



We are the Arbutus Avalanche!

École Arbutus Global Middle School

Celebrating Diversity. Seeking Sustainability.

Update to Cell phone / Device policy January, 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This is to let you know that we are creating more clarity and boundaries about our use of electronic devices starting in January, especially regarding cell phones. This includes listening devices like earpods/headphones.

We appreciate that there are many students who are using them appropriately. We thank them, and you, for your guidance around that.

As shared in our Code of Conduct, *“Our main goal is to help students learn to use modern technology in a balanced and healthy manner that supports their learning and development. It is important that students be able to focus during the day on learning activities, as well as on in-person social interactions with staff and students.”*

Unfortunately, we are finding that there are a large number of students who are not using electronic devices appropriately, and this creates distractions to learning as well as detracts from positive social interactions. There is also a lot of research into the negative and harmful impacts of cell phones and being constantly “plugged in” on mental health and well being. School is a place to take a break and unplug to focus on social, emotional, and academic development.

We are finding that many students are keeping their cell phones in their pockets when they should be in lockers or backpacks. The attraction of using Social Media apps and texting are too challenging for many to manage responsibly, and this creates a constant distraction for students. Many students are also using phones when leaving class to connect with friends, are taking photos of videos without permission, or are watching inappropriate content. We do deal with situations on a case-by-case basis as they arise, but the volume of interventions we are needing to have is becoming unmanageable, as well as causing unnecessary and unfortunate negative interactions between staff and students. Our hope is by creating a clearer boundary around their use, this will reduce or eliminate the need for staff to intervene, and we can go back to focusing on learning and positive relationships.

Another strategy we recommend, to reduce temptation for students, is to use parental controls to restrict screen time for the hours of the school day. This could help make putting devices away go more smoothly.

Starting in January, the expectation is that:

- **All students must keep their phones and earpods/earphones in their lockers at all times.**
- **If a student is seen with a phone or an earpod /phone in their ears at any time, they will be confiscated until the end of the day.**
 - **If this happens more than once, their parent or guardian will need to come pick up the device from the office, or it will be returned at the end of the next school day.**
 - **If this continues to happen, the student will be asked to turn in their phone to the office each morning and pick it up after school each day.**
- **If students need to contact you, they can use the school phone outside the office.**
- **If you need to contact them, please do so through the office. We will pass messages along.**
- **If they absolutely need to retrieve their phone to contact you, they must ask an adult for permission first, and use it within sight of that adult, then return it to their locker immediately after.**
- **If staff would like students to use devices for an educational purpose, such as to use the camera feature, or to listen to music while they work, they must have the explicit permission from a staff member prior to getting their device out, and return it immediately after the learning activity.**

There are some students who will have medical exemptions to this rule; those are known to staff. They are still expected to keep phones out of sight at all times.

We appreciate your support with these boundaries. We are confident that with this clarity, we will be able to better support a more positive, focused, and respectful school and learning environment for students and staff, as well as support better mental health and wellbeing for all.

Sincerely,

Carrie Schlappner
Principal