

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 114

STUDENT USE OF PERSONAL MOBILE DEVICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN SCHOOLS

Background

The Division recognizes the responsibility it shares with parents to provide a Christ-centered, safe learning environment for students. On June 17, 2024, Alberta's government introduced new restrictions on the use of personal mobile devices (PMDs) in classrooms and access to social media sites on school networks, beginning in the fall of 2024. RDCRS recognizes that embracing new and emerging technologies in education opens doors to many beneficial and constructive applications that can enhance the instructional process. Additionally, controlled use of personal mobile devices within schools and the community may help ensure the safety and security of students and staff. However, when personal communication devices are used without regulation, they may threaten personal safety, disrupt learning, invade privacy, or undermine academic integrity.

In the spirit of creating a positive Catholic climate for all our school communities, the Division asserts that school principals will implement appropriate procedures for the use of cell phones and PMDs on school premises and during school sanctioned activities. The Division expects staff and students to model and reinforce socially responsible and respectful behaviours when using cell phones and PMDs so teaching and learning can take place in a safe and caring environment.

Definition

Personal Mobile Devices: means any personal electronic devices that can be used to communicate with or access the internet or cellular network, such as a cellphone, tablet, laptop, gaming device, or smartwatch. This also may include devices capable of communicating with a PMD (e.g. Bluetooth devices) such as headphones, earbuds, or smart speakers.

Social Media: refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks., This includes but is not limited to, the following platforms: Facebook (meta), Instagram, Snapchat, Discord, TikTok, Threads, X (formerly Twitter), Twitch, reddit, Telegram, WhatsApp, BeReal, ClubHouse, Flickr, Tumblr, Yelp, Foursquare, WeChat, MeWe, Kuaishou, Weibo, QQ, LINE, Threads, Mastodon, Blue Social, Quora, Tencent, Yahoo Groups, Yammer, Truth Social and others as determined by the school division as part of routine social media monitoring.

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

Non-instructional time: Includes time during the school day when students are not scheduled to

be with a teacher. This 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 directs 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).

1. General Procedures:

- 1.1. Students may not use PMDs during instructional time unless such use is approved by the Principal to facilitate learning activities.
- 1.2. Students may not access social media on school networks or on school devices. The division shall restrict student access to all social media platforms on school networks and school devices.
- 1.3. Student PMDs are valuable electronic devices. The security and storage of these items is the sole responsibility of the owner or user. RDCRS assumes no responsibility for the safety, security, loss, repair or replacement of student PMDs.
- 1.4. 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.
- 1.5. Each school shall adopt procedures governing the acceptable use of personal mobile devices while students are on school property and/or in attendance at school-sponsored activities.
- 1.6. Students who bring personal mobile devices to school are expected to comply with this policy.
- 1.7. Disciplinary measures are detailed in the school's rules and the steps outlined in Administrative Procedures [310](#) (School and Classroom Management) and [362](#) (Student Conduct).
- 1.8. PMDs are not permitted to be taken into test or examination settings.
- 1.9. PMDs are not permitted to be used in bathrooms or changing rooms under any circumstances.

2. Role of the Principal:

- 2.1. Each principal will incorporate into their school rules of conduct the stipulations of this administrative procedure to ensure the appropriate use of personally owned devices and Internet services.

- 2.2. The principal shall inform staff and students about the procedures regulating cell phone and personal electronic device usage during school hours and during school sanctioned events;
- 2.3. The principal will ensure all parents are aware of appropriate behaviour expectations of students use of, computer technology, use of PMDs and Internet services annually and ensure that procedures are readily accessible to the school community and/or public.
- 2.4. The principal shall ensure that the school procedures include the following mandated elements:
 - 2.4.1. Schools have the right and authority to temporarily confiscate, restrict, and/or prohibit PMDs usage while individuals are on school property and/or in attendance at school sponsored activities.
 - 2.4.2. Schools will put in place restrictions that require students to keep their phones on silent or powered off and stored out of view during instructional time.
 - 2.4.3. The Principal may authorize a specific use of a PMD during the school day.
 - 2.4.4. roles and responsibilities of staff, students, and parents in ensuring compliance with this policy;
 - 2.4.5. that parents must be notified when students are in non-compliance with this policy;
 - 2.4.6. at minimum, that student personal mobile devices shall be powered off or placed in silent mode and stored out of view during instructional time; and address the location(s) and /or manner(s) in which personal mobile devices are to be stored out of view; schools are expected to communicate that the security and storage of these items is the sole responsibility of the student.
 - 2.4.7. When mobile devices are temporarily confiscated from students by staff, devices must be securely stored.
 - 2.4.8. that schools are not public buildings, and sharing and recording videos and/or photos of individuals without explicit consent is prohibited.
 - 2.4.9. Videos and photos may be taken during public events located on school property when there is not a reasonable expectation of privacy.

- 2.4.10. school procedures will have clear expectations and consequences regarding inappropriate use. Students' unacceptable use of cell phones or PMDs

3. Role of the Student:

- 3.1. Students are expected to conduct themselves as expected by the norms of our Catholic beliefs when using digital technology.
- 3.2. Students are required to keep PMD's in the locker, or a school designated space, during instructional time. If students have personal mobile devices with them during instructional time, they are required to keep devices on silent or powered off and stored out of view.
- 3.3. Students will report misuse of digital media, PMDs, computer technology and Internet services to the teacher and/or administrator

4. Consequences for Non Compliance:

- 4.1. In the event of inappropriate use by students, the principal or Superintendent may take action according to the Education Act and involve the police or other appropriate services.
- 4.2. Discipline for inappropriate possession and/or usage shall be progressive and may include:
 - 4.2.1. asked to put away;
 - 4.2.2. conversation with the student and/or parent;
 - 4.2.3. temporary confiscation, where student or parent may regain access/collect the personal mobile device at a later time; and/or
 - 4.2.4. prohibition of devices on school property:
 - 4.2.5. detention, and or suspension:
 - 4.2.6. expulsion in extreme circumstances.

5. Limited Use Exceptions:

- 5.1. Wherever possible division supplied devices will be utilized for instruction and student support. Accommodations for the limited usage of personal mobile devices during instructional time are permitted:

- 5.1.1. 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;
- 5.1.2. 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
- 5.1.3. Limited use of personal mobile devices may be permitted for educational purposes as determined by the principal.
- 5.1.4. An exemption for personal laptops can be granted by the principal on a case-by-case basis to support the educational needs of an individual student. This will be reviewed by the principal each semester/trimester and recorded in PowerSchool. Any violation of conduct regarding this personal laptop will result in a loss of this exemption.

References: Education Act
Ministerial Order (#014/2024) Standards for the Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools
Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

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APPENDIX A – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does Red Deer Catholic Schools consider a personal mobile device? As per the Ministry of Education FAQ “personal mobile device means any personal electronic device that can be used to communicate with or access the internet, such as a cellphone, tablet, laptop, or smartwatch”.

Can my child bring their personal laptop to school? Yes with prior approval. Learners can bring their personal laptops to school if it is being used for instructional purposes as directed by the teacher. Any misuse of a personal laptop/tablet is subject to the procedures outlined in AP114.

How can parents/guardians contact their child at school? Allowing your child to text or call during instructional time is a distraction to their learning and the learning of others. Please call the main office and schools will ensure that important messages are passed along.

What if my child has high anxiety and needs to be able to contact parents? Confidential phone calls can be made from the administration office or the school counsellor's office. Allowing your child to text or call during instructional time is a distraction to their learning and the learning of others.

Can my child use their PMD during lunch/recess/spares/in the hallway or during non- instructional time or while on the school bus? Students are strongly encouraged to leave their personal mobile device at home. If they bring it to school, they must leave it in their locker, backpack, or other designated space during instructional time. Personal mobile devices should be powered off or on silent and stored out of view.

During non-instructional times such as lunch, recess, breaks between classes, spares, on the bus students can use their personal mobile devices unless the school has specifically prohibited that usage after consulting parents via the school council. However, if students are cyberbullying or otherwise using their personal mobile devices inappropriately, school staff or administration will investigate and respond appropriately, and consequences may be applied regardless of where or when the device is in use.

Can my child use their PMD during extracurricular activities? Personal mobile device usage during extracurricular events is at the discretion of the teacher or coach and should be made clear to students at the outset of the event. Examples of extracurricular events might include sports, clubs, band concerts, practices, etc.

Why are teachers and staff allowed to use their personal mobile devices? To support instruction and for security/authentication purposes, staff may need to access PMDs. All staff will continue to model good digital citizenship practices and refrain from personal usage during instructional time. Staff may also use social media to make learning visible.

Can my child use their PMD in an emergency? In the case of an emergency can I contact my child on their PMD during instructional time? Your child's PMD will be turned off or stored during instructional time.

Urgent information is best communicated to your child through the school office. School administration will ensure that school contact numbers are shared with parents and that urgent messages are passed along in a timely and private manner. School Administration are aware that urgent information is best shared in a private and supportive environment.

How do I request an exception for my child who has a health or medical reason that requires the use of their PMD? Exceptions may be made to address students' individual needs, such as when required for health or medical purposes. For these exceptions, consultation will occur with the school-based team and include the parent/guardian and student. Final decisions on exceptions will be made by the school administration. Exceptions will be documented in the medical considerations section of the student's profile within PowerSchool.

Can a teacher take a student's phone? Confiscation happens when a staff member takes possession of a student's personal mobile device. If a student is asked to place their device somewhere (e.g., in a locker, backpack, on the teacher's desk, or in a storage container), this is not considered confiscation.

What happens when a mobile device is confiscated? When a staff member temporarily confiscates a mobile device, it will be securely stored until it is returned.

Is the school responsible for my device if it gets confiscated? The school is not responsible for the safety, security, loss, repair, or replacement of confiscated devices, unless there is gross negligence on the part of the staff. Confiscation due to disciplinary reasons does not change this policy. Students are strongly encouraged to leave their PMD at home. If they choose to bring it to school, the school is not responsible for any loss, theft, or damage.

Our school does not have a PMD problem. Why do we have to follow this? This is a province wide decision made by the provincial government that has been established to ensure that all schools are consistent in addressing unnecessary distractions to learning and pro-social interactions in schools. The Ministerial Order applies to all public schools in Alberta.