PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICE USAGE IN SCHOOL-PROCEDURE

This procedure meets the minimum requirements of WV Code 18-2-46 and West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) Procedure 4374 in that it ensures a consistent approach to the use of a personal electronic device (PED) in all Putnam County Schools (PCS) during instructional time, including transition between classes. The goal is to promote a distraction-free learning environment while allowing for appropriate exemptions and educational opportunities.

A personal electronic device (PED) means any portable device capable of wireless communication or computing, including, but not limited to, cellular phones, tablets, laptops, smartwatches, and portable gaming systems not provided by PCS.

For the purpose of this procedure, the instructional day shall be defined as the period of time from the start of the first instructional period to the end of the last instructional period, including transition time between classes.

As referenced in WVBE Procedure 4374, student possession of PEDs at school is a privilege, not a right. Students use of these devices during the instructional day routinely interferes with the academic and social development of students. As indicated in WVBE Policy 4373, the goal of the policy is to promote a distraction-free environment, PEDs are believed to prohibit the age-appropriate development of relationships, study skills, and other necessary skills to be successful. Therefore, students are prohibited from possessing PEDs during the instructional day unless an allowable exemption applies.

Any use of PEDs during off-campus co-curricular or field trips during the instructional day will be prohibited, unless such use is specifically allowed by the principal.

After-school tutorial and disciplinary programs are an extension of the school day for participating students. The prohibition of PEDs in these activities extends until the conclusion of the program.

PEDs are permitted on school property, however, the use of and/or display of a PED is not permissible during the instructional day. Students must store PEDs in their assigned locker. For schools without lockers, students will store the PED in a principal approved location.

504 Plans, IEP, and Medical Conditions

Students may have access to their personal electronic devices during the instructional day if deemed necessary by a medical provider or the student's IEP or 504 team, or other written accommodation plan, by a school nurse, school psychologist or other school official; parent requests or notes shall not be accepted as approved accommodation. Barring emergency situations, a written order from the student's medical provider and/or a written explanation from the student's IEP or 504 team regarding the student's need for device access during instructional time must be submitted to the school principal before any exemptions will be permitted. Medical orders and written explanations from IEP or 504 teams must specify the electronic device(s) to which the student shall have access, how long that access is likely to be needed, and the anticipated use of the devices when accessed during the instructional day. A school principal may request additional information from the medical provider, IEP or 504 team if the need to access a device is not clear from the documentation submitted.

Work-Based Learning Programs

Students enrolled in a county board approved work-based learning program may use specific PEDs for course-related activities, provided the:

- Device type
- Purpose
- Specific courses are documented and approved by the school administration.

Non-Instructional Setting

High school students may possess PEDs in the gymnasium common areas or cafeteria during lunch but only when instruction is not occurring in those areas. Student usage must be appropriate and not disruptive. Following this non-instructional lunch/period, the PEDs must be stored as set forth herein.

Students involved in extracurricular activities after school shall have any PED set to "silent" or "vibrate" mode so that the extracurricular activity will not be disrupted. Student use of cell phones during extracurricular activities may be regulated by the coach or group sponsor as needed to prevent disruptions. PEDs should not be used in any locker room area.

Each violation of this procedure shall be documented in WVEIS. A principal may prohibit an individual student from possessing a PED if previous misuse has been documented. However, if a student is prohibited from possessing a PED on school property, a conference shall be offered to the parent/guardian to discuss the reasoning for the prohibition.

Secondary (6-12):

- Offense I: Personal electronic device is confiscated; returned at end of instructional day
- Offense II: Personal electronic device is confiscated; phone returned to parent/guardian during school day; conference between administration and parent/guardian and student; one (1) day of detention.
- Offense III: Personal electronic device is confiscated; phone returned to parent/guardian during school day; three days (3) of detention or one (1) day of Saturday school.
- Offense IV: Personal electronic device is confiscated; phone returned to parent/guardian during school day; five days (5) detention or two days (2) of Saturday school or one (1) day ISS. Student may be prohibited from bringing PED on campus for the duration of the semester. A conference with the parent/guardian is required if a student is prohibited from bringing PED on campus.
- Subsequent Offenses: Personal electronic device is confiscated; phone returned to parent/guardian during school day; considered habitual violation of school rules.

If a PED is used for an illegal activity, the principal shall report the matter to law enforcement officials. Use of a PED resulting in a violation of WVDE Procedure 4373 is prohibited.

Principals shall make reasonable efforts to ensure information related to acceptable use of PEDs is disseminated to students and their parent/guardians including posting signs on school property and publishing the information in student handbooks, newsletters, social media and county or school websites.

PCS and the Board are not responsible for theft, loss, damage or vandalism to PEDs brought onto its property.

Parents/guardians are advised that the best way to get in touch with their children during the school day is by calling the school office.