

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Board of Education  
Upper Marlboro, Maryland

5180  
Policy No.

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY

STUDENTS

Student Use of Social Media and Portable Electronic Devices in the Schools

**I. Policy Statement**

- A. The Prince George's County Board of Education (Board) believes that encouraging the use of technology in schools is essential in our global marketplace and will enhance the educational environment by promoting innovation; increasing student interest in learning; improving student achievement; and empowering teachers to use diverse and effective methods to prepare students for college and career. The Board recognizes social media as a viable tool to advance communications for students in the educational process and to be used in productive and innovative ways for instructional purposes.
- B. The Board's policy on portable electronic devices (PEDs) is designed to ensure that the use of PEDs is encouraged during the school day for instructional purposes, and at other times as approved by school administrators, provided that PED use does not violate the Code of Student Conduct in the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.
- C. The Board acknowledges that safe, supportive, effective learning environments depend on students demonstrating respect for themselves and others and using social media and electronic devices in a manner that will not detract from the learning process.

**II. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide students attending Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) with guidelines for appropriate conduct when using social media, recognize the value of allowing students to use PEDs for instructional purposes; and hold students accountable for inappropriate PED use in accordance with the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.

**III. Definitions**

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. *Cyberbullying* - Bullying that takes place over digital devices like cellular phones, computers, tablets, or other electronic communication. Cyberbullying can occur through texting, apps, or online via social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative,

harmful, false, or hurtful content about another student. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

- B. *Electronic Devices* – A communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, or pager.
- C. *Misuse of Social Media* - The use of social media, whether originating on or off school property, in a manner that demeans, condemns or berates others, including students and staff, incites violence of any kind, embarrasses, defames, harasses, bullies or wrongfully impersonates others, including students and staff or in any manner that violates the Student Rights and Responsibility Handbook, Board policies, administrative procedures, or other local, State or federal laws.
- D. *Portable Electronic Device (PED)* – Any non-PGCPS device used to send or receive data via voice, video, or text. Mobile phones, e-readers, tablets, personal computers, smart watches, or other devices equipped with microphones, headphones, speakers, and/or cameras are all considered PEDs
- E. *School Administration* - The principal or assistant principal of a school.
- F. *School day* – The time that the student comes onto school property until the student leaves school property.
- G. *School property* – All PGCPS buildings, including land that surrounds the buildings and grounds owned and operated by PGCPS, and PGCPS buses and other PGCPS vehicles, that are owned or leased by PGCPS, and the facility and/or grounds of any PGCPS-sponsored activity involving students.
- H. *School-sponsored activity* – Any activity that is sponsored, approved, conducted, planned, and/or supervised by PGCPS or school personnel, regardless of the location of the activity or whether the activity is or is not held during the instructional day.
- I. *Use* – In the context of this policy, *use* means being in possession of a PED that is not powered off or set on silent mode and is visible and audible to others.

#### **IV. Standards**

- A. Use of Social Media
  - 1. The Superintendent/designee may provide access to designated social media sites deemed appropriate for instructional purposes on PGCPS computers, tablets, or other mobile devices. The Superintendent/designee may also discontinue access to any designated social media site and /or provide access to additional social media sites as necessary and appropriate for legitimate instructional purposes for students to use.
  - 2. All instructional programs utilizing social media must be aligned with the curriculum standards, educational goals, and objectives of the lesson or unit of study.

3. Student misuse of social media on school property which has a negative and/or severe impact on the school learning environment or risks the safety of students and staff is prohibited and shall be addressed in accordance with the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.
4. Student misuse of social media off school property in a way that creates an actual or potential threat to students, staff, or administration or could reasonably be expected to materially interfere with the school environment is prohibited and shall be addressed in accordance with the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook.
5. Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their child's use of social media outside of school, which may impact their child's or other students' educational opportunities.
6. Students may not use social media to communicate with staff except in cases where such use is regulated by the school administration and whose parent(s)/guardian(s) have given written authorization and have access to their child's use of the social media sites.
7. Staff are required to report any incident that involves misuse of social media to the school administration.
8. Students are encouraged to report the misuse of social media to the school administration, including communications or invitations to communicate with staff members over social media.

B. Use of PEDs in Schools

1. Students are permitted to use PEDs for instructional purposes, with school administrator approval.
2. Students are permitted to use PEDs while riding to and from school on PGCPs buses, as long as it does not interfere with the safe operation of the school bus.
3. The school principal or designee may allow additional times for students to use PEDs at school in approved designated areas.
4. Students are prohibited from using PEDs in the following manner on school property:
  - a. Using PEDs in a manner that would be an invasion of privacy of another person (this includes using the device to take audio recordings, pictures, or videos in locker rooms or bathrooms at any time).
  - b. Using PEDs while getting on or off the school bus.
  - c. "Sexting" or the taking and/or transmission of nude or sexually explicit photos or videos in school.
  - d. Unauthorized or unlawful sharing or electronic posting of images taken or stored on PEDs during the school day and/or on school property.

- e. Taking, uploading, or sharing photos, recording audio, or capturing video during the school day in a manner that reflects bullying, harassment, intimidation, or cyberbullying.
  - f. Using PEDs in a manner that would be illegal.
  - g. Using PEDs in a manner that would be seen as compromising academic integrity.
  - h. Unintended use of a borrowed device (this includes using a borrowed device to text or make calls under the guise of the device's owner).
  - i. Using PEDs in any manner that reflects violations in the Code of Student Conduct.
  - j. Engaging in group texts when using PEDs.
5. At times when PED use is not permitted, PEDs must be turned off or on silent mode and stored in a backpack, book bag, pocket, purse, locker, vehicle, etc.
  6. Administrators, faculty, and staff may request at any time that students turn off and put away PEDs. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and possible confiscation by the school principal. School administrators are required to consult with parents/guardians regarding a student's misuse of a PED and appropriate responses in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct.
  7. No student shall use or access PGCPS 'network of Wi-Fi in an unauthorized manner.

C. Waiver of Liability:

1. Student-owned PEDs: Students assume full responsibility for their PEDs. The school system may not assume liability for theft, loss, damage, or unauthorized use of PEDs possessed by students on school property.
2. PGCPS-issued PEDs: Students are responsible for using PGCPS-issued PEDs in a manner that is consistent with the Information Technology Acceptable Use Guidelines in Board Policy 0115 and Administrative Procedure 0700. Students or parents/guardians shall timely report any damage, such as breakage, malfunction, or loss, of PGCPS-issued PEDs to the proper school authority, such as school security, the school principal/designee, or a school administrator. If the cause of the reported damage is due to the student's misuse, PGCPS may require payment for the cost of repair or replacement of the PED.

V. **Implementation and Responsibilities**

- A. The Superintendent is authorized to develop administration procedures to implement this policy.
- B. The Superintendent/designee will gather information regarding the impact of using social media and PEDs in schools.

## **VI. References**

### Other Board Policies and Administrative Procedures:

BP 0115 - Information Technology Services – Acceptable Usage Guidelines

Administrative Procedure 0700, Information Technology Services Acceptable Usage Guidelines;

BP 4400 - Inappropriate Relationships between Students and Employees, Volunteers and Contractors

Administrative Procedure 4219 - Inappropriate Relationships between Students and Employees, Volunteers and Contractors

BP 0125 - Nondiscrimination

Administrative Procedure 4170 - Discrimination and Harassment;

BP 5143 – Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation

Administrative Procedure 5143 - Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation

Administrative Procedure 10101 – Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook

## **VII. History**

ADOPTED:

04/25/2024

EFFECTIVE:

07/01/2024