



## Cell Phones/Personal Digital Devices August 27, 2024

### **Background**

On August 15<sup>th</sup> Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning directed all school divisions in Manitoba to update their technology policies/procedures to be consistent with the following four directives:

- Kindergarten to Grade 8 students are banned from using cell phones during school hours, inclusive of breaks and lunch.
- Grade 9-12 students are banned from cell phone use during class time and may be permitted to use cell phones during breaks times/lunch as well as for educational purposes, when directed by the 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

On August 22<sup>nd</sup> Deputy Minister, Brian O'Leary provided the following additional information and commentary:

- The provincial directives are a starting point and schools can put further restrictions in place
- It is not expected that schools monitor/enforce policies during open campus time for K-8 students (ie. students that may walk home or go out for lunch)
- MEECL is not taking a position on time spent on school buses
- Students no longer have a right to their phones while at school

Manitoba was the ninth province in Canada to put restrictions on cell phones/digital devices in schools. The Manitoba directives are consistent with the directives in other provinces. In most of the other provinces the restrictions cover all digital devices (e.g. tablets, laptops, smartwatches, handheld gaming devices). The majority of the other provinces also provided significantly more direction to school in areas beyond the restrictions themselves, such as rationale for the restrictions, consequences of misuse and clear criteria for exemptions.

### **Sunrise School Division Procedure**

The attached Sunrise Personal Digital Device Procedure is consistent with the MEECL directives. The highlighted text in the document is the information that is required to be part of the procedure. The additional text has been included to provide context or clarity and provide additional support for schools.

The draft procedure was provided to schools on August 20<sup>th</sup>, feedback, concerns or questions were invited. 1! schools offered feedback, which was unanimously positive, with the most common themes being:

- Procedure is straightforward and easy to understand
- Consistent with, and supportive of, existing school direction on cell phones/devices
- Offers the flexibility to meet local needs at the school level

### **Next Steps**

1. The Board is invited to offer feedback for consideration
2. Minor edits may be made based on school feedback
3. Changes will be made to additional Sunrise technology procedures for consistency
4. Updated procedures will be shared with schools prior to the start of the school year