



SOUTHWOOD SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Dear Southwood Community,

You may be aware of the recent Ontario Ministry of Education mandated direction around mobile devices and vaping in schools. The enhanced policy is supported by research and clear direction is given by the Ministry of Education in their Policy & Program Memorandum 128 (PPM 128) which went into effect on September 1st, 2024. The changes outlined in PPM 128 are driven by caregiver and educator feedback as well as mental health experts, who acknowledge that mobile devices have positive uses, but in classrooms, they can lead to distracted, disengaged students. It has become clear that limiting the use of mobile devices during class time will benefit our students in several ways. Additionally, the impact vaping has on student health is clearly negative for the user and students subjected to second-hand smoke.

We invite caregivers to consider making arrangements for cell phones to remain at home. We recognize that this is a significant departure from many students' lifestyle, so, for our part, we will be implementing the Ministry's updated policy around cell phone use in school that requires students to silence and store their cell phones out of view during class time (e.g., in a backpack or locker, not on their person). Students are permitted to use their cell phones in-between classes and during their scheduled lunch. During class time, students are not allowed to use their cell phones in hallways, washrooms and/or changerooms.

Please note that senior students with scheduled spares can use their cell phones in designated areas of the school (library and the cafeteria). Should your student need to contact you during the school day, they are encouraged to come to the office. While we understand the importance of technology in our students' lives, we firmly believe that safeguarding their academic success and emotional well-being remain paramount. Starting immediately, students who use their cell phone during instructional time will be directed to put their cell phone in a secure place designated by the teacher for the rest of the period.

Students who refuse to place their cell phone in the designated place within the classroom will be referred to the VP. At the Administrator's discretion, a call will be made to their caregiver(s) so the policy expectations can be clarified and support can be introduced, if needed, to help the student positively adapt to the policy. In these cases, students will be asked to leave their phone in a secure space in the main office or the caregiver can choose to come to the school and pick it up. Students will return to class once their cell phone has been safely stored or picked up.

Chronic Noncompliance: Students who continue to use their cell phones during instructional time will experience progressive discipline measures, which may lead to suspensions, as determined by the school's Administration team and outlined in the WRDSB administrative policies

Regarding vaping in schools, in accordance with the expectations outlined by the Ministry of Education, we will be enforcing our existing zero tolerance policy. Students who are found to be vaping on school property will be referred to the VP so that expectations can be reiterated and progressive discipline applied. Students who vape on school property will have their vape/e-cigarettes confiscated and may be suspended and/or referred to by-law enforcement who will apply the applicable fines.

We will introduce and explain these updated policies during Grade Level Assemblies throughout the first week of school so students can be educated on the processes and ask questions.

We extend our sincere gratitude for your support and cooperation as we enact this positive policy to foster a healthier and less distracted learning environment for all of our students.

Sincerely,

Carli Parsons,
Principal

Lucas Bedell,
Vice-Principal