Responsible Use of Personal Mobile Devices and Social Media in Schools

Background

STEM Innovation Academy is committed to creating safe, positive learning environments. As a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) school, the Board believes that technology plays a vital role in enhancing a student's educational experience. The Board places strong emphasis on highly effective instructional time, promoting positive in-person interactions, and safeguarding psychological well-being while at school.

This administrative procedure is intended to promote responsible and healthy mobile device usage while minimizing distractions and enhancing well-being.

Definitions

In this administrative procedure,

1. "Personal Mobile Device" is any personal electronic device including cell phones, smartwatches, headphones/ear buds that are not school issued or specifically required by the school.
2. "Social Media" is any platform or application that enables users to create and share content or participate in social networking. Platforms used by STEM IA for marketing purposes are not part of the definition for this administrative procedure.
3. "Instructional Time" is time scheduled for the purpose of instruction, examination/testing, and other student activities where direct student-teacher interaction and supervision are maintained. This includes both on-campus and off-campus activities.

Procedures

1. The principal is responsible for ensuring annual communication and compliance of these procedures with staff, students, parents and other members of the school community.

2. Students are not to use their personal mobile device in school during instructional time or during any school event such as assemblies, clubs or extra-curricular activities such as athletics unless authorized by their teacher or administration.

3. Personal mobile devices are not to be used in any area that has the potential to violate a person's reasonable expectation of privacy (such as washrooms or change rooms).

4. Administrators or teachers may permit the use of personal mobile devices during instructional time for specific educational purposes.

    4.1. These activities must be pre-planned and enhance identified learning outcomes where a laptop does not meet the need.

    4.2. Students will be made aware of when their personal mobile device will be required during a class period and will be responsible to return their device to their locker after use.

4.3. At no other times will personal mobile devices be allowed in a classroom during instructional time.

5. Storage of Personal Mobile Devices

5.1. Student devices are to be stored in a student's locker at all times when not in authorized use. All devices are to be powered off (turning off completely) or placed on silent mode.

5.2. Student devices are not to be stored in backpacks or in classrooms.

5.3. The school assumes no liability for lost, stolen or damaged personal mobile devices.

5.4. Parents/guardians and students assume full responsibility if their personal mobile device is lost, stolen or damaged. This also includes devices that are issued by the school to support students in their learning.

6. Limited Use Exceptions

6.1. Students with health or medical reasons may be granted permission to use personal mobile devices during instructional time at the discretion of the principal. Any requested exemptions, either temporary or long-term, must be supported by a letter from an attending physician or by providing other sufficiently detailed medical documentation to support the request.

6.2. On a case-by-case basis, administration will work with the family to develop an alternative plan that takes into consideration the student's medical needs. Administration will ensure all staff are aware of any granted exceptions and have written copies of the agreed upon plan.

6.3. A diagnosis of anxiety and/or depression, ADHD or other similar emotional or behavioural conduct disorders, does not qualify as an exemption under this procedure unless there is a secondary diagnosis of a physical medical condition.

6.4. Students with identified learning needs may be granted permission to use personal mobile devices during instructional time at the discretion of the principal. The learning needs must be identified in the student's Individual Program Plan.

7. Social Media

7.1. Students are not permitted to access social media platforms on personal mobile devices or school provided devices at any time on the school's network.

7.2. If an educational outcome (or school marketing) requires access to a social media site, the teacher must consult with the principal before considering access to such a site.

7.3. For the purpose of this administrative procedure, prohibited social media sites include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Pinterest, Reddit, Telegram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitch, BeReal, ClubHouse, Flickr, Tumblr, Yelp, Foursquare, WeChat, MeWe, Kuaishou, Weibo, QQ, LINE, Discord, Threads, Mastodon, Blue Social, Quora, Tencent, Yahoo Groups, Yammer. This list will be updated as determined by administration and STEM IA IT Director as part of routine social media monitoring.

8. This procedure will be communicated to students, staff, and parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year and reinforced throughout the year.

    8.1. Information on responsible personal mobile device use will be made available through Student/Parent Handbooks and the school website.

    8.2. Consequences for non-compliance will follow the school's progressive discipline approach and will be clearly outlined to students and parents at the beginning of each school year. Parent communication is inherent in this approach.

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