

USE OF PERSONAL DIGITAL DEVICES (PDDs)

Background

The Ministry of Education and Child Care amended the provincial standards for Codes of Conduct Order requiring school districts to have appropriate policies in place to restrict student personal digital device use as of July 1, 2024. This operational procedure is aligned with Ministry guidelines to support the Ministerial Order. The purpose of this administrative procedure is to restrict the use of personal digital devices at school for the purpose of promoting online safety and maintain focused learning environments.

Openness to new and future technologies and their educated use create opportunities for many constructive and positive uses that can aid the instructional process. Further, restricted use of some personal digital devices in the school and community may contribute to the safety and security of students and staff. However, unrestricted use of such devices may pose a risk to personal safety; may disrupt instruction; may invade personal privacy; and may compromise academic integrity.

Definitions

Personal Digital Devices (PDDs) means any personal electronic device that can be used to communicate or to access the internet, such as cell phones, laptops, tablets, smartwatches, smartglasses, and any other portable technology device.

The use of cell phones and connected accessories, like smartwatches, will be limited in their use as they can impact the education and well-being of students. Smartwatches and other similar connected accessories may not be used like a cell phone in terms of communication and connection.

Procedures

1. Personal Digital Devices are not to be operated during regularly scheduled instructional time, or during any school sponsored activity, such as an assembly or talk by a guest speaker, unless such use facilitates the learning activity as permitted by the teacher to enhance digital literacy and support instructional goals.

Specifically:

- 1.1 At middle schools and secondary schools, students will be restricted from using personal digital devices during instructional hours unless they have been given permission from their teacher or school principal/vice-principal.
 - 1.2 At elementary schools, students will be restricted from using personal digital devices at school at any time unless they have been given permission from their teacher or school principal/vice-principal.
 - 1.3 Specific parameters and guidelines will be established by school codes of conduct.
2. PDDs are to be stored and in silent mode during instructional and school sponsored activities.

3. PDDs are not to be used in settings such as change rooms, washrooms, private counseling rooms, that have the potential to violate a person's reasonable expectation of privacy.
4. No images of students or staff in schools or at associated facilities or activities are to be uploaded to school, public or private websites, including social media without the written consent of the person or persons and/or their parents, in the photograph or video.
5. Students or staff who bring PDDs to the school are expected to comply with all parts of Administrative Procedure 350 – District Student Code of Conduct and Administrative Procedure 140 – Acceptable use of Technology. Students who consistently refuse to comply with the District's procedures for use of PDDs in the school setting may be subject to disciplinary measures detailed in the school's rules, as well as the steps outlined in Administrative Procedure 350.
 - 5.1 Principals will use progressive discipline reflective of the age and maturity of the student, any special needs, and the severity and frequency of the unacceptable conduct.
6. Principals, in consultation with staff and appropriate partners (including the parents' advisory councils), will consider the age and developmental stage of students to ensure appropriate and responsible usage of PDDs and to develop and implement specific procedures appropriate to each school site.
7. In the event of an emergency, such as a lockdown or an evacuation, the Principal will develop and inform the school community of the acceptable use of PDDs in that emergency situation.
8. Individual medical and health considerations help to inform PDD usage policies to prioritize student well-being. For example, students with medical conditions may require access to PDDs for communication or health monitoring purposes.
9. Special considerations will be made to accommodate accessibility for students with diverse needs such as those requiring assistive technology or alternative formats for digital content. In addition, the District will ensure that PDDs serve as tools for academic enrichment rather than sources of inequality by providing clear guidelines and equitable access to technology.
10. PDDs are valuable electronic devices. The security and storage of these items is the sole responsibility of the owner/user. The District assumes no responsibility for the safety, security, loss, repair or replacement of PDDs.
 - 10.1 PDDs which are taken temporarily from students by teachers or administrators must be securely stored.

Reference: Ministerial Order No. M89/24
Sections 6, 8, 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act
School Regulation 265/89

Adopted: June 25, 2019
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