:		JOB POSITION OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE:
DESIGNEE NAME: <b>N/A</b>		JOB POSITION OF DESIGNEE: <b>N/A</b>
REFERENCE 1 TYPE:	REFERENCE 1 NO.	REFERENCE 1 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 2 TYPE:	REFERENCE 2 NO.	REFERENCE 2 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 3 TYPE:	REFERENCE 3 NO.	REFERENCE 3 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 4 TYPE:	REFERENCE 4 NO.	REFERENCE 4 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 5 TYPE:	REFERENCE 5 NO.	REFERENCE 5 DESCRIPTION:
POLICY NUMBER PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 1, 2005: School Administration - .02.08.033		

POLICY TITLE: <b>Portable Communication Devices</b>		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: <b>6/11/1990</b>	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED: <b>1/22/2024</b>	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED:
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: <b>School Management</b>		

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria regarding student use of portable communication devices (PCD's) and Personal Listening Devices (PLD) as defined herein. Student use of cell phones, PCD's, PLD's, or other electronic devices during the school day is a privilege. Adherence to the guidelines below is essential to maintaining an appropriate, learning-focused academic environment and the integrity of the classroom.

## II. Policy Statement

PCDs and PLDs may serve as an outstanding instructional tool and learning resource if used appropriately and under the direction of the teacher or with teacher permission. We encourage our high school staff members and our students to use electronics and other 21st century devices to supplement instruction and learning. However, it has been proven that students who are on PCDs or PLDs when it is not part of the instructional lesson are not fully engaged in learning. In order to preserve the teaching and learning environment, this document is to clarify the cell phone/portable communication devices policy for Harford County Public Schools.

## III. Definitions

- A. Portable Communication Device (PCD) means any electronic or battery powered instrument which transmits or receives voice, text, data or information in any form including, but not limited to, cell phones, smart watches, tracking devices, smart phones, tablets, electronic readers or language translators and which is not owned by Harford County Public Schools (HCPS).
- B. Regular School Day means the time when students are required to be in homeroom to the time of dismissal.
- C. Personal Listening Device (PLD) means any electronic instrument which transmits sound from a PCD to a personal user such as headphones, earbuds, or personal speakers.

### IV. Elementary School

- A. Students in elementary school may possess a PCD or PLD on school grounds during the regular school day provided they are kept and maintained in the student's backpack and is on a "Do Not Disturb" setting.
- B. Elementary students may possess and use a PCD or PLD on school grounds and buses when authorized to do so pursuant to the students Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan.
- C. Students in any grade may use PCD's or PLD's on school buses before or after the regular school day provided:
  - 1) students may not use PCDs for conversation, calls, photographing or video or audio recording;
  - 2) such use does not include implementation of the audio component of the PCD unless the student uses a PLD.

### V. Middle School

- A. Students in middle school may possess a PCD or PLD on school grounds during the regular school day provided it is concealed on their person, is in a location that is not visible to staff or other students, and must be silenced and not used throughout the school day, unless otherwise instructed by an administrator.
- B. Middle school students may possess and use a PCD or PLD on school grounds and buses when authorized to do so pursuant to the students Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan.
- C. Students in any grade may use PCD's or PLD's on school buses before or after the regular school day provided:
  - 1) students may not use PCDs for conversation, calls, photographing or video or audio recording;
  - 2) such use does not include implementation of the audio component of the PCD unless the student uses a PLD.

### VI. High School

- A. PLD's and PCD's are prohibited from use in the classrooms and any other area in which academic work is being done unless otherwise instructed by a teacher or staff member and must be silenced throughout the school day.

- B. High school students may possess and use a PCD or PLD on school grounds and buses when authorized to do so pursuant to the students Individualized Education Plan or Section 504 Plan.
- C. Students in any grade may use PCD's or PLD's on school buses before or after the regular school day provided:
  - 1) students may not use PCDs for conversation, calls, photographing or video or audio recording;
  - 2) such use does not include implementation of the audio component of the PCD unless the student uses a PLD.

### VII. General Provisions

- A. Students' possession or use of personal PCDs and PLDs permitted under this policy shall not:
  - 1) disrupt the educational environment;
  - 2) thwart or disrupt HCPS network security
  - 3) impede the student from being able to hear explicit directions from staff members or hear emergency signals/announcements;
  - 4) violate federal or state law or regulation;
  - 5) violate Board policy and procedure including Board policy and procedure relating to student conduct and harassment; or
  - 6) invade the privacy of other students.
- B. Students and their parents are responsible for any theft of, loss of or damage to the student's PCD or PLD.
- C. Students using PCDs or PLDs in any manner that disrupts the educational environment, from within or from outside the classroom, or violates the rights of others, including, but not limited to, using the device in violation of our academic honesty policy, violating school conduct rules, harassing or bullying/cyber-bullying staff or students, photographing or video recording or using their device for unlawful purposes and/or in a manner that violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.
- D. The privilege of using PCDs or PLDs may be revoked when used in a manner inconsistent with this policy or other Board policies.



**Board Approval Acknowledged By:**

---

**Sean W. Bulson, Ed. D. Superintendent of Schools**  
Board of Education of Harford County

Policy Action Dates					
ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE	ACTION	DATE
Adopted	6/11/1990	Amended	11/26/2001		
Amended	7/8/1991	Amended	8/14/2006		
Amended	6/10/1996	Amended	7/29/2013		
Amended	6/9/1997				

Responsibility for Policy Maintenance & References		
LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER NAME: <b>Patrick Spicer</b>		JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: <b>General Counsel</b>
PERSON RESPONSIBLE:		JOB POSITION OF PERSON RESPONSIBLE:
DESIGNEE NAME: <b>N/A</b>		JOB POSITION OF DESIGNEE: <b>N/A</b>
REFERENCE 1 TYPE:	REFERENCE 1 NO.	REFERENCE 1 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 2 TYPE:	REFERENCE 2 NO.	REFERENCE 2 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 3 TYPE:	REFERENCE 3 NO.	REFERENCE 3 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 4 TYPE:	REFERENCE 4 NO.	REFERENCE 4 DESCRIPTION:
REFERENCE 5 TYPE:	REFERENCE 5 NO.	REFERENCE 5 DESCRIPTION:
POLICY NUMBER PRIOR TO NOVEMBER 1, 2005: School Administration - .02.08.033		