

# Cellphones and Other Personal Mobile Devices in Schools

## Questions and Answers for Parents and Guardians

### Introduction:

This document addresses common questions that parents and guardians may have about the restriction on the use of cellphones and other personal mobile devices during instructional time. This restriction will be effective November 4, 2019.

### Common Questions and Answers

**Q: Why are schools restricting the use of cellphones in classrooms?**

**A:** During the provincial consultation on education reform in fall 2018, 97% of parents, students and educators expressed the view that there should be some sort of restriction on the use of cellphones at school.

**Q: How will it be enforced?**

**A:** To help ensure students can focus on learning, the [Provincial Code of Conduct](#) has been updated to address the use of cellphones and other personal mobile devices during instructional time. School boards, School Authorities and Provincial and Demonstration Schools must establish a code of conduct that is consistent with the Provincial Code of Conduct effective November 4, 2019. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/CodeOfConductEN.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/CodeOfConductEN.pdf)

**Q: What is a “Provincial Code of Conduct”?**

**A:** [Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct](#) promotes respect within the school community and sets out clear provincial standards for behaviour. The Provincial Code of Conduct outlines the roles and responsibilities of all individuals involved in the publicly funded school system – students, educators, parents, other school staff, and community partners – whether they are on school premises, school buses, or at school-related events or activities. [www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/128.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/128.pdf)

**Q: Does the code of conduct apply to everyone in the school?**

**A:** Yes. The Provincial Code of Conduct applies to everyone in the school including school staff, parents and visitors.

**Q: I thought boards and schools already had their own codes of conduct?**

**A:** Yes. School boards and Provincial and Demonstration Schools are required to make sure their codes of conduct are consistent with the Provincial Code of Conduct.

**Q: I thought this was a restriction on cellphones?**

**A:** While cellphones are one type of device, this restriction applies to all personal mobile devices. A personal mobile device refers to any personal electronic device that can be used to communicate or access the Internet, such as a cellphone or tablet.

**Q: How will the restriction on personal mobile devices be different from board policies that are already in place?**

**A:** In Ontario, many school boards already have policies related to the use of technology (e.g., Bring Your Own Device). Boards are asked to review existing policies for alignment with changes to the Provincial Code of Conduct.

**Q: Can my child bring a personal mobile device to school?**

**A:** Yes. Your child can bring a personal mobile device to school. However, use is restricted during instructional time in elementary and secondary school classrooms in order to prevent distractions and maximize learning time. Parents and guardians should refer to their child's school or school board to learn about any additional restrictions.

**Q: Can my child use their personal mobile devices during lunch or recess?**

**A:** The use of personal mobile devices during recess or lunch is not restricted by the Provincial Code of Conduct. Parents and guardians should refer to their child's school or school board to learn about any additional restrictions.

**Q: When can my child use a personal mobile device in the classroom?**

**A:** The use of personal mobile devices is permitted during instructional time under the following circumstances:

1. For educational purposes, as directed by the educator in the classroom
2. For health and medical purposes
3. To support special educational needs

**Q: How can a personal mobile device be used for educational purposes?**

**A:** Educators may ask students to use personal mobile devices in many different ways. Some educators may invite students to use personal mobile devices to conduct research and access educational websites.

**Q: My child has special education needs and has to use their personal mobile device to support learning. Will my child be able to use their personal mobile device in the classroom?**

**A:** The use of personal mobile devices during instructional time will be permitted to support students with special education needs. School boards are responsible for accommodating students with special education needs.

**Q: My child has mental health needs and has to use their personal mobile device for support. Will my child be able to use their personal mobile device in the classroom?**

**A:** The use of personal mobile devices during instructional time will be permitted to support students with special education needs, including students with mental health needs. School boards are responsible for accommodating students with special education needs.

**Q: My child needs to use their personal mobile device to support their health and/or medical condition. Will my child be able to use their personal mobile device in the classroom?**

**A:** Yes. School boards and schools will be required to provide exceptions to the restriction on the use of personal mobile devices for students who need to use them to support, monitor or regulate their health and/or medical conditions. Students with medical conditions are not required to obtain a physician or nurse practitioner's signature to be eligible for this exception to use their device for medical reasons; a note from a parent or guardian is sufficient.

**Q: If a student is using a personal mobile device without permission, can the student be disciplined under the code of conduct?**

**A:** Any disciplinary action is determined by the local school board or school policies, which must be consistent with [PPM 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/128.pdf) and [PPM 145: Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf). [www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/128.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/128.pdf)  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/145.pdf)

## Parent's Role in Supporting the Personal Mobile Use Restriction

As a parent or guardian, you are a role model for your child/children. You can teach your child about a healthy balance of using technology by limiting screen time at home.

### **For helpful tips on limiting cellphone usage visit:**

- [Media Smarts](http://www.mediasmarts.ca/four-tips-managing-your-kids'-screen-time) [www.mediasmarts.ca/four-tips-managing-your-kids'-screen-time](http://www.mediasmarts.ca/four-tips-managing-your-kids'-screen-time)

The [Centre for Addiction and Mental Health \(CAMH\)](http://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/problem-gambling--technology-use-treatment) also provides services and resources for parents with concerns about excessive internet use by their child or children. [www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/problem-gambling--technology-use-treatment](http://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/programs-and-services/problem-gambling--technology-use-treatment)

### **For more information on online safety and privacy visit:**

- The [Office of the Privacy Commissioner](http://www.priv.gc.ca/en/). [www.priv.gc.ca/en/](http://www.priv.gc.ca/en/)
- For information specific to children and youth visit [Get Cyber Safe](http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/prtct-yrs1f/prtctn-fml/chld-mbl-en.aspx). [www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/prtct-yrs1f/prtctn-fml/chld-mbl-en.aspx](http://www.getcybersafe.gc.ca/cnt/prtct-yrs1f/prtctn-fml/chld-mbl-en.aspx)

## Where do I find more information?

- **Ask your child/children's school**
- **Contact your school council or school board Parent Involvement Committee**
- **Visit your school board's website**
- **See the [Parents' Guide to the Provincial Code of Conduct](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/CodeOfConductEN.pdf).** [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/CodeOfConductEN.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/CodeOfConductEN.pdf)