



St. Francis of Assisi Middle School

Dear Parents/Guardians:

August 30, 2022

Re: Cell Phone expectations and changes

At St. Francis of Assisi Middle School, we recognize that cell phones have become an important part of people's lives and they make student / parent communication easier. Over the past several years, we have noticed that these devices have become a huge distraction in class and in the school. A continued focus for us is to ensure the very best climate for student learning for all students in a safe and caring environment. To support this goal, we have made the decision to institute a school wide cell phone/smart technology use policy regarding the use of mobile devices during class time because of the ongoing negative effect on student learning.

This decision was not made lightly and is based on research to help understand the issues being presented in classrooms. (Please see the links at the end of this letter for research regarding cell phone use in schools). Our experience at St. Francis of Assisi Middle School is that these mobile devices are highly distracting, are being used inappropriately, and also create confrontation between students and staff. The situation is further complicated by a number of students and parents seeing it as their "right" to have constant use of a device. Please note that in the case of any special needs or family emergencies, we have a landline (403-314-1449) that is answered from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm.

Despite our efforts to help students facilitate appropriate mobile device use, including digital citizenship lessons and working through various solutions, these devices continue to cause significant distraction to the point where their presence has an addictive quality.

Students will be informed at the beginning of the school year of our new expectations by their classroom teacher and administration. The basic principles are listed below, and our school website will be updated to reflect the new procedure.

Policy

1. Mobile devices should be 'off and away' during all class times in learning communities. In school, this means that the cell phone should be turned off and placed in a student's locked locker. For Grade 9 students who do not have a locker, the cell phone must be placed in their backpack or in the classroom phone holder at the front of the class. For academic purposes, the teacher may require the students to use their mobile devices. This use of a mobile device and the time frame will be clearly communicated by the teacher and time will be given to return the device to their lockers before the next class.
2. If any mobile device/earbuds/phones are seen or heard in class, in the hallways or during lunch eating time during non-designated times, the student will be asked to take their mobile device to the office.
3. Devices delivered to the office will be returned at the end of the students' school day in the first and second instances. Should there be a third occurrence, a call will be made home requiring a parent/guardian to collect the child's device. This will be the case for all future occurrences as well. There is no 'reset' to zero for violations of the cell phone policy.

4. Students are still able to use their devices prior to school, during lunch recess, and after school.
5. Any students who require an exception to this policy based on previously implemented strategies at the school level will require permission from Mr. Gylander. Parents will need to schedule a meeting with Mr. Gylander to create a plan moving forward.

Ultimately, school is a microcosm of wider society. Just as most workplaces have mobile phone policies in place to ensure minimal distractions during work hours, so it is in the classroom. Knowing that certain behavior is acceptable in some places, but not in others is at the crux of how young people can better use mobile devices' and develop socially responsible behaviors.

Practicing moderation is a good discipline. In fact, self-control is one of the qualities that the Holy Spirit produces in the life of a believer ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). When we are not living in moderation-when we lack self-control in a certain area of our lives-it can indicate that we're not allowing God fully into that area. Let's work together to help the children find that all things should be practiced in moderation and that includes the use of mobile devices.

Thank you for your support as we continue to work towards providing a safe learning environment where quality instruction and learning occurs.

***USEFUL LINKS:** "High levels of smartphone use by teens often have a detrimental effect on achievement, because teen phone use is dominated by entertainment, not learning, applications," Wired Child: Reclaiming Childhood in a Digital Age*

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2022-06-06-the-case-for-making-classrooms-phone-free>

<https://www.educationnext.org/take-away-their-cellphones-rewire-schools-belonging-achievement/>

<http://www.scarymommy.com/how-cell-phones-affect-kids-in-school/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/do-smartphones-have-a-place-in-the-classroom/480231/>

<http://www.charlton.uk.com/news/?pid=3&nid=2&storyid=117>

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/691462>

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/16/schools-mobile-phones-academic-results>

<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1350.pdf>
(school mobile device ban data found on page 25)

In Christ's service,



Gary Gylander
Principal