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Loudoun County School Board, Student Behavior and Accountability Committee, Thursday, May 30, 2024

Date Thursday, May 30, 2024
Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length 41m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/952185255?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-21. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:00] Good afternoon, it's now four o'clock and welcome to everybody who's here. I'm calling us into order for the SBAC committee. All right, seeing as that there's no public comment, we will move right on to the minutes.

[00:00:23] If you would go ahead and read the minutes to us, I'd be appreciative, thank you. okay so the minutes are from the Monday April 22nd 2024 meeting it was at 6 p.m.

[00:00:49] here at the administrative building the meeting was called to order by Ms. LaBelle at 6:29 there was no public comment Dr. Rashid moved to accept the March minutes and dr. Dean seconded the motion the motion passed 3 to nothing we did have the policy 8655 student personal device use as an information item and that was presented by Aaron Smith who is with us today there were

[00:01:26] some questions from the Committee to clarify some elements of that policy, but no specific changes were recommended at the time by the Committee. It was noted that the policy would go out for public feedback and that we would be reconvening as a Committee in May for you to consider that public feedback. Also, as a result of the delay, we had some technical difficulties you may recall so because of a delay in starting the meeting dr.

[00:01:59] Dean's moved to move all other items that were on the April agenda to the May agenda dr. Rasheed seconded the motion and that passed by a vote of three to zero there was no new business and we adjourned at 6:51 thank you is there a motion to approve the meeting at minutes as read I move second I second

[00:03:07] There it goes now it's on all right now. It's on it. It was Let's take a look at the policy 8550 parent notification concerning sex offender and crimes against minors registry We have revisions here in front of us have the board members had time to review them and

[00:03:37] Make a decision as to whether we're going to accept them as is any comments. I don't have any questions I just wanted to move to accept the red line The red line version version and move it on to the full board. Is there a second? I second it has been moved and seconded all in favor say aye all opposed nay the

[00:04:17] Motion has been passed and this shall be passed on to the full board for consideration Thank you. The next item on the agenda is the motion on student speech and expression policy 8273. Has everyone had time to review this and consider what we're going to do? Is there a motion

[00:04:49] to bring this particular document, the red line copy, forward to the full board? I motion to bring this red line copy forward to the full board second I second all in favor say aye aye all opposed the motion has been passed in this policy will also be sent forward to the full board now the next thing we have to consider is the feedback

[00:05:23] for policy 86 55 has everybody had an opportunity to read the red line copy Okay. Mr. Smith, I do have some questions.

[00:05:45] Not necessarily on the document itself. Excuse me, I need to sit back a little. Okay, it's better. Thank you. I had received a letter from Chair Mansfield with an attachment that showed a device that is a pouch that is a Faraday case. Have you ever heard of such a device?

[00:06:15] I believe you're speaking of the Yonder pouches, manufacturer Yonder, who makes a pouch that blocks a cell phone inside of the pouch. Yes. Do you think that this could be considered as a solution to our problems with cell phones?

[00:06:33] I will be happy to share it with everybody because I don't know that everybody knows what it's all about. So I used one of them before. I think it's something we could explore piloting. We did cost this out it is a couple million dollar initiative to do that across all high schools for high school students and we just want to make sure we're aware of administrative burden and overhead that it would put on schools if you imagine 2000 kids having to put their devices in a yonder pouch and then that pouch gets locked via a receiver at the school so we probably want to pilot that before we just say that would solve the problem but

[00:07:10] I've heard feedback from other schools that it just creates 45 minutes delay in students getting to classes sometimes because they're all in line waiting to get their phones put in pouches, so it could be a solution, but at this time, it's not a budget initiative that we have funding allocation for, and it's not something we piloted internally, and we'd probably want to do that before we made a recommendation.

[00:07:33] Could I ask the staff to do an exploration and possibly set up a pilot program? For those of you who haven't heard of Yonder, and I think there might be some other devices out there that are similar we might want to explore the cost of those as well.

[00:07:53] The Yonder pouch is a little pouch about a little bit larger than cell phones and it locks with a magnetic device similar to what is used if you've been to clothing stores and they have those little white tags on them that have magnets and you can't get it out or off until you put it through a special magnet or special device.

[00:08:15] Their pouches are similar to that. They are what we know as Faraday cages. They prevent electronic contact or wireless contact with the device. So a student who put his phone into one of these pouches and closed it, it would receive no reception from anything and prevents contact until the device is removed from the pouch.

[00:08:44] To remove it, or the way the schools have been using it, is the students are required to bring their phones in and put them, they're handed a yonder pouch, they put their phone in the pouch and seal it. They can then carry the phone with them all day, which alleviates us of the burden of making sure they're not stolen.

[00:09:05] Some of the teachers in the past have been putting shoe bags up and making students put their phones in them and then somebody can steal them when they're going out the door and other things like that. So having the student have his phone with him all day is not necessarily denying him any freedoms of speech or possession or anything like that.

[00:09:30] And they get, at the end of the day, they can go out through the door. The magnet that releases the pouch is by the door. So as they go out the door, they tap it. They drop the pouch back in a basket. and that all the messages and all the texts and anything else that came during the day will automatically download as soon as the phone is freed.

[00:09:54] Schools that have piloted this and are using it have said that there is a lot more focused attention. At first the kids are a little wild about it, but then after that they start to actually pay attention to what's going on in school and that there has been a noticeable increase in achievement in these schools.

[00:10:13] So perhaps through these pilot programs, through this research on these pouches, we can get more information about how they're working, what other options for companies there might be out there besides Yonder, if there is, and maybe look into funding a pilot program.

[00:10:36] Do the other board members think that this might be a good idea? This is a discussion item here. Yes, ma'am. While it sounds perfect, I think the investment as the monetary investment would be a lot for this time of the year, to bring it on board this time of the year.

[00:11:05] Even to pilot it would be that we are going to delay the passing of a cell phone policy until we finish the pilot. That's usually the way a pilot works. But I think that we need to have something concrete and succinct and concrete ready for August when the kids return.

[00:11:30] So I think that if we choose to pilot it, we still should go forward with creating something that will restrict the use of cell phones in the schools. And the question I have related to that, I think I've heard the answer.

[00:11:46] All students don't have a locker in high schools, right? That's correct. Most students don't use a locker in high school. they don't use it or they don't or there's not one there's not available to them signed to them they can request use of a locker but most students don't have a locker assigned to them and we have some middle schools that have more students than lockers at the same time too just so you're aware

of that okay okay that answers that question um I also think we need to look at the research related to the impact of technology cell phones and other devices on the anxiety

[00:12:26] associated with young people and with that I think that that would lead us to possibly want them not to have the cell phones in their possession at all during the school day. Ms. Rashid, Dr. Rashid do you have any comments you'd like to make?

[00:12:46] Yes, I echo Dr. Dean's comments, and I don't know how much it would cost. I think it's a wonderful idea. In addition to that, what would be the protocol for a little bit larger devices that are not accommodated by such pouches, like an iPad?

[00:13:06] I don't know if there's a mini iPad that it could maybe accommodate. so we just have done cursory investigations into the product line read articles talked to other school districts who have used them and primarily around cell phone size so not situationally aware but that's something we could take back and research so I think I agree we could do possibly do a pilot we'd want a high school to volunteer for that so that it's something that they choose to do and that we can assist them with that and if they're about \$20 a device if you're looking at you know a high school like that has two thousand students it's about what forty thousand dollars to do a pilot for

[00:13:44] that so not unreasonable but we definitely want to get that feedback before with how those processes work so we can do best practices and what that's going to look like and what the impact is going to be because we don't want that in an impertinent impact on schools to have a well this is one more thing we need to manage so we just want to make sure we do it thoughtfully and when you were answering dr. Dean's his questions about lockers just to just to clarify are there more lockers than there are students in all the middle schools or the other way around I believe most middle schools I don't have the number off the top of my head but I do know at least one middle school that has more students

[00:14:20] than lockers so that's why some of the language and the policy that we're referring to is the student personal device use feedback included redline copy because we did get so much feedback that we did incorporate changes into that policy but that's why some of the language was changed around middle schools for that one particular principal who brought that to our attention and mr. Smith are you aware of any other places that are kind of doing something similar with such pouches yes we've talked to different schools local school districts are doing everything from keeping it status quo as things are and just allowing having to be a classroom behavior management some of

[00:14:58] them are doing official policies that ban them some of them are using the yonder pouches as a consequence so if a student doesn't follow through with what they need to do so when you're looking at a yonder pouch investment it's less for them because they're buying 20 or 30 pouches for students who have habitually abuse the practice versus every student so there's just different processes and we probably want to weigh all of that when we look at our pilot to see what kind of works best for our high schools thank you for this another

[00:15:32] thought in reading all of those responses there was a teacher comment or there was more than one that talked about the smart watches in addition to the cell phones and that it was often used for cheating so how do we deal with the watches if if if we choose to deal with the cell phones how do we go a step further with the smart watches so I believe on the screen here actually thank you we added some language around smart watches that they are allowed one of the challenges with smart watches is even

[00:16:12] defining what they look like so there's so many different forms they look like regular watches how do you know and really putting teachers in a position of having to do that legwork doesn't is an advantage for them so we really put some language around we also heard from parents that they you know they really value the location being able to see where their children are so that they can know that so we put some language in here that says that they are allowed but that they may be asked to be removed for tests they may be asked if they're a disruption in class they may be asked to be removed and then standard discipline practices from the srnr and the code of conduct would be followed after that so that's kind of the language we added specifically around

[00:16:49] smart watches to the red line feedback version of the policy um while we're on the the topic of smart watches uh for the special needs kids uh there are some special needs kids that use such devices as angel sense or something of the sort i guess the difficult part is how do you determine you know that you can't really take away like a child's angel sense because the parent it's more of like a concern or a safety measure that's a tough one so i think what we did with the feedback is we tried there was consensus that we needed a policy and that we should restrict cell phone use

[00:17:28] And then we heard varying perspectives on some of these things, and we're trying to find a middle ground about how we make sure parents feel like they still are able to do the things that they want, that makes them feel safe and their children feel safe, while limiting disruptions and distractions in the classroom.

[00:17:43] So we felt like you can't do as much on a smartwatch as what you can do on your cell phone, so the distraction here is a reduced level already. And then if it becomes a distraction in the classroom, then that's something that could be handled separately. Does that make sense? While we're on that topic, I believe, what about those people, like, after lunch?

[00:18:06] I guess my concern is health also, that, you know, if their sugar goes up, they use it for the sticky thing that's on there. The diabetes devices. Yeah, the diabetes levels. I think one of the recommendations that was made through SEAC is that students that have these devices that are necessary to their health and have IEPs should have it mentioned in the IEP as an accommodation.

[00:18:32] so that they will legally be allowed to keep and use these devices, especially if they are diabetic. That is critically important. So I think that that kind of language should be mentioned in the policy, that if a student has an IEP with an accommodation for a personal device necessary for the student's health, that this should be allowed.

[00:18:57] And we do have line 88, item D, exceptions, where it does note that 504 is IEPs other personal knowledge and those that docu so we have documented accommodations that they will still be allowed to use those devices we do not want to put someone in negative health situation due to device removal so we that language was added specifically to address that concern and if we need to refine that or do something different message it a little bit I'm sure staff would be more than happy to look at that Yes, ma'am. Go ahead. Jump in.

[00:19:36] My comment on that would be that they also might exploit the policy. Those G7s, which is the next generation of blood sugar control, they have their own monitoring device.

[00:19:53] They don't have to monitor it on their cell phone. They can monitor it on the device that comes with the sticky. yeah and so technical term i think i think for every student even if it's in the iep there

needs to be a documentation or verification by the school nurse and she would make a list of those students who require such uh devices to to to monitor so i think the school nurse would have

[00:20:28] would need to verify those i would say the policy has been a cross-departmental effort because there's been student services and Ms. Richardson's team weighing in on everything from IEP, special education, to nurses and what that needs to look like and what that language needs to be.

[00:20:47] So we could definitely take that back and just make sure that that was consistent. But the goal was that it wasn't just, as much as it's an IT policy, it's really much more of like a behavior policy and a classroom management policy. So it's really been a lot of individuals across the department working on that to make sure that we've taken all those viewpoints and those lenses into perspective.

[00:21:08] I will also add that as a member of the Student Services Committee, that we have done extensive work on who and how these devices are monitored because that becomes a critical issue for the health of the student. And we are working on that policy to get it in place.

[00:21:27] You might want to check with Ms. Donahue to see where that is right now. But we want to make it across the board that we know in every school who is responsible for monitoring the device. Because not even the young children, they don't know how to self-monitor.

[00:21:47] Who takes care of that? Who's responsible? What about if a teacher's absent or a personal assistant is absent? Who does it then? So all of that is being explored at this time through the Student Services Committee. Go for it.

[00:22:06] I don't think, Mr. Smith, you can answer this right now because it's more about the policy that's redlined. In line 80 through 83, in the redline copy, it recognizes that, you know, some parents, I guess I myself was in that, that I used to use my son's cell phone to make sure he's okay and all that stuff.

[00:22:28] But once it's removed, which I'm fine with, I just wanted to make sure that in line 82 it says, there is an emergency, parents may contact the main office of their child's school. So oftentimes, like when I would call, no one would answer the main office. So I was just curious if that is a policy that someone has to be at the main office at all times. I'm just curious for my own sake, and I think some other parents will feel the same. I'll take that as a note. I don't have an answer to that off the top of my head, but I do know that the language is put in place as

[00:23:04] students don't have access to their cell phone. If they're in their locker, then the only way to really contact them is to contact the main office and have them contact the students so just to advertise the path of communication but I'll take that back as a question for the team yeah thank you thank you and I can say that as a principal there should always be someone to answer that office phone even if it's the student teacher parent volunteer you're right yeah I think that that should be a goal of every building that that

[00:23:40] main office phone is covered at all times I think the big problem in the main office is that often there are multiple calls to the school and when a parent tries to call they're either put on hold or they're in a waiting line a queue and we need to understand that and that that might be might make them unhappy. That's the best way I can put it. But I think that we also have enough substitutes in most buildings during the day that if there is a period of time where the main

[00:24:16] secretary, the main person who answers the phone, is out of the office maybe to have a lunch break or whatever else she needs to do, that one of the substitutes could be used. So there are ways in the schools to actually make sure that the phone is manned but we need to state specifically that the phone must be manned the other thought was from the comments the feedback students can sometimes take their own personal

[00:24:51] computers and use for classroom work is that I guess that's a question oh that's accurate we don't force students to take LCPS Chromebooks at this time we have about a 98% take rate but that leaves about 2% that choose to use they may be in an advanced class and they're using their personal MacBook to do certain things that they can't do on their Chromebook so really reviewing what's best for the instructional outcome of what that student is trying to do we do allow flexibility and device choice in the classroom but we do have Chromebooks

[00:25:28] for every single student but again that's about 1,600 to 2,000 students that choose to use something other than an LCPS device. That's interesting, too, in terms of control. And that's probably not a good word, control, but that's...

[00:25:46] Classroom management. How's that? Okay. My son takes his laptop to school, and me and him are arguing about it all the time. But he's in a certain predicament. I think you and I had this discussion before that he is not eligible to get an 8th grade or a 7th grade laptop because he kind of fell in the middle of a certain year.

[00:26:10] So we had to wait for him to go into 9th grade, which he's about to enter. He's a rising 9th grader, so he doesn't qualify for a new Chromebook because his current LCPS Chromebook is, like, really slow, and he's had it for quite a while, like two years or so, which I think is not that old.

[00:26:29] But, I don't know, apparently it kind of wears down and it doesn't function as great. So he is not able to get a 9th grade. He's not able to get an eighth grade new Chromebook. So in instances like that, you know, I would much rather prefer students use a Chromebook rather than their own laptop because, you know, I'm a little dubious about him.

[00:26:48] I'm always thinking, you know, he's messaging a friend or he's doing some wise guy stuff on it. So I'm always, like, a little doubtful of those things. And if you had any insight on that. So we never want a student to have a broken device or a non-working device. But middle schoolers are really hard on devices.

[00:27:06] It's one of the reasons we have an unlimited warranty repair program with our devices because they break devices more than elementary and high school students put together. So they are just very hard on devices. So, yes, when they get to eighth grade, they may have a loaner or it may have been in warranty repair two or three times.

[00:27:27] But part of that is also helping them understand, like, the nicer you treat the device, the better it's going to work for you. So there's some lessons learned in there as well. But, yes, we don't want it to have a non-working Chromebook. So if that is the case or they're not able to do schoolwork, we would absolutely, probably not a new device, but find another device that would meet the needs of what they needed.

[00:27:48] Would it be possible to treat the use of personal computers sort of like we treat special permissions? If there is a reason that your child needs to use this personal computer because of a special

program on it required for a particular class, the parent could apply, give the reason, and then get permission for the student to use his personal computer for that class or that program?

[00:28:20] So we could look into that. I think that there's a lot of administrative overhead. I'm not even sure we have the information on what would be okay and what wouldn't be okay at this point, because we do have different solutions and offerings for different classes, but teachers choose different tools and have flexibility in that, right?

[00:28:37] Also, we have a lot of parents that push back that they don't want to use the LCPS Chromebook and they want to use, even if it's not needed, like it shouldn't be needed for English 10, but we still have parents who are like, my kid should use the MacBook because I think it's the nicer tool. And so we do have families push back on us.

[00:28:53] And some of that is not instructional specific. It is just family choice specific. And we try and respect that where if they feel like that's a better tool for their child, obviously we want them to be able to make that decision. Okay, thank you. That's something that we should consider. any other comments about what's in this did I hear you say that you would have a high school to volunteer maybe to be the pilot there wouldn't be any other way to choose a high school right I think a pilot would be most successful if a school wanted to do it and find value in it versus

[00:29:30] us just mandating that they're going to do something so we would I think we would work with school leadership and see if there is a high school wants the pilot and what that looks like I'm not sure that would be ready for the start of school necessarily with having to procure and do trainings and get a school on board, but it is something we can look at for next school year to see and then could drive a budget initiative or conversation around that for FY26 budget the following year.

[00:29:54] And the possibility of having 25 devices at each school for those kids who repeatedly violate the cell phone use, would that be something that could be done by August?

[00:30:13] So we can look into that. were actually so the county is Stafford who's doing that and we were kind of letting them see how it worked and gathering some feedback on that we don't know if that's a successful approach or not it's just one of the ones we've heard so they're actually there so their student device use policy is in the same state as ours so it'll be implemented next year and so we're hopeful to meet with them and see okay is this actually working our kids just putting burner cell phones in there and still keeping their regular cell phones in their pocket like how much additional policing is this adding on to it because if you to police cell phones and you have to police yonder pouches it's just one more thing you have

[00:30:48] to do so we really want to get that feedback from them and see how it's working understood well is there a motion to ask the staff to explore how these pouches are being used at various schools what the pros and cons of them are and also look into um cost we can't we don't need to do that I don't think we need a motion to do that.

[00:31:21] We'll just take that under advisement. Okay, good. Thank you. It's not something that we didn't expect coming anyway, so the team has already done some initial legwork on it. So we'll definitely take that back and have a cabinet conversation about it and see what that is. And we can maybe send an information item in an upcoming school board update or something like that.

[00:31:38] That would be lovely. Thank you. Is there any other conversation about the red line copy of the policy? Anybody? Well, at this point, if we feel that this is sufficient to begin to get a handle on cell phone usage in the schools, then we would vote to either send it ahead to the board for discussion,

[00:32:16] or we would table it and have more discussion after we hear back from other opinions. So, you know, whichever we decide would be appropriate. May I make one comment just about that? So we are hopeful to have a policy in place.

[00:32:33] So if it's approved as an action item today, it would go as an information item at June 11th and then action item at June 25th, 26th meeting. The goal with having it a policy in June is that we want to build a communications plan that really stresses the why, the student mental health, the lack of distractions, because we don't want it to feel punitive.

[00:32:49] We're not just saying don't use cell phones. We're saying here's all the good reasons not to do it. So if we have a policy in place at the end of June, it gives us something to build a communication plan off that's foundational and something we can that's codified that teachers can be like look it says right there in the policy so that's really our goal is to get this something in place and then as a policy it'll be you know if we need to change or make changes as we get additional information it can be brought back again and make those updates so just wanted to kind of highlight what our timeline looks like and then that communications plan that'll lead into schools coming or students going back in august thank

[00:33:22] Thank you. One of the questions I have is line 71, 72. Is teachers giving special permission to use these devices for specific educational activities? I think that that might take us down a rabbit hole when we have a lot of students come up and say, well, Ms. So-and-so said we can use it on our you know for this particular activity and now i'm in in study hall and you're not letting me

[00:33:57] use it and so it also might be some teachers say yes you can and some say no you can't is there language in the document that makes it specific that this is throughout the entire division that it's not something that is particularly particular a teacher saying yes well yes we're doing it you know so I see that as a problem so in the red line feedback version we did add language specifically around in consultation with school leadership because we don't want that to be teacher by teacher we want that to be if an art

[00:34:36] class needs it for a project they should consult with their administration and get approval versus it being inconsistent so that language was added to give an avenue where it could potentially be an instructional benefit but still have some sort of consistency and process for review.

[00:34:52] So that was one of the feedbacks that we actually received from, I think, MSAC and several teachers that they wanted it to be, if you wanted to use it, you needed to kind of talk to an administrator and get a plan and an approval process. Okay. I think that that part isn't quite as clear.

[00:35:08] A teacher might say, oh, well, I told my, you know, principal or assistant principal that I'm going to be using, you know, letting kids use their devices today. And I think that it needs to be a little bit more clear that they have to form a plan and get the approval of the administrator prior to actually letting the student use the device in class.

[00:35:35] And it needs to be for every time they want to use it, a separate plan, because obviously all the activities that they're going to be using it for are not the same. So if that language was adjusted to high school teachers may allow the use of devices for specific educational activities with approval of school leadership versus in consultation, is it something like that?

[00:35:58] Well, notice upon presenting a plan to the school administration and getting approval, how would that work? Any other thoughts? Ms. Ellis, you don't look happy. What if you say in consultation with and approval from school leadership?

[00:36:25] Okay. they have to have a discussion with school leadership and the school leadership has to approve their plan thank you I think that would work nicely any any other comments no okay we would make we will go ahead and make that change so if you approve the policy tonight it'll be in there for the June 11th meeting with this wording yes with that said is there a motion to approve this policy tonight I like to make the motion to approve policy 8 6 5 5 with

[00:37:00] the appropriate edits in line 72 second a second there's been a motion to approve policy eight six five five with Corrections and edits as it is with Corrections and edits all in favor say aye all opposed nay no nays policy the

[00:37:35] The motion passes, and the policy will be edited and sent forward for review by the full board. Okay. Where are we now? Any new business?

[00:37:59] If the other members of the board do not have this committee, I should say, do not have any new business, I would like to mention a policy suggestion sent to us by Dr. Ellis regarding the drug policy and the tiers.

[00:38:26] Do you remember doing that policy? No? Well, we received a policy at the recommendation of several people on the administration. It was a policy regarding a tiered plan to address the use of drugs in Loudoun County Public Schools and how to help our students when drug use is evident.

[00:38:57] And they have stepped outside of the actual drug use policy that we currently have. I would like to, I will get back to whoever sent that to me and ask if they can do a presentation on that for our next meeting in June.

[00:39:12] Is there any interest from, I think I sent you that, the tiered plan. Is there anything that the, I'll send it to you, Ms. Ellis. All right. I'm sorry. I thought it had come from you.

[00:39:29] That's why you were excluded. But if we can get something from that particular committee that devised that suggestion, Possibly we could have a presentation on what and how they see this working for our June meeting.

[00:39:49] Is there any discussion on this suggestion? You support it? Okay, well, I will take on the responsibility of finding out where that came from and getting something put together for all of us to understand what's in this policy.

[00:40:09] And with that said, is there any other new business? No? With no new business before us, is there a motion to close the committee meeting? I move to close the committee meeting.

[00:40:25] Is there a second? Second. Having been moved and seconded, this meeting is now adjourned. Thank you all for coming.



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