

# POLICY

## Harford County Public Schools

POLICY TITLE: <b>Portable Communication Devices</b>		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: 6/11/1990	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED: 1/22/2024	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 (PCD's), Personal Listening Devices (PLD), and Wearable Communication Devices (WCD) as defined herein. Student use of cell phones, PCD's, PLD's, WCD'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, PLDs, and WCDs 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, PLDs, or WCDs 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. Deactivated means the device is not able to emit any notifications, which encompasses sound, vibration, and visual alerts and includes settings such as the off position or "Do Not Disturb" mode;

# POLICY

## Harford County Public Schools

- B. Educational Environment means all locations where learning takes place, extending not only to classrooms but also libraries, laboratories, assembly halls, and online platforms.
- C. 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 phones, tablets, electronic readers or language translators and which is not owned by Harford County Public Schools (HCPS). Tracking devices that do not send or receive voice or text are excluded from this definition and include pedometers or location trackers, such as Apple AirTags or Tile.
- D. 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.
- E. Regular School Day means the time when students are required to be in homeroom to the time of dismissal.
- F. Wearable Communication Device (WCD) means any electronic or battery-powered instrument that transmits or receives voice, text, data, or information that is designed primarily to be worn on the person, including, but not limited to, smartwatch, smart glasses, smart ring, or fitness tracker.

### 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 Deactivated.
- 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, Section 504 Plan, or Nursing 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.

# POLICY

## Harford County Public Schools

### V. Middle School

- A. ~~Students in middle school may possess a PCD or PLD on school grounds during the regular school day provided kept and maintained in the student's locker and is Deactivated.~~
- A. ~~WCDs are permitted on a student's person but must be Deactivated in the Educational Environment, unless otherwise instructed by a teacher or staff member for a bona fide educational purpose.~~
- B. Middle school students may possess and use a PCD, PLD or WCD on school grounds and buses when authorized to do so pursuant to the students Individualized Education Plan, Section 504 Plan, or Nursing Plan.
- C. Students in any grade may use PCD's, PLD's, or WCD'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 or WCD unless the student uses a PLD.

### VI. High School

- A. PLD's and PCD's are ~~permitted on a student's person but must not be visible and is Deactivated in the Educational Environment, unless otherwise instructed by a teacher or staff member for a bona fide educational purpose.~~
- B. ~~WCDs are permitted on a student's person but must be Deactivated in the Educational Environment, unless otherwise instructed by a teacher or staff member for a bona fide educational purpose.~~

# POLICY

## Harford County Public Schools

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

### VII. General Provisions

- A. Students' possession or use of personal PCDs, PLDs, or WCDs 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, PLD, or WCD.
- C. Students using PCDs, PLDs, or WCDs 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, PLDs, and WCDs may be revoked when used in a manner inconsistent with this policy or other Board policies.

# **POLICY**

**Harford County Public Schools**

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**Board Approval Acknowledged By:**

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

# POLICY

## Harford County Public Schools

Policy Action Dates			
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: Patrick Spicer		JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: General Counsel
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