
Montgomery County Education Association

New Business Items Committee

Implementing a Phased Transition to a MCPS Environment Free of Cell Phones and Other Personal Mobile Devices (PMDs)

WHEREAS, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) defines Personal Mobile Devices (PMDs) under Regulation COG-RA as any non-MCPS-issued personal electronic device used to send or receive data via voice, video, or text, including, but not limited to, cell phones, smartwatches, earbuds, tablets, or other devices capable of connecting to the internet or functioning as a communication tool during instructional hours; Whereas, MCPS emphasizes in Regulation COG-RA the importance of limiting PMD use to support an effective social-emotional and learning environment, minimize distractions, and enhance student and well-being (<https://www.staffordschools.net/trending-now/cell-phonepolicy>);

WHEREAS, research shows that excessive PMD use during school hours significantly distracts students, reducing focus and academic performance (Common Sense Media, 2023);

WHEREAS, the term "learning environment" encompasses not only academic settings but also the promotion of social-emotional health, student engagement, and safety, which are integral to fostering effective education and overall well-being;

WHEREAS, excessive PMD use correlates with mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation, all of which are detrimental to the learning environment; Whereas, reliance on PMDs for instructional purposes exacerbates educational inequities, particularly for students without access to equivalent technology;

WHEREAS, MCPS's current PMD policy allows individual schools to determine usage rules, emphasizing "Away All Day" for elementary schools while granting flexibility to middle and high schools during non-instructional periods; Whereas, the uneven application of the "Away All Day" initiative has created inequitable learning environments across schools, depending on individual leadership teams' implementation ;

WHEREAS, the Montgomery County Education Association (MCEA) is committed to fostering safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments and supporting educators in maintaining focused classrooms;

WHEREAS, safety trainings for MCEA members emphasize the importance of students remaining quiet and focused on adult directions during emergency situations to prevent distractions, misinformation, and safety risks (<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/lifeline-distractionshooting-reignites-debate-phones-schools-rcna169920>); Whereas, phased transitions in other districts, such as New York City, have demonstrated the effectiveness of gradual implementation in reducing device dependency and improving student outcomes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that MCEA strongly urges MCPS to universally and consistently implement and enforce a phased transition to a MCPS environment free of cell phones and other personal mobile devices (PMDs) during instructional hours.