Steve Barnette
Superintendent

Dear Paulding County School District Parents/Guardians & Students,

We are pleased with the completed deployment of our district's 1:1 computing device initiative for our middle and high school students. This initiative will help facilitate instruction and learning within today's digital learning environment. Now that the program is fully implemented for middle and high grades, we need your assistance to ensure that our policies and regulations are followed with students compliant as per the following:

- PCSD Board Policy IFBG - Internet Acceptable Use *(PCSD Technology Acceptable Use and Internet Safety)*
- PCSD Student Code of Conduct
- PCSD Student/Parent One-to-One Computing Device Guide
  See Parent Dashboard on the district's website for additional student laptop program information.

One significant issue with a take home laptop is the potential utilization of a virtual private network (VPN) on the device, which is violation of our technology acceptable use policy. VPN applications can be utilized to bypass the protections provided by our school district's network firewall and web content filter. While we have security safeguards in place to restrict students from installing unapproved applications and block unauthorized VPNs, even our industry leading protections are not fail-safe. Some VPN applications use multiple providers that are continuously shifting hosting locations in an attempt to circumvent detection by firewall and web content filtering products.

VPN use on district-issued devices not only has disciplinary consequences but also has serious academic consequences. The district has conditional access policies in place if VPN applications are detected on the device. In the next two weeks, standardized testing begins for high school courses; given the security concerns, students using unauthorized VPNs on their devices will be blocked from taking these tests. Students unable to participate in standardized testing could have a serious impact on their academic standing.

The purpose of this letter is to bring the issue of VPNs to your attention and ask for your help to ensure student district-issued devices are free from any files that enable virtual private networks. Students are to remove any VPN applications and related files from their district devices. To determine if a VPN is in use, please search "Task Manager" on the task bar and view programs running. If necessary, technology assistance is available through our support ticketing system, which is entered by the students' teachers. We appreciate your support as we work to protect the integrity of our network and provide a safe and secure cyber learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

The Paulding County School District