



ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY	
Effective:	September 3, 2024
Last Revised:	August 26, 2024

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## PERSONAL MOBILE DEVICES

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### 1. PURPOSE

As per the Ministry of Education Program/Policy Memorandum 128, school boards must develop an administrative procedure setting out the enforcement of the restrictions on student use of personal mobile devices at school. The procedure must comply with the obligations under the Education Act and other relevant provincial policy and legislation.

This Administrative Procedure will help establish and maintain an engaging learning environment that supports the achievement and well-being of all students.

### 2. RATIONALE, CONCERNS ADDRESSED AND BENEFITS

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) shared a report in 2023 which outlined the detrimental effects that personal mobile devices are having on education, including increased disruptions to classrooms and learning and decreased educational performance (UNESCO, 2023 as cited in Haidt, 2024, p. 249). In the *Anxious Generation*, author and social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has concluded that restricting the use of personal mobile devices “ameliorates three of the four foundational harms of the phone-based childhood: attention fragmentation, social deprivation, and addiction. It reduces social comparison and the pull into the virtual world. It generates community.” (p. 248) The benefits of this administrative procedure include improved attention and focus, reduced addiction and dependency, and reductions of negative impacts on social development, the brain and the body’s stress response.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

**Personal Mobile Device** - any personal device that can be used to communicate or access the Internet, such as a laptop, cellphone, tablet or smart watch.

#### **4. APPLICATION**

This Administrative Procedure applies to all students, staff and visitors of the Rainbow District School Board.

- on school property
- on school buses during field trips
- at school-related events or activities
- in a virtual learning environment

#### **5. SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**

School staff, parents/guardians and students have a shared responsibility to implement this procedure for the health and well-being of students and staff and the support of learning and academic performance.

##### **Students will:**

- learn about the contents of the administrative procedure and work cooperatively with school staff
- follow the requirements of the Ministry direction and the Administrative Procedure as outlined in this document
- learn more about the negative impact of excessive mobile device use and social media on their well-being
- work with school staff if support is required

##### **School Staff will:**

- learn about the contents of the administrative procedure and work cooperatively with school staff
- ensure that personal mobile devices are not to be used other than for teaching and learning purposes related to a curriculum goal of the activity in a situation where school based technology is not an alternative
- follow the requirements of the Ministry direction and the Administrative Procedure as outlined in this document
- support students as required for successful implementation of the Administrative Procedure
- work cooperatively with administration, colleagues, parents/guardians and students

##### **School and Board Administration will:**

- support the implementation of the requirements of the Ministry direction and the Administrative Procedure as outlined in this document
- support students, parents/guardians, staff and schools
- ensure communication as required in Ministry Regulations is timely and effective

## 6. PROCEDURE

All members of the school community must not use personal mobile devices during instructional time except under the following circumstances:

- for educational purposes related to a teaching and learning goal based on the course curriculum, as directed by an educator
- for health and medical purposes (Appendix A)
- to support special education needs for a student with a special education designation as part of an Individualized Education Plan created in an Identification, Placement and Review Committee only in a situation where school based technology cannot fulfill the support required for learning

Staff may temporarily use a personal mobile device under the following circumstances:

- Staff may momentarily use their mobile device for two-factor authentication to connect to board provided technology
- Staff may momentarily use a mobile device for communication with the office if required during supervision or for urgent situations if other means of communication are not available.

Notwithstanding the exemptions above, as members of the school community, staff will follow and model the expectations of the Administrative Procedure. Staff will not use personal mobile devices during teaching and scheduled supervision time. Devices must be stored out of view.

## REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

**Grades 7 to 12:** For all Grade 7 to 12 students, personal mobile devices are stored in lockers or assigned personal spaces out of view and powered off or set to silent/do not disturb mode during the instructional period, except when their use is explicitly permitted by the educator under the circumstances outlined above. Mobile device use is permitted before the start of the school day, at lunch and after school.

- if the educator sees a personal mobile device that is not stored out of view during the instructional period, they must require the student to store the device in their locker or assigned personal space immediately.

**Grades 6 and below:** For students in Grade 6 and below, personal mobile devices are stored out of view in their personal space and powered off or set to silent/do not disturb mode throughout the full instructional day, except when their use is explicitly permitted by the educator under the circumstances outlined above.

- If an educator sees a personal mobile device that is not stored out of view, they must require the device be stored for the instructional day and the device must be placed, by the student, in their personal storage area with their other belongings.

## **COMMUNICATION AND NOTIFICATION**

To support the implementation of the above, schools will communicate clear expectations and responsibilities of students, educators, educational support staff and volunteers at the beginning of the school year.

This administrative procedure will be shared by the Principal or designate with all staff, students, and parents/guardians via email at the start of the school year and a link to this procedure will be shared on school websites to remind everyone of the administrative procedure, its requirements and the consequences for non-compliance.

The educational component will occur at the start of the school year. Students will clearly understand the responsibilities, rationale and benefits of the implementation of the procedure.

If a student does not store their personal mobile device when required, they must be sent to the Principal's office. Principals have discretion under PPM 145, Progressive discipline and promoting positive student behaviour, to consider a range of responses to address this behaviour, including suspension. The vast majority of students will work within the procedure cooperatively. In cases where a student is not following the procedure, progressive discipline will be used including but not limited to:

- further education on the procedure, rationale and benefits
- communication home with parents and guardians
- loss of phone for the day
- requirement to keep mobile device at home
- suspension

## **7. SPECIAL EDUCATION**

For students who require assistive technology, a Board issued device will be provided. If a student's learning need cannot be addressed by board issued technology, an alternative may be considered.

## **8. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/GUARDIANS**

In case of an emergency, parents and guardians are asked to contact the office to reach their child.

## **9. FIELD TRIPS**

Mobile phones on field trips are to be stored out of sight and silenced during the planned activities, unless consent is provided by the educator.

## **10. RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERSONAL MOBILE DEVICES**

The student is responsible for their personal mobile device, how they use it, and the consequences of not following the school board's administrative procedure on personal mobile device use. Rainbow District School Board is not responsible for damaged, lost or stolen devices.

## **11. RESPECT**

During times of permissible use of personal mobile devices, members of the school community will use technology appropriately and be respectful of themselves and others at all times.

## **12. SUPPORT**

Studies show that cell phone and social media use on personal mobile devices can be detrimental to mental health and well-being. Students who require support are able to access support from the school mental health social worker.

## **13. EVALUATION**

This Administrative Procedure will be reviewed as required.

## 14. APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Medical Exemption Form
- Appendix B: Relevant Information - Questions and Answers
- Appendix C: Resources

## 15. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Board Policy No. GOV-01: Vision, Mission, and Values

Board Policy No. GOV-02: Strategic Directions for Rainbow Schools

Haidt, J. (2024). *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, Penguin Press

Ontario Ministry of Education, Cell Phones and other mobile devices in schools  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/cellphones-and-other-mobile-devices-schools>

Ontario Ministry of Education, Program/Policy Memorandum 128  
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policy-program-memorandum-128>

Ontario Ministry of Education, Provincial Code of Conduct  
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/education-ontario-policy-and-program-direction/policy-program-memorandum-128#section-2>

(UNESCO) (2023). *Technology in Education. Global Education Monitoring Report*  
<https://www.unesco.org/gem-report/en>

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**APPENDIX A - Medical Exemption Form (not required for students who use technology for blood glucose monitoring as outlined in their Plan of Care)**

**Name:** [Name of Student]

**Physician:** [Name of Physician]

**Date:** [Date Submitted]

**Exemption Details: (please fill out each section below in detail):**

1. Reason for exemption

2. Anticipated needs for the mobile device access during instructional time.

3. Accommodations required.

4. Duration of Exemption/Accommodation required.

5. Date for review of required Exemption/Accommodation.

6. Exemption Plan - How and when will the exemption be used to address the prevalent medical condition and ensure there is minimal disruption to the teaching and learning environment.

Please consider:

- Exemptions/accommodations are for valid medical reasons essential to the health of a student due to a significant prevalent medical condition. (e.g. blood glucose monitoring)
- The exemption is granted only for the purpose of attending to the needs of the prevalent medical condition.
- The student is responsible for using the exemption in a responsible and appropriate manner.
- Abuse of the exemption is subject to progressive discipline and review of the exemption plan.

I confirm that the exemption requested is for valid, significant medical reasons due to a prevalent medical condition.

Health Care Practitioner Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I confirm that the exemption requested will only be used for the outlined valid, significant medical reasons due to a prevalent medical condition.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent's/Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**

Background Information and Questions and Answers:

**Question:** In the case of an extenuating circumstance, how will I reach my child at school during the day?

**Answer:** During the school day parents/guardians can call the school office in case of an emergency that requires them to speak with their child.

**Question:** How will my child reach me in an extenuating circumstance during the school day?

**Answer:** In an extenuating circumstance, a student can be excused or supported to go to the main office to use the office phone and, if needed in an exceptional circumstance, be provided with an opportunity to use their mobile device to contact you.

**Question:** Why are classrooms not being equipped with lock boxes or phone pouches to store student phones during instructional time?

**Answer: This approach is not being used for four reasons:**

1. Teachers, educational support staff, schools and the Rainbow District School Board are not responsible for personal mobile devices.
2. The cost of lock boxes or phone pouches are not funded and school resources are better directed to teaching and learning materials.
3. The storage and collection of phones is not an effective use of instructional time.
4. By not publicly storing and displaying student phones in class, there is a reduction in pressure to own the latest new device and there are less distractions with the device being out of sight.

**Question:** Does this procedure apply to school staff?

**Answer:** Yes, the procedure applies to school staff. Personal mobile devices are not to be used other than for teaching and learning purposes related to the curriculum goal of the activity. Staff may momentarily use their mobile device for two-factor authentication to connect to board provided technology, for communication with the office if required during supervision or for urgent school situations if other means of communication are not available.



**APPENDIX C - Resources for Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians can teach children about a healthy balance in using technology by limiting and supervising screen time at home. Helpful resources can be found below.

“The Anxious Generation”, Jonathan Haidt, Penguin Press, New York, 2024

Screenagers: Growing Up in a Digital Age

Ontario Ministry of Education - Our Code of Conduct for Schools - Parent Guide:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/our-code-conduct-schools-parent-guide>

Media Smarts' [tips for managing your kids' screen time](#)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health: [CAMH](#)

School Mental Health Ontario: [manage your child's screen time](#)

“Out of sight. Out of mind” Rainbow District School Board Video:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qqX9f5RyjV-R22Oe5AvOCgE1dCvkQ5ov/view>