REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 7

Newbury Library Media Center

Personal Device Subcommittee Meeting

September 25, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.

APPROVED 10/9/24

PRESENT: Chair Ms. Molly Sexton Read (B), Secretary / Treasurer Mr. Noel Gauthier (NH), Ms. Crone (N), Superintendent Steven K. LePage, HS Principal Gary Franklin, and MS Principal Ryan Cornelius. Teachers: Mr. Dan Wilbur, MS Social Studies; Ms. Jennifer Yanosky, MS Math; Ms. Kim Pershmann, HS English Department Chair; Mr. Jacob Green, HS Science. Parents: Ms. Rosalie Butler, Ms. Gina Fleming, Ms. Jennifer Grant, Ms. Angela Skornia, and Ms. Deirdre Tindall. Students: Jamison Chiron, grade #10; Delilah Halt, grade #11; Owen Langer, grade #12; Keira Mann, grade #11; Amaya Washington, grade #11.

Ms. Sexton Read began the meeting by welcoming all and thanking all for their time and interest in this Personal Electronic Device Policy review**.** All guests introduced themselves. Ms. Sexton Read reviewed the background of the Personal Device Policy and why updates and/or changes may need to take place in reference to the CSDE Position Statement and Policy Guidance of Personal Technology Use in Connecticut Schools that was distributed in August 2024. Superintendent LePage communicated that he handed out a packet to all that included information on personal device usage, results of studies from personal device usage, surveys and articles related to this topic at hand. Given the risks and negative impact on learning and mental health, RSD#7 in collaboration, educators, families and students, want to enact a Personal Technology Use Policy to assist in enhancing learning, ensuring student safety and promote responsible technology use is grades 7-12. Students, BOE members, administrators and teachers congregated in groups for a discussion of the personal electronic device policy and discussed information and perspectives to assist in developing surveys.

Students: The recommendations of students were to have uniformity of rules and regulations between all classes, grade levels, etc. Students expressed that in A/P and College Prep classes, the cell phone policy was more relaxed than in regular classes throughout the High School. Students appreciate clear and consistent guidelines on when and where phone use is allowed. Inconsistent enforcement can lead to confusion and frustration. Parents feel the need to communicate with their children, and children should feel safe communicating with the parents in the appropriate surroundings.

Parents: Parents expressed the concern of communication and safety due to the recent increase of threats among CT Schools. Parents expressed the consensus of regulation and moderation of personal devices in school and at home. Parents suggested more transparency and communication between students, staff, parents, and the community. If more transparency occurred with communication, parents, staff and students would not be searching social media on current local events. Parents stated that having their children with cell phones gives the parents less anxiety in regards to reaching their children due to emergency situations. Balancing safety and responsible technology use is crucial. Parents need to ensure that the school has a communication system in place, such as a reliable phone line and emergency notification systems, to keep parents informed.

Teachers: The Middle School Teachers expressed that the problem is minimal in the Middle School. Students know not to have their phones out in class. If the teacher sees that the cell phone is out, the teacher will ask the student to hand it into the teacher. Students in the Middle School are reactive and do not think twice about taking photos of their friends and posting them on social media. Students do not understand the ramifications of this issue. The Middle School implements the personal device policy and guidelines and provides consequences when needed. The High Teachers expressed they have places where the students can drop off their phones upon entry to the class and even provide charging stations. The High School Teachers communicated there is a level of respect upon leaving your device at the door and engaging the students' full focus on learning. Both High School and Middle School teachers expressed the desire to conform with the personal electronic device policy in Middle and High school.

Administrators: Principal Franklin and Principal Cornelius stated that conformity of the Personal Electronic Device Policy within the High School and Middle School would be an acceptable advantage. They also reflected that focusing on skills within the students can assist in reducing cell phone usage: self-regulation, impulse control, self-awareness, reflection, and relationship and communication skills.

The BOE Members and Superintendent LePage thanked all members for this information. Ms. Sexton Read said there will be communication in the coming weeks in regards to the subsequent next steps. Meeting ended at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Barrett
Board Clerk