

August 28, 2025

Dear Families,

*Re: **Devices off, learning on!** Personal Digital Devices (PDD) limitations in schools*

As part of the North Vancouver School District's (NVSD) ongoing commitment to student-centred education, mental health, and well-being, I want to remind you of our guidelines regarding personal digital devices (PDDs).

In September 2024, NVSD introduced updated guidelines for devices such as cell phones, tablets, smartwatches, and earbuds. These expectations are integrated into every school's Code of Conduct and are designed to maintain a focused, safe, and inclusive learning environment for all students:

*All members of the school community are expected to leave personal digital devices at home, in their bag/backpack, and/or in their locker during instructional time. Allowances may be made by the staff for instructional purposes, digital literacy, appropriate use based on age and developmental stage, accommodations within a student's Individualized Education Plan, accessibility, medical and health needs, and/or equitable support for learning outcomes.*

#### **What this means for the 2025–26 school year**

Guidelines for PDDs continue in effect across all BC schools. During instructional time, students are expected to leave devices at home, in their backpack, or in their locker. Staff may allow use for instructional purposes, digital literacy, medical or accessibility needs, or equitable support for learning outcomes.

#### **Why this matters**

Community feedback throughout the 2024–25 school year included the February 2025 *Personal Digital Devices Community Check-In* and a district-wide survey. The feedback received helped NVSD understand how these restrictions are shaping learning. Families, students, and staff shared that, in general, the guidelines are helping reduce digital distractions and support classroom focus.

Research echoes this feedback: too much phone use increases stress, disrupts sleep, and impacts learning. By contrast, students without phones in class report feeling calmer, more focused, and often achieve stronger results.

#### **Listening and looking ahead**

We value the perspectives of the NVSD community and will continue to refine our approach. This year, we will create further opportunities for dialogue, including a Board of Education standing committee on AI in Education and an NVSD-hosted AI Ethics Bowl. These conversations reflect the NVSD's commitment to working in partnership with families to prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of the digital world.

#### **How families can help**

- Talk with your child about the benefits of being phone-free during learning.





- Encourage healthy digital habits at home (e.g., device-free mealtimes, tech-free time before bed).
- Model balanced technology use.
- Connect with your child's teacher, counsellor, or administrator if your child requires an accommodation.

#### Helpful resources

- [Mediasmarts: Resources for Parents](#) – Canadian resource for managing kids' screen time.
- [Safer Schools Together: Raising Digitally Responsible Youth](#) – A parents' guide.
- [Safer Schools Together: ERASE Family Sessions](#) – A series of remote sessions focused on key digital media topics.

Together, we can support students in building balance, focus, and well-being in their digital lives. Thank you for your partnership in making classrooms positive, engaging, and distraction-free spaces for learning — where we embrace the motto:

**Devices off, learning on!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Pius Ryan'.

Dr. Pius Ryan  
Superintendent of Schools