

BC 2009.01 Regulating the Use of Personal Electronic Devices On School Premises

Whereas, In schools, the inappropriate use of personal electronic devices by students causes distraction and disruption of the learning environment; and

Whereas, The British Columbia Ministry of Education states that safe schools support an environment that is resistant to disruption and intrusion and enables a constant focus on student achievement; and

Whereas, Electronic devices and technology are an integral part of society and can play a vital role in education or during emergency situations; therefore be it

Resolved, That the BC & Yukon Provincial Council of the Catholic Women’s League of Canada urge the Ministries of Education of British Columbia and the Yukon to:

- a) Develop provincial-territorial policies with clear rules to govern the possession and use of personal electronic devices on school premises; and
- b) That this policy be widely distributed and made easily accessible to parents and students.

1 **BRIEF: Regulating the Use of Personal Electronic Devices On School Premises**

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3 Personal electronic devices (PEDs) have become a common means of communication and
4 information access in to-day's society, but this technology inevitably brings new challenges
5 and problems for our schools. The inappropriate usage of PEDs, especially cell phones in
6 classroom setting, is extremely distracting, negatively affecting the ability of students to
7 learn, and of the teacher to foster an environment of learning without disruption (RiskEd, 5).

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9 Electronic communication also can serve as a medium in which students engage in
10 malevolent behavior that includes harassing others. For example, students may engage in
11 cyber-bullying using the cell phone to send text messages, and/or pictures to insult, taunt,
12 threaten, harass or intimidate classmates and/or teachers. Bullying in cyberspace occurs
13 frequently and because of its anonymity the bullies can hide their identities and therefore
14 avoid consequences (Wilson). A Canadian study on cyber-bullying shows that 69% of
15 students have heard of incidents of cyber harassment, 21% have been harassed several times
16 and 3% admitted engaging in this form of harassment (Li and Beran 2, 13).

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18 The British Columbia Ministry of Education states that safe schools are ones in which “the
19 attitudes and actions of students, staff and parents support an environment that is resistant to
20 disruption and intrusion, and enables a constant focus on student achievement” (B.C.
21 Ministry of Education 11). British Columbia schools are committed to fostering optimal
22 environments for learning. “Everyone in the school has work to do and does it in a timely
23 way – and in a way that doesn't interfere with the learning and development of others” (ibid
24 13). A few school districts have developed policies, the content of which are varied and are
25 not consistently enforced. In British Columbia the Ministry of Education does not have a
26 province-wide policy to deal with the acceptable use of PEDs in schools, but has left the
27 issue to individual school districts.

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29 Several attempts at schools to ban the use of cell phones and other PEDs have encountered
30 strong opposition from parents feeling the need for instant communication with their
31 children, in case of an emergency or to confirm after school plans. Also many students claim
32 the right to have their PEDs always accessible (Boesveld 1,3).

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34 We believe that every school in the province must ensure that every student has a safe,
35 positive learning environment without disruption. Schools have an obligation to introduce
36 students to new technologies; the devices could even be used to enhance learning, but there is
37 also the obligation to teach students how to use technologies in a responsible and respectful
38 manner.

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40 A British Columbia Ministry of Education policy regarding the possession and use of PEDs
41 would allow a consistent standard to be applied province-wide.
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1 **REFERENCES:**

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30 **ACTION PLAN:**

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32 Write letters to the British Columbia and Yukon Ministers of Education requesting the
33 development of a province-wide policy regulating the use of personal electronic devices
34 in schools.

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36 Encourage councils to become aware of existing policies in their school districts
37 regarding the use of personal electronic devices.

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