

# Personal Communication Device (PCD) Policy 5136

## - Frequently Asked Questions -

### General Questions

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#### **What is a Personal Communication Device (PCD)?**

For purposes of Policy 5136, a Personal Communication Device refers to student-owned electronic devices. Examples include computers, tablets, electronic readers, cell phones, smartphones, smartwatches, smart glasses, wireless earbuds or headphones, wearable technology, and other web-enabled or electronic devices of any type.

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#### **When does Phase 2 of the Personal Communication Device (PCD) policy take effect?**

Phase 2 of Board Policy 5136 takes effect January 20, 2026, which is the first day of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2026.

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#### **When may students use Personal Communication Devices?**

Students may use PCDs while traveling to and from school on a school bus or other Board-provided transportation, at the discretion of the bus driver or supervising staff, provided the use does not create a distraction or unsafe environment.

Students may also use PCDs during after-school activities or school-related functions, provided their use does not create a distraction, disruption, or interfere with the educational environment. This use is a privilege and may be revoked if abused.

Students may use PCDs in buildings during building hours, *outside of instructional time*. This means prior to the beginning of first period and after the completion of last period.

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#### **When is PCD use prohibited?**

Student use of Personal Communication Devices is prohibited on school grounds during school hours; defined as the time between the beginning of first period and the completion of last period.

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## Grades Pre-K to 5

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### **What are the expectations for elementary students?**

Students in grades Pre-K–5 must keep Personal Communication Devices silenced (no vibration) and stored in a locker, backpack, or teacher-designated location during school hours.

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## Grades 6 to 12

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### **What are the expectations for secondary students?**

Students in grades 6–12 must keep PCDs/phones silenced (no vibration), powered off, or on airplane mode and secured inside a District-issued locking pouch during school hours.

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### **What if a student forgets their locking pouch?**

If a student does not have their pouch, any PCDs must be turned in to the school office upon arrival, where they will be secured during school hours. Students can retrieve them after the school day. Repeated forgetting will prompt a problem-solving conversation between staff and the family.

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### **What about Personal Communication Devices other than phones?**

All other PCDs that do not fit in the pouch must be powered off or silenced (no vibration) and secured in the student's locker, backpack. District-issued locking pouches can hold most earbuds, smartwatches with most phones.

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### **How will buildings manage collecting or locking phones each day?**

Grades 6-12 students will lock their phones in secure pouches when they get to school and keep them with them all day. Pouches can only be opened using the district's unlocking bases at arrival and dismissal, in the office for early pickup, or at an unlocking station located outside the building for students who forget to unlock their pouch before leaving. This is a quick process and ensures phones stay inaccessible during the day.

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### **How does the locking pouch program work?**

The pouches are purchased from a company called Yondr. Pouches remain the property of the district, but must be brought to and from school each day and kept in good working condition.

Learn more about Yondr at: <https://vimeo.com/986781861?fl=pl&fe=sh>

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### **How will student safety be ensured if a threat occurs and students can't access their phones?**

During emergencies, students will follow established safety protocols led by trained staff. Emergency communication will be coordinated by the district and public safety officials. The district's emergency plans already include clear procedures for these situations. During an emergency, including a lockdown or active assailant situation, PCDs can be retrieved when deemed appropriate by trained staff or law enforcement.

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### **Why is a cell phone-free environment considered safer for students during school emergencies?**

Cell phones can often act as a significant burden during critical situations like lockdowns or evacuations. According to law enforcement and security personnel, a PCD-free environment enhances safety for several reasons:

- **Prevents System Overload:** Excessive outgoing calls can overwhelm local communication networks, potentially blocking essential systems used by emergency responders.
- **Reduces Misinformation:** Students often share unverified information in real-time, which can lead to panic or confusion. Official communication is more accurately handled through established school radio systems, PAs, and school phones.
- **Ensures Focus on Directions:** During an emergency, it is vital that students listen to the immediate instructions provided by staff, administration, and first-responders rather than being distracted by their devices.
- **Protects Student Safety:** In some emergencies, phone activity (sounds, signals, or posts) can unintentionally reveal where students are sheltering. Restricting device use reduces the risk of being exposed to a threat.
- **Minimizes Daily Conflict:** A significant majority of school incidents, including bullying and other forms of aggression, originate from cell phone communication. Restricting access to them helps maintain a safer, more focused educational environment.

Hear Directly from our School Security Team: [The Impact of Cell Phones on School Safety and Emergency Response](#)

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**Are any devices allowed to be worn or used during school hours?**

The policy makes a specific allowance for student-owned fitness devices that are not web-enabled and do not connect to the internet through another device, provided they are silenced with no vibration. This is a privilege that may be revoked if abused.

Students who require device access for health or learning reasons may be permitted to use them as part of an approved medical plan, IEP, or 504 plan.

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**What happens if a student violates the policy?**

Violations will result in disciplinary action consistent with the student code of conduct outlined in the student handbook. If a device is confiscated, it will be held in a secure location and returned to the parent or guardian, or adult designated by the parent or guardian in the student's emergency contacts, unless the violation involves potentially illegal activity.

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**Will school staff search student devices?**

School officials will not search or tamper with Personal Communication Devices unless there is reasonable suspicion that a search is required to discover evidence of a violation of the law or of school rules. Any search will be conducted in accordance with the district's search and seizure policy.

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**Who is responsible for a student's device?**

Students are personally and solely responsible for the care and security of their Personal Communication Devices. The Board assumes no responsibility for theft, loss, damage, or misuse of devices brought onto school property, even when secured in a locking pouch.

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**How should parents contact their child during the school day?**

Parents and guardians are advised that the best way to contact their child during the school day is by calling the school office. Students are expected to use school phones to contact parents or guardians during school hours.

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**What happens if a locking pouch is lost or damaged?**

If a District-issued locking pouch is lost, damaged, or destroyed, the student or parent/guardian may be charged a replacement fee based on the actual replacement cost to the district.

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**What happens if a student forgets to silence their device?**

Failure to silence a device (including vibration) is considered a violation of the policy and may result in disciplinary consequences.

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**Are students allowed to purchase or use unapproved magnets or other devices to open locking pouches?**

No. Students may not tamper with, damage, or attempt to bypass District-issued locking pouches. Using unapproved magnets or other tools to open a pouch during school hours is a violation of Policy 5136 and may result in disciplinary action, device confiscation, and a replacement fee if the pouch is damaged.

In addition, unapproved magnets pose potential health risks for some students. Certain medical devices, including some programmable brain shunts used to treat hydrocephalus, can be affected by magnetic fields. Because staff cannot determine which students may have such medical conditions, the use of unapproved magnets at school presents unnecessary safety concerns.

Students with documented medical needs related to magnetic sensitivity should work through established medical, 504, or IEP processes to ensure appropriate accommodations and safety measures are in place.