**September 3rd, 2024**

**Re: Cell Phones In Schools**

**Dear Brookside Families!**

**This letter is outlining some information you need before Thursday regarding the Cellphone Directive in Schools and what this means for your children! Please share this information with your child(ren).**

**We have a new directive this year regarding cell phones / personal mobile devices and their use in school. As you may be aware, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development has recently announced a Provincial Directive on Cell Phones in Schools. This directive recognizes the importance of maintaining a learning environment that is free from unnecessary distractions so that students can focus, feel safe and be successful in school.**

**Last spring, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development consulted with school advisory councils and ministerial advisory councils, as well as the Public-School Administrators Association of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union on the use of cellphones and personal mobile devices in schools. The team also visited schools, spoke directly with principals and teachers and consulted with IWK public health experts. Responses overwhelmingly supported clear, consistent restrictions on cell phone and personal technology device use throughout the school day.  We owe it to our students to do what we can to remove distractions and enable them to be fully present and engaged in the classroom.**

**As a school, we welcome this announcement as we know from experience that cell phones and other personal technological devices are often a source of distraction. They are also known to contribute to feelings of anxiety, can be used to bully and negatively impact students’ overall feelings of well-being.**

**PLEASE NOTE:  Cell Phones and any other personal mobile devices with similar functionality (portable gaming consoles, MP3 players, earbuds (eg. Air Pods) or other headphones connected to a portable device, iPods, etc) are included in the directive. IF students decide to bring these devices to school, students accept all responsibility. The school is not responsible for loss or damage to any cell phones or other personal mobile devices.**

**What does this mean for students at our school this year?**

**GRADE 6:**

* **Students in Grade 6 may not use their cell phone or personal mobile devices (air pods, headphones and smart devices) at any time during the day, including lunch hour. They are to be turned off and stored in their bags if they bring these devices to school.**

**GRADE 7 - 9:**

* **For Grades 7-9, cell phones and personal mobile devices (air pods, headphones and smart devices) are to be completely away, turned off, and stored in lockers during all instructional time**
* **Students in Grades 7-9 are permitted to use their personal devices during lunch**
* **For Grades 7-9, all backpacks, school bags, coats, etc are to be stored in lockers during instructional time.**

**ALL STUDENTS:**

* **Exceptions to these requirements will be to accommodate the documented individual medical condition for those students who use their phone to monitor blood sugar levels for diabetes.**
* **At no time are cell phones permitted in washrooms and change rooms**
* **Parents and Guardians are welcome to call the office (902-852-2062, ext 0) to pass along important messages, if necessary, during the day.**

**What happens if a student does not follow these expectations?**

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| **Incident #** | **Consequence** |
| **1** | **The first time a student is found using their device(s) when not permitted, they’ll be referred to the office and the device will be left in a secure location in our office for the day.  Students can pick up their phone at the end of the day.** |
| **2** | **The second time a student is found using their device(s) when not permitted, they’ll be referred to the office and the device will be left in a secure location in our office. Their parent or guardian will be notified.** |
| **3** | **The third time a student is found using their device(s) when not permitted, they’ll be referred to the office and the device will be left in a secure location in our office until a parent can come to the school to retrieve it.** |
| **4** | **If a student is found using their device(s) when not permitted, this becomes an incident that will be dealt with using the Code of Conduct. The parent or guardian will be notified and will have to come to the school to retrieve it.** |
| **Continued misuse of cell phone or personal mobile device on school property will result in the application of the Provincial Code of Conduct.** | |

**Students are responsible for respecting the privacy of others and must not make others’ personal information or images public. Students are not permitted to take pictures/videos/ recordings unless authorized by school staff. The Nova Scotia Provincial School Code of Conduct will be applied to all students who use cell phones or personal mobile devices inappropriately or unexpectedly during the school day.  Students are not permitted to answer cell phones during class time, including text messages.**

**If there is an emergency, we ask you to please contact our main office at 902-852-2062, ext 0 to speak to someone to relay a message. We kindly ask for your support and not to call or text your child’s cell phones during the school day.**

**Cell phones add considerable convenience to our day-to-day lives. However, we have seen that pervasive use can lead to distractions and concerning mental health outcomes. When appropriate, our school will continue to educate and model appropriate, responsible use. Our staff will also model these expectations by only using personal cell phones when absolutely necessary for work purposes. We are looking forward to partnering with parents and guardians to successfully implement this change in expectations because we believe strongly that it is in everyone’s best interest.**

**Thank you for your support.**