

Personal digital devices in educational environments policy

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1	February 2009	School Support Services	First version
1.1	2015		Minor updates to first version EDOC2015/13729
2	17 June 2022	Operational Policy Coordination	Policy review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> transferred to current NT Government template and updated formatting, styles and hyperlinks revoked Mobile phones and electronic devices in the school environment guidelines changed name from Mobile phones and electronic devices in the school environment policy to Personal digital devices in educational environments policy added Scope, Options and Communication and implementation sections added school community definition added Teaching and Learning and teacher responsibilities and removed regional director responsibilities added additional resources added references to support package for schools.

Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory
TRM	Territory Records Manager

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1. Policy

The Department of Education (the department) supports the use of emerging technologies for educational delivery and personal development in physical and online environments, that promotes safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children to be harmed.

All Northern Territory (NT) Government schools are required to align to this policy and implement procedures governing the acceptable and appropriate use of personal digital devices, including mobile phones, in their educational environments.

Schools, led by principals, must manage personal digital device usage through their whole-school approach to student wellbeing and positive behaviour, including educating students about safe and appropriate use through targeted and planned delivery of the technologies and health curriculum.

2. Business need

The ever-changing technologies of personal digital devices are a part of everyday life and can add value to a student's educational experience if appropriately incorporated into the learning program. However, use of some functions is inappropriate in educational environments and can be disruptive to student learning.

The major issues relating to the use of personal digital devices in educational environments include:

- misuse having profound effects on students' health and wellbeing
- disruption to educational programs through the receipt and transmission of messages
- privacy concerns related to the ability of many devices to take photographs or record conversations without the knowledge of those being recorded
- access and interface with inappropriate materials via the internet
- potential for cyber bullying including the sender's belief that they have anonymity
- loss or theft
- potential for breach of copyright
- responsibility to take reasonable steps to prevent persons being harmed, such as by access to inappropriate materials, by cyber bullying, by defamation or threats of violence.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all NT Government schools and outlines options for how the use of personal digital devices will be managed in the NT's educational environments.

4. Options for use of personal digital devices in educational environments

Three options have been identified to manage the use of personal digital devices in NT Government educational environments. These include responsible use, restricted use or switched off and securely stored.

4.1. Responsible use

Responsible use permits students to bring their personal digital devices to school and use them in the educational environment during the school day, in line with the school-based procedure on acceptable use.

The principal, in consultation with the school community, and as endorsed by the school representative body, agrees to allow the use of personal digital devices in their educational environments.

When considering if this option is suitable, the school, led by the principal, must:

- consider school behaviour data relating to inappropriate use and [school survey](#) results to gauge school community, including parents', perceptions
- develop a whole of school approach to acceptable use by following section 5 of the department's [Student wellbeing and behaviour policy](#)
- develop a school-based acceptable use of personal digital devices procedure. This may include a requirement for parents and students to 'sign-off' on the procedure to acknowledge they understand what is considered acceptable and responsible use
- communicate in a targeted and ongoing manner to students, parents, staff and the broader school community
- promote safety, wellbeing and cyber safety through training
- ensure explicit teaching of respectful relationships, and safe practices when using digital tools and online services, including dealing with cyberbullying, are part of their whole-school planning and assessment expectations
- review the implications of allowing personal digital device usage at the school by conducting periodic data informed reviews.

4.2. Restricted use

Restricted use permits students to use personal digital devices in certain year levels or at certain times throughout the day in the educational environment.

The principal, in consultation with the school community, and as endorsed by the school representative body, agrees to restrict access to personal digital devices in the educational environment to certain year levels or to certain times during the school day.

When considering if this option is suitable, the school, led by the principal, must:

- consider school behaviour data relating to inappropriate use and [school survey](#) results to gauge school community, including parents', perceptions
- develop a whole of school approach to acceptable use by following section 5 of the department's [Student wellbeing and behaviour policy](#)
- develop a school-based procedure to restrict the use of personal digital devices, which may include restricting use to certain year levels or certain times during the school day. This may include a requirement for parents and students to 'sign-off' on the procedure to acknowledge they understand the restrictions in place
- communicate in a targeted and ongoing manner to students, parents, staff and the broader school community
- promote safety, wellbeing and cyber safety through training

- ensure explicit teaching of respectful relationships, and safe practices when using digital tools and online services, including dealing with cyberbullying, are part of their whole-school planning and assessment expectations
- review the implications of restricting personal digital device use at the school by conducting periodic data informed reviews.

4.3. Switched off and securely stored

Switched off and securely stored means devices that are brought to the educational environment are turned off and not accessed, seen or heard at any time during school hours and are electronically or physically secured.

The principal, in consultation with the school community, and as endorsed by the school representative body, agrees that students must not have access to personal digital devices during school hours in the educational environment.

When considering if this option is suitable, the school, led by the principal, must:

- consider school behaviour data relating to inappropriate use and [school survey](#) results to gauge school community, in particular parents', perceptions
- develop a whole of school approach to acceptable use by following section 5 of the department's [Student wellbeing and behaviour policy](#)
- develop a school-based procedure for the switch off and storage of personal digital devices during the school day. This may include a requirement for parents and students to 'sign-off' on the procedure to acknowledge they understand the restrictions in place
- communicate in a targeted and ongoing manner to students, parents, staff and the broader school community
- promote safety, wellbeing and cyber safety through training
- ensure explicit teaching of respectful relationships, and safe practices when using digital tools and online services, including dealing with cyberbullying, are part of their whole-school planning and assessment expectations
- review the implications of not allowing personal digital device use at the school by conducting periodic data informed reviews.

5. Definitions

Educational environments – includes school premises, such as school buildings and school grounds, and during school excursions, camps, extracurricular activities and other school organised functions.

Parent – refers to a child's father, mother or any other person who has parental responsibility for that child, including a person who is regarded as a parent of the child under Aboriginal customary law or Aboriginal tradition. The definition of a parent does not include a person standing in place of the parent on a temporary basis.

Personal digital devices – includes, but is not limited to, mobile phones, smart watches, tablets, laptop computers, music and video players, still and video cameras, voice recorders, instant messaging services, digital assistants, handheld games, smart devices and similar.

School community – refers to all school staff, families, students and persons who have direct involvement or interest in the school.

6. Communication and implementation – must do

Schools, as guided by principals, must ensure a broad and consistent approach when communicating procedures for the use of personal digital devices in their educational environments. Existing mechanisms, such as the school website or application, newsletter, student assemblies, open days and any other opportunity approved by the principal, should be used to promote the school's procedure for the use of personal digital devices.

Schools should use the [NT Guide for implementation](#) available on eLearn to assist them in implementing their personal digital devices in educational environments procedure.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1. Teaching and Learning – must do

Teaching and Learning, as the policy owner, is responsible for:

- communicating and reviewing this policy.

7.2. Principals – must do

Principals are responsible for:

- developing new personal digital devices in educational environments procedures or reviewing the current procedure, in conjunction with school representative bodies who will endorse the procedure, and in consultation with the school community. Principals may adapt the Personal digital devices in educational environments procedure and acceptable use form available on the [eLearn](#) Policy and advisory library or create a similar document to suit their specific needs
- implementing and communicating the procedure for the use of personal digital devices in their educational environments to the school community
- monitoring and reviewing the procedure for the use of personal digital devices to ensure they remain effective. This should include consideration of school behaviour data relating to inappropriate use of personal digital devices and [school survey](#) results, to gauge parent and community perceptions so the procedure is evidence-informed
- ensuring procedures regarding the use of personal digital devices are made available to parents and students
- ensuring explicit teaching of respectful relationships, and safe practices when using digital tools and online services, including dealing with cyberbullying, are part of their whole-school planning and assessment expectations
- ensuring the school's code of conduct includes a statement about appropriate use of personal digital devices in their educational environments
- signing, if required, an exception to the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure if a parent or child living independently negotiates a special arrangement for the use of personal digital devices at the school
- modelling the behaviours of the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure to ensure a consistent approach in the educational environment.

7.3. Teachers – must do

Teachers are responsible for:

- managing positive behaviour for the appropriate use of personal digital devices, in line with the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure
- modelling the behaviours of the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure to ensure a consistent approach in the educational environment
- delivering learning experiences that promote the appropriate use of personal digital devices, cyber safety and student wellbeing
- responding to and reporting any inappropriate use of personal digital devices, as required by the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure
- supporting parents to understand the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure and to encourage their children's safe, responsible and respectful use of personal digital devices.

7.4. Students

Students are responsible for:

- ensuring they comply with the school's code of conduct and procedure governing the use of personal digital devices in educational environments
- ensuring personal digital devices are only used, if permitted, appropriately and responsibly, with regard to others' rights, including the rights of other students to learn without being disrupted or put at risk
- ensuring they are not involved in cyberbullying, including online or through electronic communications, such as threatening, intimidating, harassing or humiliating behaviours
- ensuring any personal digital devices carried by them in educational environments are stored appropriately during school hours, in line with the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure and any other specific arrangements made by the school
- signing, if required by the school, an acceptable use form to indicate they have read and understand the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure.

7.5. Parents

Parents are responsible for:

- supporting and reinforcing the procedures regarding the acceptable use of personal digital devices in their children's educational environments and ensuring that their children comply with those procedures
- signing, if required by the school, an acceptable use form to indicate they have read and understand the school's personal digital devices in educational environments procedure.

8. Related resources, policies and legislation

8.1. Related resources

8.1.1. Internal

[Excursions policy](#)

[NT Guide for implementation](#)

[Student wellbeing and positive behaviour policy](#)

- Support package for schools:
- Personal digital devices in educational environments procedure and acceptable use form
- Personal digital devices in educational environments summary consultation register template

Templates for schools to adapt are available on the [eLearn](#) Policy and advisory library. Staff login required.

8.1.2. External

[Australian Cyber Security Centre – Step-by-step guides](#)

Australian Government eSafety Commissioner:

- [Cyberbullying](#)
- [eSafety education for educators](#)
- [eSafety kids](#)
- [Professional learning program for teachers](#)
- [Toolkit for schools](#)

[Australian Securities & Investment Commission \(ASIC\) MoneySmart teacher resources – Mobile phones](#)

[NT Government health and wellbeing of students – Bullying, cyberbullying and cybersafety](#)

8.2. Related legislation

[Anti-Discrimination Act 1992 \(NT\)](#)

[Criminal Code Act 1983 \(NT\)](#)

[Education Act 2015 \(NT\)](#)

[Information Act 2002 \(NT\)](#)

[Surveillance Devices Act 2007 \(NT\)](#)