POLSON ALTERNATIVE LEARNING (PAL) STUDENT & PARENT HANDBOOK

POLSON
ALTERNATIVE LEARNING
2025-2026

PAL
POLSON
ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

Vision:
Striving for Excellence – Everyone, Every Day!

Mission:
Our Mision is to be a safe, thriving, and dynamic educational environment that teams with families and the community to inspire self-directed learners in an interconnected world.

SCHOOL COLORS
Purple & Gold

SCHOOL MASCOT
Pirate & Lady Pirate

SCHOOL YEAR THEME
"Brave the Waves"

CORE VALUES
We believe...

Partnerships allow parents, communities, and schools to support one another.

Relationships inspire mutual respect and are at the heart of success.

Integrity builds honesty and trust.

Diversity embraces individuality and enriches our community.

Excellence promotes high expectations and academic rigor.

Polson High School - 1712 2nd St W - Polson, MT 59860 - (406) 883-6351 - www.polson.k12.mt.us

TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS

The Polson Alternative Learning Student and Parent Handbook contains information that students and parents are likely to need during the school year. Throughout the handbook, the term "the student's parent" is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, or other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

The Student Handbook is designed to be in harmony with Board policy. Please note that references to policy codes are included to help parents confirm current policy. A copy of the District's Policy Manual is available on the school website.

This handbook has been prepared to provide the best possible guidance for PHS/PAL students and parents. PHS administration is required to enforce these regulations and is given the discretion needed to address special circumstances as they arise. It is the student and parent's responsibility to know, understand, and comply with the policies listed in this handbook. If the student or parent has a question or concern, please contact an administrator.

Important Note: this handbook is not the be-all and end-all for student information and PAL "Policy and Rules." All PAL students must abide by PHS rules and school board policies. Students will be held accountable for their behavior and will be subject to the disciplinary consequences outlined in the handbooks. In order to make our alternative learning successful it will take dedicated students and teamwork. You have been accepted into PAL because we believe you have the desire to succeed; we challenge you to prove we accepted the right students to succeed!

PRINCIPAL'S WELCOME TO STUDENTS

On behalf of the entire Pirate community, I want to welcome you to the 2025-2026 school year at Polson High School. I am honored to serve as your principal and am excited for the opportunities this year will bring. PHS has a defined set of core values that are represented by the acronym PRIDE. We believe in Partnerships, Relationships, Integrity, Diversity, and Excellence. As we move through the year, ready to "Brave the Waves" together, our focus remains on providing rich experiences for you to grow, learn, challenge yourself, and discover your strengths. - Betsy Wade

ACCREDITATION

Polson High School has been granted full accreditation by the Montana Office of Public Instruction pursuant to the Montana Code Annotated 20-6-503.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2025-2026

The Board of Trustees would like to extend an invitation to students, parents and community members to come to board meetings throughout the school year and summer. We would also like to encourage you to share with us your concerns, ideas, and general comments. We will be available to listen to and we will provide guidance on how to get your concerns addressed through the proper channels.

Chanel Lake - Chair	**Alan Anderson -** Vice Chair	**Joanna Browning -** Trustee	**Devon Cox -** Trustee
Tim McGinnis - Trustee	**Kat Collins -** Trustee	**Nathaniel Netzer -** Trustee	**Shane Orien -** Trustee

Polson High School - Administration - Counselors - Office Staff		
Principal	Betsy Wade	(406) 883-6351 ext 201
Assistant Principal	Jay Sampson	(406) 883-6351 ext 202
Activities Director	Sean Dellwo	(406) 883-6351 ext 205
Counselor (Last Name A-K)	Chris McElwee	(406) 883-6351 ext 203
Counselor (Last Name L-Z)	Nicole Bonner	(406) 883-6351 ext 204
Administrative Assistant	Alysha Valentine	(406) 883-6351 ext 200
Registrar	Pam Carruth	(406) 883-6351 ext 209
Activities Secretary	Crystal Walker	(406) 883-6351 ext 207

ACADEMIC RECOGNITION
PAL Students will not be included in "Class Rank". PAL Students are not eligible for academic graduation distinctions.

ACTIVITIES
PAL students may NOT participate in extracurricular activities, nor will they participate in school assemblies or other whole school functions. (Graduation rehearsal and meetings will be an exception.)

ATTENDANCE
DAILY Attendance Matters! PAL Students that do not attend each day will have their account frozen until the next day. Progress online outside of school hours is encouraged, but will only be allowed if the student is attending in person between 9:00am and 12:00pm.

You are required to commit yourself to attending school each day and to be punctual. Your schooling begins at 9:00 am, and you must be there on time. Students enrolled in the PAL program may not arrive prior to 9:00am unless they have arranged an earlier arrival with the director and or principal. PAL Students must depart campus by 12:00pm, unless they have arranged a late stay with the director or principal. If you have frequent absences due to chronic medical issues, you must have a doctor's note in order for the absences to be excused. If you are, or will be absent, A PARENT OR GUARDIAN NEEDS TO CALL THE MAIN HIGH SCHOOL OFFICE (883-6351 ext. 200) AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO REPORT THE ABSENCE. If you begin to show excessive absences, you may lose your spot in our alternative school. Excessive absences will require a parent meeting and will be addressed by administration, which may lead to removal from PAL and or an attendance contract. We have other students waiting to commit to being here!

CAMPUS
PAL students are not allowed on the PHS campus unless prior approval has been granted by an Administrator or the PAL Director.

CHECKING OUT
If you have to leave during the academic time, you must check out with the office or program designee.

CREDITS
Once a student is admitted to PAL, all credits will be earned via the online program and/or school-to-work. PAL students will need to have earned a minimum of 11 credits prior to being enrolled. The maximum number of credits that a PAL student may earn during a semester is 5.5 credits. PAL students may NOT take classes offered by PHS in the main building. The online program will not utilize the Pretest and allow students to test through certain sections. Students will be required to complete the entire online course to earn credit.

DISCIPLINE
The discipline policy for PAL will remain consistent with district policy and the PHS handbook at Polson High School.

DUE PROCESS
If you have a problem or complaint, you must write a complaint within ten calendar days of the event. Once the complaint is filed, you (and parent or guardian) will meet with the principal or designee to seek an informal resolution. If the informal resolution does not work, then you can file a formal complaint.

DUE PROCESS FOR NON-VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL FROM PAL
If you are exited from PAL involuntarily, you may appeal the decision in writing within ten days from being exited. The PAL team (principal, counselor, student, and parent/guardian) will meet to discuss the reasons for the forced exit. After the meeting, the principal will re-determine the withdrawal. If the principal rules against you and you and/or parent/guardian wish to appeal, you will need to do so, in writing (within ten days), to the superintendent. If the superintendent rules against you, your final appeal must be made in writing (within ten days) to the board of trustees. The board of trustees will make the final decision for the appeal. While the process is evolving, you will remain in the alternative school (and be in good standing) until the complaint decision is made.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment in PAL is based on a team decision, for applicable 12th grade students. The team will look at the applications and each individual applicant to determine if you will be a successful PAL candidate. There is limited space in our alternative school. The decision of the team to accept you is not based on a first-come, first-served basis or on an age appropriate decision. The team retains the right to refuse any candidate. There are no last minute additions to PAL. After the start of 2nd semester, students will not be admitted unless there are extenuating circumstances. Upon acceptance into PAL, a parent and student meeting with the team or appropriate representative will be required.

EVALUATION

In January, in concordance with the ending of the 1st Semester, PAL students will be evaluated by their instructor, counselors, and administration on their progress in the program - based on attendance, attitude, and course completion. If the student is not on pace to graduate in June, they will be exited from the PAL program.

GRADUATION

Students earning the necessary credits will receive a PHS diploma and will have the option to participate in graduation ceremonies.

HOURS

9:00am - 12:00pm

INDEPENDENT LEARNING PLAN (ILP)

You will be on an ILP. The ILP is established by the PAL team, once you are accepted. The ILP will include an academic plan and the specific credits needed to graduate. The ILP will also include progress benchmarks. If these benchmarks are not met, the student may be dropped from PAL.

PARKING LOT

PAL students may NOT use the PHS Parking Lot. All PAL students will park at the Boys and Girls Club.

SCHOOL TO WORK

School-to-Work. School-to-Work is a program that allows students to earn academic credit while gaining job experience. The work experience is tailored to become an integral part of the student's education. Through this interaction of study and work experience, the student enhances his or her academic knowledge, personal development, and professional preparation.

- This program requires that a student's schedule accommodate a one or two class period block for the entire school year.
- The student must attend a school-to-work seminar class four times each semester.
  - These meeting dates are mandatory.
  - Times will be established by the counselor and announced during the second week of each semester.
- Upon completion of this course, the student is awarded one or two credits in the area of Vocational and Practical Arts.
- To be approved for the School-to-Work Program, the student must:
  - Have at least 12 credits and be of junior status.
  - Maintain passing grades while in the School-to-Work program.
  - Be approved for the program by the counselor, principal, employer, and parent.
  - Sign an agreement to remain drug and alcohol-free throughout the entire School-to-Work placement.
  - Secure employment from an employer who is not an immediate relative (or family member) of the STW student.
- Students who enroll in this program will be expected to:
  - Keep a weekly journal of work experience.
  - Attend all seminar meetings.
  - Fulfill employers' expectations.
  - Follow the employee dress code.
  - Report to the job site and back to school on time.
  - Inform both the high school and the employer prior to being absent.
  - Follow an exemplary code of conduct.

The first semester of this course is a trial period for the program. Upon completion, the student will be evaluated for continued employment, and if approved for the second semester of the program, he or she will receive ½ credit or 1 credit for the first semester. Upon completion and evaluation of the second semester, an additional ½ credit or 1 credit will be awarded. Should the student not be approved for the second semester of the program, he or she will not be placed in another location but will return to a full schedule of classes. Both semesters' evaluations will be based on the course expectations listed above and will be completed by the supervisor, high school counselor, and the employer. The teacher and the counselor will determine whether the student receives a passing or a failing grade.

STUDENTS WITH JOBS
PAL students may get jobs or continue with the jobs they currently have. However, those jobs must not compete – in any way – with actual school hours (9:00am - 12:00pm). You may schedule work before school or after school as needed. You have been accepted into PAL, so you need to arrange with your supervisor based on this information

TRANSPORTATION
If you need school provided transportation, the PAL director and or principal will meet with you to discuss bussing options. You will be responsible to abide by all bus policies and procedures, as bus riding is a privilege. You are NOT permitted to enter the high school building to wander or interrupt classes!

PHS GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of high school graduation requirements is to establish rigorous standards of learning. Graduation requirements are intended to provide the student with a well-rounded education in a variety of subjects and should be viewed as minimums. We encourage all students to pursue a rigorous schedule all four years of high school. Graduation requirements are those in effect when the student enters the ninth grade for the first time.

SUBJECT	CREDITS
English 1 credit each in English 9, 10, 11, 12	**4**
Math Must be in different Math courses	**2**
Science	**2**
Social Studies Must include 1 credit of US History, 1 credit Government/Economics or AP Government	**2**
College & Career Readiness Must include .5 credit of CCR 1 (9th Grade)	**.5**
Physical Education* If a student has a temporary exemption from PE, that credit must be made up prior to graduation. If permanently exempt, 22 credits will still be required.	**1.5***
Health	**0.5**
Fine Arts Fine Arts courses include Art, Choir, Band, Journalism, Publications, Engineering Design, Web Page Design, Graphic Design, PHSN TV & Design & Animation	**1**
Practical Arts Practical Arts courses include Shop, FCS, LINK, Journalism, Publications, Health Occupations Internship, Education Occupations Internship, Engineering Design, Web Page Design, Graphic Design, Video Game Design, Entrepreneurship, PHSN TV & Design & Animation	**1**
Electives	**7.5**
TOTAL	**22**

Note: In addition to all credit requirements listed above, ALL Graduating Seniors are required to successfully complete a "Pirate Pursuit" during their senior year.

Note: Courses described in this curriculum guide may not necessarily be offered every year.

Polson School District Acceptable Use Policy (3612P)
District-Provided Access to Electronic Information, Services, Equipment, and Networks

All use of equipment and electronic networks shall be consistent with the District's goal of promoting educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. These procedures do not attempt to state all required or proscribed behaviors by users. However, some specific examples are provided. The failure of any user to follow these procedures will result in the loss of privileges, disciplinary action, and/or appropriate legal action.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Acceptable Use – Access to the District's equipment and electronic networks must be: (a) for the purpose of education or research and consistent with the educational objectives of the District; or (b) for legitimate business use.

- Privileges – The use of the District's equipment and electronic networks is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in cancellation of those privileges. The system administrator (and/or principal) will make all decisions regarding whether or not a user has violated these procedures and may deny, revoke, or suspend access at any time. That decision is final.

- Unacceptable Use – The user is responsible for his or her actions and activities involving the equipment and network. Some examples of unacceptable uses are:

  - Using the equipment and network for any illegal activity, including violation of copyright or other contracts, or transmitting any material in violation of any federal or state law;
  - Unauthorized downloading of software, regardless of whether it is copyrighted or devirused;
  - Downloading copyrighted material for other than personal use;
  - Using the equipment or network for private financial or commercial gain;
  - .Wastefully using resources, such as file space;
  - Hacking or gaining unauthorized access to files, resources, or entities;
  - Invading the privacy of individuals, which includes the unauthorized disclosure, dissemination, and use of information of a personal nature about anyone;
  - Using another user's account or password;
  - Posting material authored or created by another, without his/her consent;
  - Posting anonymous messages;
  - Using the equipment or network for commercial or private advertising;
  - Accessing, submitting, posting, publishing, or displaying any defamatory, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, harassing, or illegal material; and
  - Using the equipment or network while access privileges are suspended or revoked.

- Network Etiquette – The user is expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include but are not limited to the following:

  - Be polite. Do not become abusive in messages to others.
  - Use appropriate language. Do not swear or use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language.
  - Do not reveal personal information, including the addresses or telephone numbers, of students or colleagues.
  - Recognize that electronic mail (e-mail) is not private. People who operate the system have access to all mail. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to the authorities.
  - Do not use the network in any way that would disrupt its use by other users.
  - Consider all communications and information accessible via the network to be private property.

- No Warranties – The District makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing. The District will not be responsible for any damages the user suffers. This includes loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, missed deliveries, or service interruptions caused by its negligence or the user's errors or omissions. Use of any information obtained via the Internet is at the user's own risk. The District specifically denies any responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through its services.

- Indemnification – The user agrees to indemnify the District for any losses, costs, or damages, including reasonable attorney fees, incurred by the District, relating to or arising out of any violation of these procedures.

- Security – Network security is a high priority. If the user can identify a security problem on the Internet, the user must notify the system administrator or building principal. Do not demonstrate the problem to other users. Keep your account and password confidential. Do not use another individual's account without written permission from that individual. Attempts to log on to the Internet as a system administrator will result in cancellation of user privileges. Any user identified as a security risk may be denied access to the network.

- Vandalism – Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges, and other disciplinary action. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy equipment, data of another user, the Internet, or any other network. This includes but is not limited to uploading or creation of computer viruses.

- Telephone Charges – The District assumes no responsibility for any unauthorized charges or fees, including telephone charges, long-distance charges, per-minute surcharges, and/ or equipment or line costs.

- Copyright Web Publishing Rules – Students shall comply with District Policy 2312 and staff guidance when utilizing material subject to copyright.

INTERNET SAFETY

- Internet access is limited to only those "acceptable uses," as detailed in these procedures. Internet safety is almost assured if users will not engage in "unacceptable uses," as detailed in these procedures, and will otherwise follow these procedures.

- Staff members shall supervise students while students are using District Internet access, to ensure that the students abide by the Terms and Conditions for Internet access, as contained in these procedures.

- Each District computer with Internet access has a filtering device that blocks entry to visual depictions that are: (1) obscene; (2) pornographic; or (3) harmful or inappropriate for students, as defined by the Children's Internet Protection Act and determined by the Superintendent or designee.

- The district shall provide age-appropriate instruction to students regarding appropriate online behavior. Such instruction shall include, but not be limited to: positive interactions with others online, including on social networking sites and in chat rooms; proper online social etiquette; protection from online predators and personal safety; and how to recognize and respond to cyberbullying and other threats.

- The system administrator and principal shall monitor student Internet access.

Polson School District #23
Artificial Intelligence - Principles and Beliefs

Polson School District's integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the learning environment is guided by the belief that AI should serve as a supportive tool, enhancing the efforts of educators and students rather than replacing them. AI poses potential risks and benefits to educational systems. We are committed to thoughtfully and responsibly leveraging AI to enhance student learning, while proactively working to identify and mitigate any potential downsides or unintended consequences.

Personalization and Equity:
AI technologies can provide learners equitable access to educational opportunities, thereby promoting independence and reducing barriers.

Augmenting Human Interaction and Instruction:
Polson School District understands the importance of preserving human interaction and empathy in education. AI should augment, not replace, the role of educators, empowering them to invest more time in direct interpersonal interactions with students and individualized support.

Ethical Considerations:
Polson School DIstrict recognizes the importance of using technology resources such as AI ethically and responsibly. Digital citizenship and data privacy are fundamental aspects of our approach to AI integration.

Empowering Educators and Students:
Polson School District believes in equipping educators and students with the knowledge and skills to navigate the evolving landscape of AI safely and effectively. We aim to incorporate digital literacy and responsible AI engagement across the school community.

Addendum to Polson School District's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) 3612

This addendum to the Polson School District's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) aims to address the responsible and ethical use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies within our educational environment. AI technologies have the potential to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative operations, but it is crucial to establish guidelines that ensure the ethical and responsible use of these tools. This addendum is intended to supplement the existing AUP and provide specific guidance related to AI usage. All users, including students, staff, and administrators, are expected to adhere to these guidelines when utilizing AI technologies within the school district.

Responsible Use of AI:
Users must use AI technologies in a responsible and ethical manner, respecting the rights and privacy of individuals and ensuring compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Educational Purpose:
The use of AI technologies should align with the district's educational goals and objectives. Users should prioritize educational outcomes, personalized learning, and pedagogical effectiveness when integrating AI tools into instructional practices.

Data Privacy and Security:
Users must protect the privacy and security of personal and confidential data when using AI tools. Any school use of AI should be in accordance with relevant data protection laws and district policies.

Bias and Fairness:
Users must be aware of the potential biases that can exist within AI technologies and take measures to minimize their impact. When using AI tools for decision-making processes, users must ensure fairness and equity, considering the potential implications for diverse student populations.

Transparency:
Users must prioritize the transparency of AI systems, particularly when they have a significant impact on students or staff. Professional development focused on AI literacy will help users understand how AI technologies operate and the reasoning behind their outcomes.

Ethical Considerations:
Users must consider the ethical implications of AI technologies, including issues related to privacy, consent, dignity, and the well-being of individuals. It is important to foster a culture that encourages thoughtful discussions and critical thinking around the ethical dimensions of AI.

Compliance with Existing Policies:
The use of AI technologies must comply with all existing district policies, including but not limited to the AUP, data privacy policies, and student code of conduct. Users are responsible for familiarizing themselves with these policies and ensuring compliance.

By incorporating this AI addendum into the existing AUP, Polson School District aims to provide a framework that promotes the responsible and ethical use of AI technologies. This addendum seeks to balance the benefits of AI integration with the safeguarding of student privacy, fairness, and transparency. It is essential for all users to understand and adhere to these guidelines to create a safe, inclusive, and responsible AI-enabled learning environment.

PAL - POLSON ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

Handbook Acknowledgement

Student Name: _____Grade _____
                                (Please Print)

I have read the Polson School District Acceptable Use Policy (3612P).

I agree to follow the rules contained in this policy. I understand that if I violate the rules, my account can be terminated and I may face other disciplinary measures.

I have read the PAL *Student and Parent Handbook* and understand the procedures and rules therein.

I have read the PHS *Student and Parent Handbook* and understand the procedures and rules therein.

I have read the *Title 1 Compact* and understand the procedures therein.

Student Signature_____Date_____

Parent or Guardian Section
I have read the Polson School District Acceptable Use Policy (3612P)*.*

I hereby release the school district, its personnel, and any institutions with which it is affiliated, from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my child's use of, or inability to use, the Polson Public Schools Information Network System, including, but not limited to claims that may arise from unauthorized use of the network to purchase products or services.

I will instruct my child regarding any restrictions against accessing material that are in addition to the restrictions set forth in the Polson School District Acceptable Use Policy. I will emphasize to my child the importance of following the rules for personal safety.

I give permission to issue an account for my child and certify that the information contained in this form is correct.

I give permission for my child to participate in any school activity that is not on school property, and that is chaperoned by a classroom teacher. This could include field trips, lunches, end of year activities, and permission for my student's work or photo to be published on our school's web page or other publications.

I have read the *Student and Parent Handbook* and understand the procedures and rules therein.

Parent/Guardian (Print)_____

Parent/Guardian Signature_____ Date_____