

**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 Student 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 Student 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 instructional 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 instructional 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 instructional hours.

## Definitions

For purposes of Responsible Student Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy:

### 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.

### Instructional Hours

From when students enter the school property until they are dismissed from class at the end of the school day. This does not apply during recess and lunch breaks. Students in grades 7-12 are permitted to use PEDs in school during recess and lunch.

## Policy Directives

1. This Policy applies to all students, school staff and volunteers during instructional hours.

2. PEDs are not permitted to be seen or heard in school buildings during instructional hours. Students in grades 7-12 are permitted to use PEDs in school during recess and lunch breaks.
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 (e.g. students may keep PEDs in lockers, bins, etc. where available).

## **Administrative Procedures**

### **1. General**

- 1.1. Instructional hours are intended for educational and positive social-emotional learning purposes. Instructional hours do not include recess and lunch breaks.
- 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 Student Use of Personal Electronic Devices Policy.
- 2.2. **Grades K-6 Students** - Students in grades K-6 are encouraged not to bring PEDs to school. Grades K-6 students will not have access to PEDs during school hours, including during recess and lunch.
- 2.3. **Grades 7-12 Students** - Students in grades 7-12 are encouraged not to bring PEDs to school. 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 instructional hours. PED's cannot be stored on a student's body (e.g. in a student's clothing). Students in grades 7-12 are permitted to use their PEDs during recess and lunch.
- 2.4. During instructional 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 child/children during instructional hours. Students in grades 7-12 are permitted to use their PEDs during recess and lunch.

- 3.2. The school communicates via established protocols to parents/guardians should there be an emergency requiring evacuation or lock down. See [Lockdown-Secure Schools](#) Policy.
- 3.3. Parents/guardians can expect to be contacted directly by school staff should their child/children be injured and/or require serious medical attention.
- 3.4. Parents/guardians should contact the office in case of an emergency. Your child/children will be confidentially notified of the need to communicate with parents/guardians.

#### **4. Teachers and Staff Responsibilities**

- 4.1. Implement this Policy as outlined and monitor to ensure understanding and adherence to this Policy.
- 4.2. Promote this Policy and its rationale with students, parents/guardians, and school communities.
- 4.3. Teachers and staff should continue to exercise their professional judgement in determining when their PED use is necessary and model behaviour to support the policy.
- 4.4. Develop and employ class routines free from PED use to achieve a distraction and interruption free environment to maximize educational/instructional time in classrooms.

#### **5. School Volunteers**

- 5.1. School volunteers supporting education of students are expected to model appropriate use of PEDs in this policy when possible during instructional hours.
- 5.2. School administrators and teachers are encouraged to share this policy with volunteers who engage with students during instructional hours to ensure fulsome understanding prior to the volunteer's engagement with students.

#### **6. Individual Exceptions**

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. A student with an exception agreement may use their PEDs as outlined in their Personal Electronic Device Exception Agreement.

## Implementation and Violations

This Policy is effective January 6, 2025.

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 at the overall school level.