

Ministry of Education

Minister

315 Front Street West
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Ministère de l'Éducation

Ministre

315, rue Front Ouest
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Dear parents,

For the first time in nearly a generation, our government successfully negotiated agreements with all teachers' unions and averted strikes in schools. This allowed us to deliver on our promise to parents to bring stability to classrooms and keep kids in class.

As kids benefit from three more years of uninterrupted learning, I have heard from many of you, teachers and students alike, about concerns about the alarming rise of youth vaping in schools and the persistent use of cellphones as a distraction from learning in class.

That is why we are rolling out Canada's most comprehensive plan to counter these threats.

To help reduce distractions in our schools, starting this September, we are denying cellphone usage during instructional time so that students can focus on getting back to basics and learning foundational skills like reading, writing and math.

Our youngest learners in kindergarten to Grade 6, who may have phones, will now be required to keep phones on silent and out of sight for the duration of the day.

For students in Grades 7 to 12, phones can be with the student. However, they will only be permitted during instructional time if explicitly allowed by the educator.

We will also commit to having report cards include comments on students' distraction levels in class. We recognize that some parents want to communicate with their children during school, and the policies listed above will still permit that during non-instructional time or when an educator gives permission.

When it comes to cellphones, Ontario's policy is: out of sight and out of mind.

We are also removing social media websites from all school networks and devices to help strengthen in-person relationships, communication and social-emotional skills.

We have also announced a strict anti-vaping policy in schools where parents are immediately informed, and the vapes in a student's possession will be given up and disposed of. There are immediate consequences for students caught in possession of illegal substances, and Public Health Units can also be engaged to support education, prevention and enforcement, when necessary. We are also providing funding to schools to install vape detectors so they can better enforce these new rules.

We are also increasing wrap-around supports for students to support learning, addictive behaviours and implementation, as well as dedicated training for teachers and supports for

parents on how best to manage this change. I encourage you to read the updated [Provincial Code of Conduct](#) that outlines these changes.

No matter how strong the policy is, we can't do this alone.

To truly change behaviour, we are asking for your support and collaboration to hold conversations at home about the new expectations and the importance of respecting school staff and the rules as we head into September.

Change will come when we all work together and stand by teachers, principals, and education workers as they implement these new measures. Your co-operation will help ensure students can get back to basics, focus on their studies, and prepare for the jobs of tomorrow.

By doing so, we restore common sense, where the focus remains on academic achievement and the safety of your child.

Thank you,

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education