



Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning

Legislative Building, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8 CANADA

August 15, 2024

To: Superintendents of School Divisions
Principals of Funded Independent Schools
Manitoba School for the Deaf

Dear Colleagues:

Subject: Enhancing Guidelines for Cell Phone Use in Schools to Minimize Distractions and Support Student Learning and Safety

Manitoba students have the right to learn in environments with limited distractions and where the potentially harmful impacts of online platforms and cell phone use are minimized. With student learning and safety front of mind, I am directing that all schools and school divisions/districts review and revise use of technology policies to include clear guidelines for cell phone use in publicly funded Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools. Renewed policies are to include:

- Kindergarten to Grade 8 students are banned from using cell phones during school hours, inclusive of breaks and lunch.
- Grades 9 to 12 students are banned from cell phone use during class time and may be permitted to use cell phones during break times/lunch as well as for educational purposes, when directed by classroom teachers.
- Appropriate exceptions to support student medical and diverse learning needs.
- Clear and appropriate direction for cell phone use in classrooms for school staff.

As an education system, we have the collective responsibility to provide students with current information regarding the use of technology to support their personal safety, well-being, and learning. In collaboration with the Manitoba Association of Educational Technology Leaders, the department is reviewing the provincial guidelines for Early Years, Middle Years, and Senior Years teachers regarding the role and use of technology in Manitoba classrooms that are currently articulated in Manitoba's Literacy with Information Communication Technology Continuum. This work will align with the guiding principles of the Framework for Learning, as well as the provincial global competencies, enhancing digital media literacy learning throughout provincial curricula, supporting student safety, and engaging learners in becoming active, digitally literate global citizens. Broader engagement to renew the Continuum in its entirety will commence in the 2024/2025 school year.

Enhancing Guidelines for Cell Phone Use In Schools
to Minimize Distractions and Support Student Learning and Safety

Manitoba is committed to working with education partners such as the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, to support parents/caregivers in navigating the harmful impacts of cell phone use when students are outside the classroom. Minimizing the harmful impacts of cell phone use requires action from all stakeholders. We are working collaboratively to enhance education and awareness for parents/caregivers and to ensure school staff have the information they need to create and maintain safe learning environments for all children and youth.

As information and communication technology continues to evolve, it is essential that education partners regularly update policies to reflect current best practices responsive to the role and use of technology in schools and classrooms. Revised use of technology policies are to be sent to the Student Achievement and Inclusion Division at sai-adm@gov.mb.ca by **November 1, 2024**, as well as any questions regarding the updating of technology use policies to align with the above direction, which takes effect September 1, 2024.

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

Sincerely,



Nello Altomare
Minister
Education and
Early Childhood Learning

- c. Board Chairs, School Divisions
Secretary-Treasurers, School Divisions
Janet Tomy, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement and Inclusion
Division