

Administrative Procedure 324 USE OF PERSONAL MOBILE DEVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOOLS

Background

The use of personal mobile devices in schools can be a significant source of distraction, negatively impacting children's and students' mental health, engagement, and overall learning experience. Students are entitled to a welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning environment that respects diversity and nurtures a sense of belonging and positive self-esteem. However, the misuse of personal mobile devices can lead to harmful behaviours such as bullying and harassment, which compromise the integrity and safety of the school environment.

ECACS is committed to fostering a learning environment free from distractions, a space conducive to enhancing learning outcomes and promoting student well-being. This crucial initiative is designed to mitigate the adverse effects of mobile devices and social media, thereby reducing bullying and ensuring all students can flourish in a positive and supportive educational setting. By implementing administrative procedures that limit personal mobile devices during school hours and educating the school community about responsible digital behaviour, ECACS strives to create an atmosphere where students can fully concentrate on their studies and grow in a healthy, respectful, inclusive, and faith filled environment.

Definitions

Personal Mobile Device: any electronic device that can communicate with or access the internet, such as a cellphone, tablet, laptop, or smartwatch.

Instructional Time includes all time during a scheduled period when students are in the classroom or time outside the classroom when teachers take responsibility for ensuring that students' learning activities are directed toward achieving the outcomes of approved programs of study and instructional support plans.

Non-instructional Time: This includes time during the school day when students are not scheduled to be with a teacher. It includes before and after school, breaks, and lunch.

Confiscation: means when staff take possession of a student's personal mobile device. Devices are not necessarily considered confiscated when staff direct students to place a device somewhere (e.g. in their locker, backpack, on the teacher's desk, in a personal mobile devices storage container, etc)

Social media sites - are content created by individuals using accessible, expandable, and upgradable publishing technologies through and on the Internet. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, NextDoor, Blogs, RSS, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

Guidelines

1. The following administrative procedure applies to the use of student personal mobile devices and student access to social media on the division's network during the school day and school-sanctioned events, on or off campus.

- 1.1 Students who bring personal mobile devices to school are expected to comply with this administrative procedure.
 - 1.2 Those who refuse to comply with this procedure may be subject to disciplinary measures. Students who consistently refuse to comply with the Division's procedures for use of personal mobile devices in the school setting may be subject to disciplinary measures detailed in the school's rules and the steps outlined in Administrative Procedure 305(Student Conduct and Discipline).
2. Schools have the right and authority to temporarily confiscate, restrict, and/or prohibit cell phone usage while individuals are on school property and/or attending school-sponsored activities.
 - 2.1 Schools are encouraged to put restrictions that require students to keep their phones on silent or powered off and stored out of view for the entire day for kindergarten to Grade 6 classrooms.
 - 2.2 Schools should take into consideration the following when deciding on restrictions and/or prohibition:
 - 2.2.1 the student population at the school (e.g. student's age and developmental stage), and
 - 2.2.2 clear and consistent expectations at the end of a class when students are done early as this can be a problematic time that should be monitored
 - 2.3 Confiscation, restrictions and/or prohibition may extend to;
 - 2.3.1 students and/or staff;
 - 2.3.2 instructional time
 - 2.3.3 non-instructional
 - 2.3.4 periods of time students are being transported;
 - 2.3.5 co-curricular, extra-curricular activities, including school-sanctioned events, on or off-campus; and
 - 2.3.6 specific locations within the building and/or school property
3. School procedures may include guidelines for parent/staff, parent/student, staff/student, staff/staff, and student/student communication during the school day.
4. School procedures may include guidelines for parent/staff, staff/student, and staff/staff communication after the school day, such as
 - 4.1 reasonable response timeframes;
 - 4.2 evening, weekend, and holiday response expectations; and
 - 4.3 professionalism, and appropriateness of communication

Procedure

1. The division shall restrict student access to all social media platforms on school networks and school devices.
 - 1.1 Limited access to social media may be permitted to meet learning outcomes as determined by a principal.
2. Each school shall adopt a procedure governing the acceptable use of personal mobile devices while students are on school property and/or in attendance at school-sponsored activities. The school procedures include:
 - 2.1 roles and responsibilities of staff, students, and parents in ensuring compliance with this administrative procedure;
 - 2.2 that parents must be notified when students are in non-compliance with this administrative procedure;
 - 2.3 at minimum, that student personal mobile devices shall be powered off or placed in silent mode and stored out of view during instructional time;
 - 2.3.1 Accommodations for the limited usage of personal mobile devices during instructional time are required:
 - 2.3.2 for educational purposes, including digital literacy, as determined by the principal;
 - 2.3.3 to support, monitor, or regulate an identified health and/or medical condition as per a student's school medical plan as determined by the principal
 - 2.3.4 to support an identified inclusive educational need (accessibility and accommodation need), including mental health need as per the student's individual support plan as determined by the principal; and/or
 - 2.3.5 emergencies whether real or practice.
 - 2.3.5.1 In the event of an emergency, the principal or designate will communicate acceptable use of personal mobile devices.
 - 2.4 Address the location(s) and /or manner(s) in which personal mobile devices are to be stored out of view;
 - 2.4.1 Schools are expected to communicate that the security and storage of these items is the sole responsibility of the student.
 - 2.4.2 That notwithstanding confiscation for the purpose of discipline, the division assumes no responsibility for the safety, security, loss, repair, or replacement of such items, except in the case of gross negligence.
 - 2.4.3 When mobile devices are temporarily confiscated from students by staff, devices must be securely stored.
 - 2.5 Discipline for inappropriate possession and/or usage, shall be progressive and may include:
 - 2.5.1 asked to put away;
 - 2.5.2 conversation with student and/or parent;

- 2.5.3 temporary confiscation, where student or parent may regain access//collect the personal mobile device at a later time; and/or
 - 2.5.4 prohibition of device on school property.
- 2.6 that personal mobile devices are prohibited:
 - 2.6.1 from being used in bathrooms and changing rooms; and
 - 2.6.2 during test or examination settings, unless students have been given explicit permission to do so by the teacher administering the test or exam
- 2.7 that schools are not public buildings, and sharing and recording videos and/or photos of individuals without explicit consent is prohibited.
 - 2.7.1 Videos and photos may be taken during public events located on school property when there is not a reasonable expectation of privacy
- 3. School administrative procedures must be shared annually with parents, staff, and students annually and ensure that policies and/or procedures are readily accessible to the school community and/or public.
- 4. The principal may authorize any specific use of a personal mobile device during the school day on a case-by-case basis.

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Reference: Ministerial Order (#014/2024)
Horizon School Division