

### Background

The board of trustees of the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education believe that personal digital devices offer potential opportunities for communication, information access and enhanced opportunities for instruction and learning, but that restricted use of personal digital devices in schools is required, particularly as it relates to student use of cell phones to ensure the promotion of caring and respectful learning environments.

### Definitions

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 programs of study and instructional support plans.

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

Personal Digital Device: any personal electronic devices that can be used to communicate or access the internet, a cellular network or other devices; such as a cell phone, computer, tablet, gaming device, electronic toy or smart watch.

### Guidelines

1. Schools have the right and authority to temporarily confiscate, restrict and/or prohibit personal digital device usage while individuals are on school property and/or in attendance at school sponsored activities.
  - 1.1 Schools are required to, at a minimum, put in place restrictions that require students to keep their phones on silent, or power-off, and out of view during instructional times in ELP – grade 12 classrooms.
  - 1.2 Confiscation, restrictions and/or prohibition may extend to:
    - 1.2.1 Instructional time;
    - 1.2.2 Non-instructional times;
    - 1.2.3 Periods of time students are being transported; and/or

1.2.4 Specific locations within the building or on school property.

1.3 Schools should take into consideration the following when deciding on restrictions and/or prohibition:

1.3.1 The student population at the school (i.e. student's age and development stage); and

1.3.2 Expectations at the end of a class when students are done early as this can be a problematic time that should be monitored.

## Notice

1. Schools shall provide notice annually to staff, students and parents that use of personal digital devices may be banned and/or restricted, including what those bans/restrictions are and shall communicate the possibility of the imposition of progressive disciplinary action by the school or criminal penalties if the device is used in a criminal act. This notice must include location and manner in which personal digital devices are to be stored or out of view.
2. Schools' administrative procedures may include guidelines for parent/staff, staff/student, and staff/staff communication both during and after the school day, such as:
  - 3.1 Reasonable response timeframes.
  - 3.2 Evening, weekend and holiday response expectations.
  - 3.3 Professionalism and appropriateness of communication.

## Procedures

1. Each school shall adopt policies governing the acceptable use of personal digital devices while individuals are on school property and/or in attendance at school sponsored activities. School policies shall include:
  - 1.1 Clear expectations and consequences regarding inappropriate use such as temporary confiscation and permanent loss of the privilege of having the device on school premises. Progressive discipline is required to include notification to parents/guardians if a student is found to have violated the policy.
    - 1.1.1 Consequences may include:
      - 1.1.1.1 Asked to put away;
      - 1.1.1.2 Conversation with student and/or parent;
      - 1.1.1.3 Temporary confiscation, where student or parent may pick up later;



1.1.1.4 Detention;

1.1.1.5 In-school / Out of school suspension;

1.1.1.6 Prohibition.

1.1.2 School administrative procedures must be published appropriately so that all stakeholders are aware.

1.2 When restrictions and/or prohibitions are in place, schools' administrative procedures shall include:

1.2.1 Expectations regarding storage of the personal digital device (i.e. location, whether in silent mode).

1.2.1.1 Schools are expected to communicate that the security and storage of these items is the sole responsibility of the owner/user and that notwithstanding confiscation for the purpose of discipline, the division assumes no responsibility for the safety, security, loss, repair or replacement of such items.

1.2.1.2 When temporarily confiscated from students by staff, devices must be securely stored.

1.3 That personal digital devices are prohibited:

1.3.1 From being used in bathrooms and changing rooms.

1.3.2 During tests or examinations, unless students have been given permission to do so by the teacher administering the test or exam.

1.4 That sharing and recording videos and/or photos of individuals without explicit consent is prohibited, with the exception of photos and recordings made at public events located on school property.

1.5 Accommodations for the usage of personal digital devices during instructional time for the following reasons:


1.5.1 For educational purposes, including digital literacy, as directed and/or approved by the teacher in the classroom;

1.5.2 To support, monitor, or regulate an identified health and/or medical condition as per their medical plan;



- 1.5.3 To support an identified educational need (accessibility and accommodation need), including mental health need as per their individual support plan; and/or
- 1.5.4 Emergencies whether real or practice.

- 2. The principal may authorize any specific use of a personal digital device during the school day.
- 3. The division information technology department shall ensure that student may not access social media on school networks or on school devices. Social media is defined as: Facebook, Instagram, X, SnapChat or any other application where said users share information. The list is not exhaustive and social media shall be clocked as new applications are identified.

<b>Reference:</b> Education Act Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Ministerial Order (#013/2024)	<b>Approved:</b> 
	<b>Date Approved:</b> August 2006
	<b>Reviewed or Revised:</b> August 2024

*Note: References shall be updated as required and do not require additional approval*

