FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Does the policy include technology other than smartphones? Yes. Any device that can transmit communication or receive notifications, such as smartwatches, must be turned off and stored away.

Can students use their PCDs during after-school activities?
Once students enter the building at the beginning of each school day, they must first turn off their devices, and store the devices away until the end of the school day.

Students may access their PCDs after school hours, even during extracurricular functions.

EXCEPTIONS:
Are there exceptions? Students with medical or health needs (e.g. diabetic monitoring) may receive accommodations on a case-by-case basis, which will be determined with a 504, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), English Learning Plan (ELP), Health Service Plan, or any other health accommodation.

Will staff be allowed to let students use their phones as a reward, for class projects, or if they have down time? No.

Will schools randomly search students for their personal communication devices? No.

My child is in elementary or middle school, and uses a smartwatch to communicate with me about pickup, does this apply to them?
Yes. We recognize that parents provide their children with cell phones for safety reasons. Therefore, we understand that students bring their cell phones/smart watches to school. Students can call parents immediately upon arrival or at dismissal. Other than that, all PCDs must remain turned off and stowed away during the school day including breakfast and lunch.

If parents/guardians need to communicate with their child, they may contact the school office, and the office will be able to send a message to their child, or the child can be called out of class to talk on the office phone with their parent/guardian.

How will I be able to communicate with my child during the school day? You may call the school office, and they will be able to deliver notes to your child during the school day. Students may also use the phone in the school office to call home if needed.

Will staff members be allowed to use their PCDs? Staff members will model expectations during school hours, however, in the case that their PCD is needed as an academic tool, staff retain the ability to use the technology during school hours (e.g. timers, documentation, etc). Additionally, administrators use the Remind App to communicate with staff members in

emergency situations. When necessary, staff may use PCDs when they are not in the presence of students during their prep period, and lunch time.

Why has the personal communication device policy been updated? Smartphones, earbuds, and smartwatches prove to be a constant distraction to students during class. Even when teachers enforce no-phones in class, many students bring second cell phones, or communicate on their smartwatches during class. These devices provide constant distractions, which have led to a decline in academic achievement and social behavior. Gov. Brad Little is aware of the effects of PCDs in an academic setting, and has signed an executive order that Idaho Schools should create policy preventing student access to PCDs during the school day.

PSD is complying with Gov. Brad Little's executive order, and is working to be proactive in creating an environment where students can thrive academically, and develop healthy interpersonal relationships with their peers.

Will this policy update really improve academic achievement and student behavior? The updated policy is based upon research by psychologist Jonathan Haidt, who has worked since 2015 to identify changes in adolescent behavior both socially and academically. His book, The Anxious Generation, published in 2023 includes all of the data collected tying a decline in school performance to access to smartphone technology. If you would like more information, here are some links to explore:

Smartphones vs Smart Kids: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVq4ARIlNVg
The Anxious Generation Evidence: https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/research/the-evidence
Collaborative Review: https://www.anxiousgeneration.com/research/collaborative-review-docs

Why can't a student use their PCD during passing periods, lunch breaks, and free periods during school hours? Research shows that adolescents spend, on average, 9 hours a day on non-school sanctioned technology, and that social media consumption and texting during instructional hours detract from a student's ability to focus. It is the goal of PSD to cultivate an environment with limited distractions.

Unfortunately, many phone violations also take place during passing periods, lunch breaks, and free periods. This is the time when students take or share inappropriate videos and pictures of themselves or their classmates. Even in such a short period of time, that can influence the mental state of students who are on the receiving end of these social media shares in their next class period.

Local law enforcement also recommends this change due to the number of incidents in which students have used their smartphones to participate in illegal activity during school hours.

Why can't my child use their personal device during a school emergency?
During an emergency, we all want to have instant information to see if our loved ones are safe. However, law enforcement agencies have concluded that having personal devices during an emergency can cause a number of issues:

1. Potential to hinder emergency response time. During a crisis, mass use of cell phones can overload local call networks, interfering with emergency responders' communications. Additionally, cell phone use may encourage parents to rush to the school, potentially creating traffic congestion and interfering with evacuation or emergency response.
2. Distraction from safety protocols. Our teachers are well-trained in emergency protocols, and if students are focusing on their phones during an emergency, they may fail to follow important safety instructions by teachers and first responders.
3. Revealing locations to potential threats. In situations like an active shooter scenario, cell phone activity (ringing, vibrating, screen lights) could reveal hidden locations to a perpetrator.
4. Spread of misinformation: Panicked students may unintentionally send inaccurate information, which could then be shared with first responders, potentially hindering the emergency response.

What if I need to communicate with my child during a school emergency?
PSD has worked with law enforcement to develop safety procedures during a school emergency. Part of the safety procedure is the "Reunification Plan." If you'll remember, PSD has sent home paperwork for the "Reunification Plan" in order to communicate with parents, and reunify students who have been relocated to safe locations with their families. If you have not received paperwork for the "Reunification Plan," please contact your child's administrator.

SchoolMessenger communication system:
The PSD will utilize the SchoolMessenger system to provide parents with updates about school information, including emergencies, through mass phone calls and/or email messages. This is one way the PSD is implementing tools to keep parents informed during situations like school emergencies.

A text message option will also be available for parents to opt in once the SchoolMessenger feature is active. Schools will provide a flyer with instructions on how to opt in when this option becomes available.

ENFORCEMENT:
What are the consequences for a student using their PCD during school hours?
First offense: Device will be brought to the main office by the student. The student's name will be recorded and the device may be picked up after school by the student.

Second offense: Device will be brought to the main office by the student. The student's name will be recorded and the parent/guardian is required to pick it up, or authorize its return to the student after school.

Third offense: Device will be brought to the main office by the student. The student may be suspended for a minimum of one day (either In-School Suspension or Out-of-School Suspension), the student will not be allowed to have the device on campus for the remainder of the school year, and the device will be returned to the parent/guardian.

Possession of PCDs by a student is a privilege, which may be forfeited by any student who fails to abide by the terms of this policy, or otherwise engages in misuse of this privilege.

Students who violate the privacy provisions of this policy and/or use a PCD to violate the privacy rights of another person may have their device confiscated and held until a parent/guardian picks it up, and may be directed to delete the audio and/or picture/video file while the parent/guardian is present. If the violation involves potentially illegal activity the confiscated device may be turned over to law enforcement.