



## Introduction

The Government of Alberta has established standards to be implemented as of September 1, 2024, to ensure personal mobile devices and social media do not disrupt learning. The new standards establish restrictions, enforcement procedures, and exceptions for Alberta schools. The Calgary Board of Education's (CBE) Student Personal Mobile Device Policy is implemented in alignment with Alberta Education's [Standards for the Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools](#).

This document outlines the CBE's [AR6008 Student Mobile Device Policy](#), which regulates the use of personal mobile devices in schools to support the safety and security of students and staff and reduce distractions to learning during the school day.

While the policy will be in place for the start of the 2024-25 school year, CBE will engage with staff and students to determine if any updates or adjustments are needed prior to the January 1, 2025 deadline from Alberta Education to finalize the policy.

To learn more about the Government of Alberta's standards, visit:

- [Letter to Parents from the Minister of Education - June 20, 2024](#)
- [Ministerial Order \(#014/2024\) – Standards for the Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools](#)
- [Government of Alberta - Cellphone use in schools engagement](#)
- [Government of Alberta – Limiting distractions in Alberta's classrooms](#)

## Definitions

- **Personal Mobile Device:** Any personal electronic device that can be used to communicate with or access the internet, such as a cellphone, tablet, gaming device, laptop, or smartwatch. This also includes devices capable of communicating with a mobile device such as headphones, and bluetooth devices (e.g. earbuds and speakers).
- **Social Media:** Platforms and applications that enable users to participate, communicate, create, and share content through interactive or social dialogue. Social media includes apps, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, Internet Forums, instant messaging, and social network aggregation platforms. Examples include but are not limited to Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok, Discord, Facebook, and others.
- **Instructional Time:** Time scheduled for purposes of instruction, examinations/testing, and other student activities where direct student–teacher interaction and supervision are maintained ([Alberta Education](#), 2023). Examples include but are not limited to: in-class instruction and activities, assemblies, guest speaker activities, and field trips. A principal has discretion to determine instructional time and may seek support from their Education Director, as needed.
- **Educational Use:** Administrators and teachers may permit the use of personal mobile devices during instructional time for specific educational activities. These activities are planned by teachers and structured to enhance learning outcomes.
- **Digital Citizenship:** Having the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to demonstrate responsible and respectful behaviour when using technology or participating in digital environments.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What do the Alberta Education's [Standards for the Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools](#) say?**

Alberta Education has instructed school authorities to limit the use of personal mobile devices and restrict access to social media as follows:

- Children and students may not use personal mobile devices during instructional time. If children and students have personal mobile devices with them during instructional time, they are required to keep these devices on silent or powered off, and stored out of view; and
- Children and students may not access social media on school networks or on school devices.

A school authority may further limit the use of personal mobile devices and social media, so long as it otherwise complies with these Standards, including the Limited Use Exceptions ([Government of Alberta, 2024](#)).

### **Where can I access the CBE's Student Personal Mobile Device Policy?**

Visit the CBE's [AR6008 Student Personal Mobile Device Policy](#), which is aligned with Alberta Education's [Standards for the Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools](#).

### **What is a personal mobile device?**

A personal mobile device is any device that can be used to communicate with or access the internet, such as a cellphone, tablet, gaming device, laptop, or smartwatch. This also includes devices capable of communicating with a mobile device such as Bluetooth devices (e.g. earbuds, headphones, speakers).

### **Can students bring personal mobile devices to school?**

We recommend that students leave personal mobile devices at home unless use is approved by a teacher or administrator, or unless an exception is granted for health and medical needs or to support specialized learning needs, or for specific educational purposes.

Students who choose to bring personal mobile devices to school do so at their own risk. The security and storage of these devices is the sole responsibility of the owner or user. CBE assumes no responsibility for the safety, security, loss, repair or replacement of student personal mobile devices.

### **Where will students store their personal mobile devices while they are at school?**

If students choose to bring their devices to school, they must be powered off or set to silent and stored out of view during the school day unless a teacher or administrator allows use for a specific educational purpose, or unless an exception is granted for health and medical needs or to support specialized learning needs. Students will be directed by school staff to store their devices in places such as backpacks, lockers, or other designated areas.

### **What happens if a student's PMD is damaged or stolen at school?**

Security and storage of PMDs are the responsibility of the owner and/or user. CBE is not responsible for the safety, security, loss, repair or replacement of PMDs. It is recommended that parents and students take advantage of available security mechanisms (e.g. password protection) where possible.

In situations where a student does not comply with the PMD policy and a teacher or administrator is required to temporarily remove a PMD from a student's possession, reasonable efforts will be made to ensure the device is securely stored.

### **What does the Personal Mobile Device Policy mean for students in grades K-9?**

K-9 schools in the CBE will implement “Away for the Day” guidelines for student personal mobile devices. This means:

- Student personal mobile devices are not permitted to be used inside the school building during school hours without permission from a teacher or administrator for specific educational purposes, or unless an exception is granted for health and medical needs or to support specialized learning needs. This means that mobile devices cannot be used inside the school during recess, breaks, or at lunch time.
- Students who bring personal mobile devices to school must set them to silent or powered off and store them out of view before entering the school.
- If a student needs to contact a parent/guardian using a personal mobile device during the school day, they must ask a teacher or go to the main office to ask to use their device.

### **What does the Personal Mobile Device Policy mean for students in high school?**

Students in high school are not permitted to use personal mobile devices during instructional time without permission from a teacher or administrator for specific educational purposes, or unless an exception is granted for health and medical needs or to support specialized learning needs.

A high school principal may wish to restrict locations in the school where personal mobile devices can be used when students are on spare or during breaks such as lunch time.

### **Can students access social media at school?**

Social media includes platforms and applications that enable users to participate, communicate, create, and share content through interactive or social dialogue. Social media includes apps, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, Internet Forums, instant messaging, and social network aggregation platforms. Examples include but are not limited to Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok, Discord, Facebook, and others.

Students will not be permitted to access social media on CBE networks or using CBE devices on CBE networks.

If students have a data plan for their device, they may be able to access social media on a personal mobile device using their device’s data plan.

### **Can students in grades K-9 use personal mobile devices during non-instructional times, such as lunch, recess, break times, or on the school bus?**

Students may not access personal devices inside the school during the school day which includes non-instructional times such as lunch, recess, or break times. A principal has discretion to further restrict device use outside of the school on the school grounds.

### **Can students in high school use personal mobile devices during non-instructional times, such as lunch, spare periods, or break times?**

In high schools, students may be permitted to use personal mobile devices during specified non-instructional times in alignment with any additional direction from the school. Devices may be permitted in designated school spaces such as school cafeterias and learning commons during non-instructional times.

### **Can students use personal mobile devices in washrooms, changing rooms, or counseling rooms?**

No, students are not permitted to use personal mobile devices in settings that have the potential to violate a person’s reasonable expectation of privacy.

**Can students use personal mobile devices during tests or exams?**

No, students are not permitted to use personal mobile devices during tests or in exam settings unless the administering teacher or supervisor gives them permission to do so for a specific educational or medical purpose.

**Can students use personal mobile devices during school-sponsored extracurricular activities such as sports, fine arts, clubs, concerts, and practices?**

Students may be permitted to use personal mobile devices during non-instructional activities before or after school in alignment with the school's Digital Citizenship Plan or guidelines.

**How can parents/guardians and students contact each other during the school day?**

If parents need to communicate with their child during the school day, they can do so by contacting the school office. The office will facilitate contact with students during the school day when needed.

If students need to contact their parents/guardians during the school day, they can do so through the school office or with permission from teachers or administrators.

Parents are asked to refrain from contacting their child/student on personal mobile devices during the school day to avoid interrupting or distracting students from learning activities.

**What if there is an emergency at school?**

Schools follow specific protocols during emergency situations. Student mobile devices are not necessary in these circumstances. Parents/guardians will be contacted by the school.

**What if my child requires the use of their personal mobile device to support a specialized learning or health and medical need?**

Exceptions will be made for students using personal mobile devices for health and medical needs, to support specialized learning needs, and for specific educational purposes.

In consultation with parents/guardians and students, schools will use the Student Health Plan, Individual Program Plan (IPP), EAL PMD Exception Form, or other documentation to assess exceptions and make appropriate arrangements. All exceptions will be recorded and implemented by the school using the designated forms. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis and may be adjusted or reviewed as needed to ensure they remain appropriate.

**What if there is disagreement regarding a requested exception to use personal mobile devices due to specific student learning or health and medical needs?**

Schools will need to be able to discuss exceptions listed in Student Health Plans, IPPs and ELL/EAL accommodations with parents and students to determine suitable arrangements with the understanding that arrangements may need to be adjusted to remain appropriate. Schools should ensure that students and parents understand that exceptions are made for specific use cases only (e.g. for specific learning tasks and activities or specific medical device monitoring).

**What are the consequences for a student using a personal mobile device when it is not permitted?**

Students will be held accountable for their behaviour and conduct as outlined in [AR6005 Student Code of Conduct](#). This includes exhibiting responsible and respectful behaviours so that learning is maximized. If a student uses their personal mobile device when not permitted to do so, schools will follow disciplinary practices in alignment with [AR 6006 Progressive Student Discipline](#). Parents/guardians will be notified about non-compliance issues where appropriate. The principal or teacher will consider the individual circumstances including the student's social, emotional, developmental and cognitive levels, learning needs, nature and severity of the incident, effect of the behaviour upon other students, staff, and school community, previous conduct or interventions, and other

relevant information. Repeated non-compliance may result in further conversations with students and parents, additional restrictions, temporary confiscation, and/or prohibition of devices on school property.

### **Can staff confiscate a personal mobile device from a student?**

Administrators or teachers may confiscate and then store a student's personal mobile device in a secure location during the school day in accordance with the [AR6005 Student Code of Conduct](#) and [AR 6006 Progressive Student Discipline](#).

### **Do students have access to technology for learning in school?**

CBE schools provide access to technology for students to use for specific educational purposes. Teachers arrange for the use of CBE-owned technology resources when it is appropriate for instructional activities. In most cases, students do not need to use their personal mobile devices to participate in learning activities, unless an exception is granted for health and medical needs, or to support specialized learning needs.

### **Can staff use personal mobile devices in school?**

CBE staff may use their personal mobile devices as they may be required for work tasks, and for authentication into CBE applications.

### **Are students allowed to use a PMD during the bus ride to and/or from school?**

Students may use their PMDs while on the bus to and/or from school before and after the school day. Students are expected to use their devices appropriately and in alignment with the school's digital citizenship plan and any related responsible / appropriate / admirable use guidelines.

As it was before, if a student is found to be using a PMD inappropriately, they may face consequences up to and including the loss of riding privileges, at the determination of the school principal.

### **Do students learn about digital citizenship in school?**

When using technology in school, educators address [digital citizenship](#) competencies and skills related to specific learning tasks and educational uses. Each CBE school develops and updates their annual [Digital Citizenship Plan](#) and shares it on their school website.

### **Does current research support limiting the use of personal mobile devices in schools?**

As outlined in Alberta Education's [Engagement on Cellphone Use in Schools](#) survey administered in May 2024, 85.4% of the 65,301 respondents view cellphone use as negatively impacting academic achievement. 81.3% of respondents believe that cellphones in schools increase the number of bullying incidents while 58.6% of parents believe having a cellphone negatively impacts their child's mental health. These results coupled with scientific research formed the basis for [Ministerial Order #014/2024](#).

Research referenced by Alberta Education in the document, [Use of personal mobile devices and social media in schools](#) outlines the use of personal mobile devices connected to poor academic performance, higher rates of cyberbullying, declining mental health, low self-esteem, sleep difficulties, and depression among youth. Key documents from [Alberta Education](#) include:

- [Social Media and Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, 2023](#)
- [Jon Haidt, The Case for Phone-Free Schools, June 6, 2023](#)
- [Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and Mental Health, February 2024](#)
- [Cell Phones, Student Rights, and School Safety: Finding the Right Balance, Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 2021](#)
- [Study probes cell phone use among grade 5 students, March 25, 2024](#)