



Rationale

This policy has been created to:

- support students to develop safe, responsible and respectful personal digital device practices
- reduce distractions in classrooms to support safe, focused learning environments
- foster online safety
- support students to manage their relationship with technology and develop long term healthy lifestyle habits and resilience; including developing the capacity to engage in developmentally appropriate and healthy activities during instructional “down time” that do not involve technology

Scope

Personal digital devices include mobile hand-held devices, cell phones, smart watches, iPods and other music players, gaming devices, and earbuds. The use of personal digital devices will be restricted at school to promote learning and engagement. For the purposes of this policy instructional time is defined as “bell to bell” or from the start to the end of the school day identified by the [daily bell schedule](#). Instructional time therefore includes when students leave the classroom for any reason, including but not limited to washroom breaks, using their locker, visits to the counseling area, assemblies, other school wide activities like fire drills, breaks and lunch time.

Student Responsibilities

All Students (Grade 7 to Grade 12):

- At all times, students must follow [School District 8 Administrative Procedure 3000: District Code of Conduct](#)
- Students may own and use personal digital devices outside of school hours while parent/caregiver(s) monitor their responsible use.
- Students are encouraged to leave personal digital devices and cell phones at home.
- Students may choose to use personal digital devices on the bus to and from school and outside of the start and end of the day. In doing so, students are encouraged to use them responsibly following bus codes of conduct.
- Students may access their personal digital devices before and after school, all other times are digital device free.
- During instructional time, personal digital devices are powered off or on airplane mode and are stored in lockers, backpacks, with a teacher or at the office.
- In some exceptional circumstances a student may have a personal digital device on their person after prior discussion with the supervising teacher or administration. The expectation is that the device is never visible or a distraction to the learning environment and classroom.
- During instructional time, a teacher may guide the use of personal digital devices to support or enhance learning or teach digital literacy.
- Students have access to school phones should they need to contact their parents/caregivers. This can be done at the office or with the permission of the teacher in the student’s classroom.
- Personal digital devices may not be accessed for recreational use (music, social media, etc.) during instructional time.
- Photos, videos or audio recordings are to be taken only with the permission of all parties and with the supervising teacher’s agreement.

- Personal digital devices cannot be taken into formal assessment situations.
- The use of personal digital devices on field trips and extra-curricular excursions will be specified by the teacher for the activity.

Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities

Inappropriate use of personal digital devices outside of this policy

- Parents/caregivers are responsible for supervising and developing responsible use of cell phones and other personal digital devices by their children.
- Resources are available to parents/caregivers and students should they encounter issues with cell phones and other personal digital devices.

Communication

- Parents/caregivers support the policy by making phone calls or sending messages to personal digital devices outside of instructional times and not expecting a response from their child during instructional times.
- For non-urgent issues that require attention before the end of the given school day, parent/caregivers are encouraged to leave a message through the office.
- The school communicates via established protocols to caregivers should there be an emergency requiring evacuation or lock down.
- Parents/caregivers can expect to be contacted directly by school staff should their child be injured and/or require serious medical attention.
- Parents/caregivers should contact the office in case of an emergency. Your child will be immediately and confidentially notified of the need to communicate with a parent/caregiver.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff at Mount Sentinel Secondary School:

- have knowledge and understanding of [School District 8 Administrative Procedure 1204: Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Devices](#)
- are committed to fostering digital literacy that enhances critical thinking about internet safety, media awareness, and online participation, ultimately empowering personal agency, promoting holistic health and engaging our students to become strong citizens within their local and global communities;
- participate in establishing shared knowledge of this policy with students and their parents/caregivers by reviewing and discussing with all students enrolled in their class and following up with parents are required;
- implement the protocol as outlined and monitor the personal digital device free learning environment consistently;
- develop and employ class routines to achieve a distraction and interruption free environment e.g. designating space in the classrooms for students to place their personal belongings
- provide explicit instruction about the appropriate and acceptable use of personal digital devices in their learning context when applicable.

Individual Responsible Use Plan

Individual students with identified and documented needs will work with the relevant School Based Team member (principal, vice principal, counsellor, inclusion support teacher or other trusted teacher) and their parents/caregivers to develop and enact an appropriate responsible plan. The exemption plan, requires that the student turns off all notifications to “recreational apps.” Final approval of the plan is given by the principal and will be communicated to the staff working directly with the student.

Security

Mount Sentinel Secondary School cannot take responsibility for the loss, damage or theft of any personal digital devices brought to school.

Response and Consequence of Misuse

The protocol implementation process will require a period of establishing shared expectations, an understanding of student, parent, and staff responsibilities, and an awareness of the consequences of not meeting the expectations of this protocol. Following a reasonable time for developing a shared understanding of the policy, students will be expected to follow this protocol during the school day.

Response to Misuse

- Students who misuse devices according to this policy will be subject to district [Policy 310: Code of Conduct](#) the [Mount Sentinel School Code of Conduct](#) posted in our school and published on our website.
- Staff have the right to instruct a student to hand in the device to the office and/or confiscate as delegated by the principal.
- Refusal by students to co-operate will result in a referral to administration and may result in an in school suspension from class until the issue is resolved.
- Parents or caregivers are normally required to collect the device from the office unless there are extenuating circumstances, which are determined by the principal or vice principal.
- Serious or repeated misuse will be treated as willful or persistent disobedience and could lead to referral to the District Safe School coordinator and/or suspension from school.
- All personal digital devices must be used within the district and school policies, administrative procedures and codes of conduct.

Progressive Consequences to Misuse

➤ **1st Incident:**

- The personal digital device must be handed to the supervising teacher or office until the next break in the daily schedule. When the device is returned, the student will be reminded to power it off and store it securely, ensuring it is not on their person.

➤ **2nd Incident:**

- The personal digital device is given to the office and the student picks it up at the end of the day. The supervising teacher will notify parents and caregivers if the personal digital device is returned. Parents and caregivers may be notified by the office.

➤ **3rd Incident:**

Consequences may include, but are not limited to:

- a parent being asked to pick up the personal digital device at the end of day
- a meeting with parents and administration
- storing the device in the office during class time for a specified number of days
- a personal digital device use contract
- if incidents are frequent and in multiple classes, cell phone privileges will be reevaluated to potentially include not bringing a device to school at any time

Policy Development and Field Testing

This policy was developed by the school administration with the support of our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and with the staff's input and shared ownership. Aspects of the policy were first established as a protocol based on the work of our Middle Years Program starting in September 2022 and the Career Life Connections 12 and senior Media Arts classes in December 2022. To successfully implement this protocol school wide, all staff required the opportunity to develop a shared understanding with our learners and parent/caregivers starting the week of April 11, 2023. The DRAFT protocol as it was written started on Thursday, April 13. The opportunity for broader school community input and revision was open until April 21. On April 24, the DRAFT protocol was republished with no revisions as the guiding protocol to our practice moving forward to the end of the 2022-23 school year.

A review of the protocol was completed in May 2023 with the recommendation to continue for 2023-24 school year.

In April 2024 the Ministry of Education and Child Care amended The *Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order* to require Boards of Education to ensure their codes of conduct include statements about restricting the use of personal digital devices to:

- Reduce distractions in classrooms and support focused learning environments
- Foster online safety, and
- Promote provincial consistency

These changes resulted in new policy, [Personal Digital Device \(Cell Phone\) Restrictions in Schools](#).

The Mount Sentinel Personal Digital Device policy originally established as a protocol in April 2023 was updated in June and August 2024 to reflect the Ministry of Education and Childcare restrictions and the amended School District 8 policy and procedure requirements. The most significant change is that teachers will not be collecting student devices at the start of class; students are required to ensure that during instructional times personal digital devices are securely stored and not a distraction in class. Our policy will continue to follow a progressive consequence approach to support students to manage their relationship with technology and will encourage students to contribute to reducing the distractions in classrooms and support focused learning environments

References and Resource Information:

- [Provincial Standards for Codes of Conduct Order \(the “Order”\)](#)
- [Personal Digital Devices Support Guide](#)
- [Trauma-Informed and Systems-Oriented Guidelines and Resources for Implementation](#)
- [School District 8 AP 1204: Cell Phones and Personal Electronic Devices](#)
- [School District 8 AP 3000: District Code of Conduct](#)