

NLSchools refers to all public K-12 English schools under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, Education Operations Branch and all employees working therein providing services and supports to such schools, including those who work in the areas of school facilities, student transportation, program implementation, student services, and procurement.

Policy Name

Responsible Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy

Policy Statement

The Department of Education supports a learning environment conducive to learning and free from unnecessary distractions. The department promotes a healthy, safe and inclusive learning environment and safe and responsible use of electronic tools for learning.

Background

The Department of Education (the department) recognizes that personal electronic devices create significant distractions in school, resulting in decreased focus and performance and overall disengagement. Frequent use of personal electronic devices hinders the development of crucial social skills such as communication and empathy, due to decreased face-to-face interactions. They are also a catalyst for cyberbullying through social media. Excessive use of personal electronic devices may also negatively impact mental health by increasing anxiety and depression and contributing to a sedentary lifestyle with less physical activity and interaction.

The responsible use of personal electronic devices policy is aimed at reducing the impact of inappropriate personal electronic device usage on class learning and creating a more conducive learning environment that promotes social and emotional development, and safeguarding students' well-being.

While this Policy does not cover use of personal electronic devices outside of regular school hours, students are always encouraged to use them responsibly. Further, students should always remember that they can be held accountable for any behaviours that negatively impact other students and/or the school environment even when they occur outside regular school hours.

As noted in the [UNESCO Technology in Education Report 2023](#):

- Large-scale international assessment data, such as that provided by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), suggest a **negative link between excessive information and communication technologies (ICT) use and student performance**. Mere proximity to a mobile device was found to distract students and to have a negative impact on learning in 14 countries.
- The use of smartphones in classrooms leads to students engaging in non-school-related activities, which **affects recall and comprehension** (Kates et al., 2018).
- A study found that it can take students **up to 20 minutes to refocus** on what they were learning after engaging in a non-academic activity (Carrier et al., 2015; Dontre, 2021).
- Apart from immediate disruptions to teaching and learning, the use of technology is associated with **negative impacts on physical and mental well-being** and increased susceptibility to online risks and harms, which affect academic performance in the long term.

Scope

This policy applies to NLSchools during regular school hours.

Definitions

For purposes of Responsible Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy:

Common Areas

Common areas include hallways, washrooms, and change rooms within the school building. However, common areas do not include staff rooms, staff and administrators' offices. A classroom is not considered a common area when a teacher is working without students present (e.g. prep periods)

Personal Electronic Devices (PEDs)

Personal electronic devices include, but are not limited to, mobile hand-held devices, laptops, cell phones/smart phones, smart watches, smart music players, earbuds, and

gaming devices. This does **not** include laptops or tablets being used for instructional purposes or school issued devices when being used in learning.

Regular School Hours

From when students enter the school property until they are dismissed from school at the end of the school day. Regular school hours include recess and lunch breaks, which are intended for students' well-being and social engagement.

Policy Directives

1. This Policy applies to all students, school staff and volunteers during regular school hours.
2. PEDs are not permitted to be seen or heard on school property (including the school building and the school grounds) during regular school hours.
3. Exceptions to this Policy may be provided for medical reasons, for example, glucose monitoring. Further, individual exceptions are provided for devices used for educational purposes (e.g. NLSchools assigned Chromebook or Assistive Tech).
4. Schools may implement additional operational measures to those outlined in this Policy.

Administrative Procedures

1. General

- 1.1. Regular school hours are intended for educational and positive social-emotional learning purposes. Regular school hours include recess and lunch breaks, which are intended for students' well-being and social engagement.
- 1.2. Restricting the use of PEDs to reduce distraction and support student achievement and well-being is consistent with the mission and goals of NLSchools.

2. Student Responsibilities

- 2.1. All students must follow the Responsible Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy.
- 2.2. **Grades K-6 Students** - Students in grades K-6 are **not** permitted to have PEDs in schools. Exceptions may be provided for medical or educational purposes.
- 2.3. **Grades 7-12 Students** - Students in grades 7-12 are encouraged not to bring PEDs to school.
- 2.4. Grades 7-12 students who bring a PED to school must switch it off or put it on airplane mode and turn off notifications; and must store it out of sight during regular school hours. PED's cannot be stored on a student's body (i.e. in a student's clothing).
- 2.5. During regular school hours and for educational purposes only, teachers may provide permission for students to use their PEDs on field trips and co-curricular activities.

3. Parents/Guardians Responsibilities and Communication

- 3.1. Parents/guardians are asked to support this Policy by not expecting a reply from their student during regular school hours.
- 3.2. For non-urgent issues that require attention before the end of regular school hours, parents/guardians are encouraged to leave a message through the office.
- 3.3. The school communicates via established protocols to parents/guardians should there be an emergency requiring evacuation or lock down. See [Lockdown-Secure Schools](#) Policy.
- 3.4. Parents/guardians can expect to be contacted directly by school staff should their child be injured and/or require serious medical attention.
- 3.5. Parents/guardians should contact the office in case of an emergency. Your child will be immediately and confidentially notified of the need to communicate with parents/guardians.

4. Teachers and Staff Responsibilities

All NLSchools staff in classrooms (when students are present) and common areas:

- 4.1. Must follow the Responsible Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy.
- 4.2. Implement this Policy as outlined and monitor to ensure understanding and adherence to this Policy.
- 4.3. Promote this Policy and its rationale with students, parents/guardians, and school communities.

- 4.4. Model appropriate actions and behaviours as it relates to the non-use of a PED during school hours.
- 4.5. Develop and employ class routines free from PED use to achieve a distraction and interruption free environment to maximize educational/instructional time in classrooms.

Teachers and staff should continue to exercise their professional judgement in determining when their PED use is necessary.

5. School Volunteers

School volunteers supporting education of students are expected to follow this Policy during regular school hours.

School administrators and teachers are encouraged to share this policy with volunteers who engage with students during regular school hours to ensure full understanding prior to the volunteer's engagement with students.

6. Individual Exceptions

- 7.1. Individual students with documented and verified needs will work with the relevant officials (e.g., principal, vice principal, school counsellor, or instructional resource or classroom teacher) to develop and enact an appropriate exception plan.
- 7.2. All authorized students and parents/guardians must sign a Personal Electronic Device Exception Agreement, which defines access, expectations of use, and penalties/consequences for improper use.
- 7.3. A student with an exception agreement may use their PEDs to contact their parents/guardians with permission of a teacher or administrator.

Implementation and Violations

This Policy is effective [TBD 2024].

Where a student contravenes this Policy, teachers are required to check the Google-shared document* to determine whether the student has previously contravened this Policy.

The first time a student contravenes this Policy, the student will be asked to put away the PED; the teacher will send an email to the student's parents/guardians and record this contravention in the Google-shared document.

The second time a student contravenes this Policy, the teacher will record this contravention in the Google-shared document, and the student will be sent to the Administrator's office to place the PED in a secure container. The Administrator will send an email to the student's parents/guardians, and the **student** may retrieve the PED at the end of the school day.

Any additional student contraventions of this Policy, the teacher will record this contravention in the Google-shared document, and the student will be sent to the Administrator's office to place the PED in a secure container. The Administrator will send an email to the student's parents/guardians, and make arrangements with the **parent/guardian** for the return of the PED at the end of the school day.

If students repetitively contravene this Policy, the Administrator may issue other progressive disciplinary actions.

- * Schools may use means other than Google shared document to capture, track and share this information.