

Guidelines for Cell Phone Use in Manitoba Classrooms

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1 Schools and school divisions already have policies for appropriate use of technology. Why is Manitoba directing them to revise these policies to restrict the use of cell phones in schools?

Manitoba is committed to working with schools and school divisions/districts to ensure that schools are places where all children and youth matter, belong, and are respected, successful, and safe.

We have a collective responsibility to ensure Manitoba classrooms are environments that minimize interruptions and distractions to support student engagement in learning.

Manitoba's cell phone directive protects students, teachers' instructional time, and student learning time during the school day by setting healthy boundaries within Manitoba classrooms in a time when technologies, social media, and online platforms are rapidly evolving, highly distracting, and addictive.

2 What about parents who have concerns about being able to reach their children during the school day?

When urgent or emergency issues arise, parents/caregivers can always reach their children by calling their school's administration office.

3 What about other devices used in schools, such as tablets, personal computers, and smart watches?

The intent of this provincial directive is to reduce the number of distractions in classrooms and minimize the impact of harmful effects of social media and online platforms. The use of other devices should be considered within this intent. It is expected that devices that have similar functions to cell phones would be treated similarly to cell phones.

Schools and school divisions continue to be able to determine policy with regard to the use of electronic and personal devices. The intent of this directive is to minimize non-educational distractions, not to limit the classroom use of technology that serves student learning.

4 How does this provincial guidance apply to teachers and school staff?

School staff are role models in their schools and school communities. As a part of the renewed use-of-technology policies, schools and school divisions will establish clear and appropriate direction for cell phone use during the school day. This direction may vary depending on local context, and staff role and function. As the employing authority, schools and school divisions are responsible for setting employment expectations for teachers and school staff.

5 Do cell phone restrictions apply to use on buses, and during field trips, extracurricular activities, off-campus events, and so on?

Provincial guidelines on cell phone use are applicable in school during regular school hours. Schools and school divisions have the authority to set additional direction for use of cell phones and other devices outside of these periods, based on local needs and contexts.

6 Can schools and school divisions make additional restrictions on cell phone use beyond the provincial guidance?

Yes. The provincial guidelines are set to ensure a minimum level of consistency in cell phone use across Manitoba schools. Based on local needs, schools and school divisions may wish to add further restrictions in their use-of-technology policies.

7 What are appropriate exceptions to these restrictions?

Teachers, schools, and school divisions know their students best. Exceptions should be determined and accommodated for student medical needs and/or diverse learning needs through the student-specific planning process.

8 How can schools and school divisions support students' adherence to cell phone guidelines?

The experiences of schools and school divisions who have implemented cell phone restrictions over the last several years have been positive and the guidelines have been well received. Staff have worked diligently to build shared understandings of the reasons for the guidelines with parents/caregivers and students, and students have generally adapted well to clear expectations on cell phone use in school.

As schools and school divisions revise current use-of-technology policies and school code of conduct policies to align with this direction, clearly articulated expectations and rationale on cell phone guidelines will support students and families in adapting to cell phone guidelines in schools.