



**AD-HOC POLICY COMMITTEE**  
**Report No. 24-086**

**20 June 2024**

**REVISIONS TO POLICIES IN RESPONSE TO THE REVISED PPM 128  
THE PROVINCIAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND THE SCHOOL BOARD  
CODES OF CONDUCT**

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Services, Ext# 8310**

**PURPOSE:**

1. To seek input on the proposed revisions to the OCDSB policies related to the Ministry's [PPM 128 The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct](#).

**STRATEGIC LINKS:**

2. The proposed updates are in line with the requirements of the revised PPM128 which reflects the Board's commitment to good governance as set out in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board's (OCDSB) 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

**CONTEXT:**

3. To help foster positive school climates that support the achievement and well-being of students in Ontario, on 28 April 2024, the Ministry Updated *PPM 128 Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct*. The revisions provide streamlined direction to boards, and reiterate expectations for members of the school community to help address concerns raised by school boards over the last year. Specifically, the revisions address the following:
  - Restrictions on the use of personal mobile devices, including smartwatches, tablets, and laptops, to reduce distraction during instructional time;
  - Enforcement of restrictions to the use of personal mobile devices;
  - Restrictions to the access to social media platforms on school networks and school devices;
  - Enforcement of consequences for student use/possession/provision of tobacco, electronic cigarettes (vaping), and nicotine products while at school;
  - Signage in schools to communicate the Code of Conduct behaviour expectations; and
  - Explicit prohibition of sexual harassment, theft, and use of abusive language.

This report addresses the implications of the new requirements on our policies and procedures and seeks input from trustees on the revisions proposed by staff.

## **KEY CONSIDERATIONS:**

### 4. A Shift in the Ministry's Direction

In this PPM the Ministry recognizes that policies would be at a high level and the implementation would be left to the procedures. This has afforded staff the flexibility to house the new requirements in either policies or procedures depending on the nature and magnitude of the change. Below is a list of the policies and procedures that are affected by the revised PPM128.

### 5. Policy P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct (Appendix A)

The District Code of Conduct houses most of the new requirements of the revised PPM128. The proposed revisions in Appendix A address the following:

- ✓ The ban of personal mobile device use during instructional time and referring the reader to Policy P.100.IT, Appropriate Use of Information Technology for further direction.
- ✓ The requirement to post signage in school entrances and other visible places that reflect the behavioural expectations of the District's Code of Conduct.
- ✓ The requirement to refrain from recording, taking, or sharing non-consensual recordings or photos of members of the OCDSB community.
- ✓ The requirement of all community members to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- ✓ The ban on the possession, provision, and use of cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, tobacco, and nicotine products.

### 6. Policy P.100.IT Appropriate Use of Information Technology (Appendix B)

The proposed revisions to the Appropriate Use policy address the following:

- ✓ Enforcing or implementing the minimum requirements of the ban on the use of personal mobile devices.
- ✓ Giving the principals the discretion to impose further restrictions to the use of personal mobile devices only in consultation with and with support from the school community.
- ✓ The restrictions of access to social media platforms on school networks and devices of the District.
- ✓ The direction to identify exceptional circumstances when social media can be used for educational purposes.
- ✓ The direction to all members of the OCDSB community not to record, take, or share non-consensual recordings or photos of members of the community.

### 7. Policy P.026.SCO Student Suspension and Expulsion

The Student Suspension and Expulsion policy currently includes language that is broad enough to address the consequences of students refusing to surrender their cell phones when they are not stored out of sight during instructional time. Specifically, P.026.SCO Section 3.14 (j) states that:

*“...it is the policy of the Board that a principal shall consider whether to suspend a student from one to 20 school days if they believe that the student has engaged in any of the following activities: j) any act considered to be contrary to the Board or school code of conduct.”*

This policy will therefore not require any revisions in response to the revised PPM128.

#### 8. Procedure Work

A number of procedures are affected by the revisions to PPM128, including:

- [PR.522.SCO Smoking and Vaping on Board Premises](#) will indicate that the ban on smoking and vaping includes the possession of nicotine, cannabis (unless the student/staff is a medical user) and electronic cigarettes.
- [PR.534.SCO Search and Seizure \(Students\)](#) will clarify the handling instructions for surrendered prohibited items (such as tobacco, electronic cigarettes, nicotine products, alcohol, illegal drugs, as well as personal cell phones).
- [PR.622.IT Appropriate Use of Information Technology \(Students\)](#) will include the Restrictions on personal mobile devices and consequences of non-compliance;
- [PR.507.CON Community Use of School Facilities](#) will include the requirements for permit holders to abide by the District Code of Conduct.
- New PR.702.IT Appropriate Use of Information Technology (Staff) will include the requirement of staff to not use personal mobile devices during instructional time unless for work-related purposes, and not record, take, or share non-consensual recordings or photos of other members of the OCDSB community;
- New PR.708.IT Social Media will include the restriction of access to social media platforms on school networks.

While staff has already started proposing revisions, they are mindful of the ongoing work of the Technical Implementation Task Force established by the Ministry along with education partners, parents, students and medical experts to support the implementation of the new requirements. Any recommendations or strategies resulting from this provincial work will inform our procedure revisions.

### **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:**

9. The changes to PPM128 will require additional resources to facilitate the enforcement of the new requirements. With regards to the ban on vaping, the Ministry has indicated that funding will be provided to schools to install vape detectors so they can better enforce the new rules. Wrap-around support for students will be increased to support learning, addictive behaviours and implementation.

The Ministry also indicated that it would provide training for teachers and support for parents on how best to manage this change. Further resources might be required to acquaint administrators with the new requirements and allow for the implementation of IT strategies in schools to control access to social media networks, all of which will be covered by the departmental budgets.

Business and Learning Technologies (B&LT) is currently reviewing options for restricting Social Media on the school networks and student devices as directed by the PPM. Currently, firewall policies are set for secondary schools, elementary schools, and administration buildings. The category of social media is partially blocked in all three settings. Currently, Facebook, Instagram, and X are open in all three settings. TikTok and Snapchat are blocked in the elementary division only. There are currently no policies to block sites on the device, only on the firewall which means students who take devices home will be subject to whatever policies are on their home network.

To comply with the PPM, B&LT will block Facebook, Instagram, X and Snapchat on both the elementary and secondary school networks. This will make these sites unavailable to anyone attempting to access the sites via the school wifi or wired network. Since many schools use some of these sites to communicate with their communities staff are in the process of looking at the option of segregating the network for staff so we can make sites such as Facebook, Instagram and X available for that purpose. A proof of concept is planned for the fall and should it prove successful staff will roll it out system-wide in January.

The OCDSB will block all social media sites on OCDSB student Chromebooks through the Chrome management console. By doing this, students will not be able to access social media sites when they take Chromebooks home to complete assignments. We are also restricting access to extensions which will prevent the loading of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) which bypass our firewalls.

## **COMMUNICATION/CONSULTATION ISSUES:**

10. The District has posted an overview of the revised PPM128 and the new requirements on its consultation platform in order to solicit feedback from the public. A list of the policies and procedures that are expected to be revised has been added to the consultation webpage for more informed input from the public. Feedback was accepted until 14 June 2024. As the proposed revisions are regulatory requirements and due to the timeline imposed by the Ministry for the enforcement of the new changes being September 01, 2024, no further consultation would be possible at this time.

Over 120 contributions were received through Engage OCDSB, most of which were supportive of the new direction. A significant number of the contributions addressed the issues that would emerge with the implementation of the new requirements, such as:

- The importance of raising awareness among students about the harms of excessive use of cell phones;
- The liability of staff for students' personal devices' loss or damage;
- Issues emerging with the unsupervised use of cell phones during lunch and recess. Some suggested the extension of the ban to the whole instructional day for grades 7 and 8 to be able to socialize with their peers;
- The additional responsibilities of policing personal mobile devices' use are placed on educators;
- Recommendations to exclude smartwatches from the use ban;

- Strategies for handling new parent calls through the office;
- Supports for staff and students who are addicted to their devices; and
- The implication of the ban on field trips held during the instructional day.

On 05 June 2024, feedback was received through discussions with principals and vice principals at the Systems Leaders' Meeting. The following themes emerged in the discussion:

- The success of cell phone bans in schools that had adopted such initiatives earlier has proven to rely on support and buy-in from the whole school community. This was achieved through communication that focused on well-being and the positive effects of the ban on the student's education;
- The possibility of using mobile device hotels in schools and whether the District would supply these hotels to schools;
- The importance of consistency in the implementation of the new requirements, especially early on in the new school year and amongst staff of every school;
- Questions were raised around the use of smartwatches where applications are blocked during school hours and tracking devices and whether they would be exempt from the "out of sight" requirement;
- Principals want to have the authority to determine discipline and have concerns about the efficiency of progressive discipline;
- There are questions around whether the bans are applicable for OSTA and how this will be enforced on buses and transportation;
- There is a push for educators to model appropriate use to students and a request for the District to supply more walkie-talkies; and
- The challenges faced by schools with K-8 students due to the requirement to adhere to two different standards.

On the other hand, the District awaits further clarification from the Ministry with regard to the implementation of the new requirements of the PPM, especially on the ban of social media from school networks and the signage requirements in order to communicate the Code of Conduct behaviour expectations with the OCDSB community members.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

- A. THAT the proposed revisions to Policy P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct, attached as Appendix A to Report 24-086, be approved; and
- B. THAT the proposed revisions to Policy P.100.IT Appropriate Use of Information Technology, attached as Appendix B to Report 24-086, be approved.

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Executive Officer of Corporate Services

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Pino Buffone  
Director of Education and  
Secretary of the Board

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix A - Revised Policy P.125.SCO School District Code of Conduct

Appendix B - Revised Policy P.100.IT Appropriate Use of Information Technology