



General Byng School

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General Byng Cell Phone Use Policy 2022/2023

As a staff, General Byng has been reflecting on our school values of kindness, respect, and responsibility and how it affects our school culture. With the significant changes to our school staffing this year we collectively agreed that school culture plays an important role in student and staff well-being and provides a foundation that supports a safe environment where all students feel a sense of belonging. Over the last two months we have discussed what we have been observing in our halls, classrooms, and on our school grounds and have been working on implementing initiatives that will support our students in becoming the best version of themselves.

One of the observations we have made is around appropriate use of cell phones. Following a number of incidents since the beginning of the school year, we felt that it was necessary to take a few days to pause and reflect on how cell phones are impacting our lives at school. Following our announcement of implementing a no cell phone use on Tuesday, school administration has visited our grade 6-9 classrooms to discuss the following topics and to ask students to provide their voice in creating a cell phone policy that ensures safety and respect for all members of our community.

Topics discussed:

- In what ways are cell phones helpful/useful?
- In what ways are cell phones harmful? Why?
- What does our use of cell phones/social media say about us? Internally and externally?
- What are the potential benefits of going cell phone free at school?

We then asked students to anonymously share their thoughts on how they anticipated feeling over the coming days as well as what they would include in a cell phone policy that ensured safety and respect for all.

As an administration team, we cannot express enough how proud we are of the honest and thoughtful discussions and feedback we have received. We have compiled the feedback from both staff and students and have created a General Byng Cell Phone Policy.

Our cell phone/device policy was created to promote:

- Connection
- Communication
- Positive Mental Health and Wellness
- An Optimal Learning Environment
- Proper Use of Technology in the Classroom

General Byng Cell Phone/Device Policy

Grade K to 6: From 8:35 a.m. to 3:20 p.m., device use is not permitted. This includes while on field trips and during special activities. Devices must be out of sight. Teachers will inform families and students if devices are required for specific learning purposes (or days).

Grade 7 to 9: From 8:35 a.m. to 3:20 p.m., devices are not to be used, including nutrition break or in the washrooms, while on field trips and during special events other than:

- As directed by the teacher for educational purposes, such as research, school permitted apps.
- If approved by the teacher for listening to music during individual quiet work time. Headphones and ear buds should not be worn throughout the school day.
- At lunch from 12:45 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

Teachers may use device garages at their own discretion. Students are encouraged to keep their cell phone/devices in their lockers.

We would also like to remind students that the Pembina Trails Divisional policy states that photos and videos are not to be taken without permission of a teacher.

In case of emergency, the school can be contacted by families and the office will notify the student.

Social Media, Snap Chat, Group Chats etc.

Many of our student issues with each other are caused or exacerbated by their communication on-line and in texts and chats outside of school. We see examples of mean, vulgar, and racist comments. We deal with the issues that impact our students' sense of safety and belonging. We ask for your partnership in this challenge by staying on top of your child's use of these modes of communication. Looking at various chats and posts with them randomly is a good way to start a conversation with them about appropriate communication (theirs and others). It is also important to remind them that they should not be posting videos or photos of anyone without their consent.

When we discuss these comments, pictures and posts with students, they will often say, "It's a joke." We are having them look at the INTENT of their actions as well as the IMPACT. The impact of the actions is often far more hurtful than they would have imagined, and often they really do not know the true meaning of what they have said.

As We Move Forward

We will continue to speak to our students about online safety, digital citizenship, and proper use of technology and offer opportunities to share information and strategies with parents. We value our partnership with homes as we teach our students what it means to be kind, respectful, and responsible students both offline and online.