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Dear Parents/Guardians:

May 6, 2019

Re: Cell Phone/Smartwatch expectations and changes

At St. Joseph High School we recognize that cell phones/Smartwatch's have become a big part of people's lives and they make student/parent communication much easier. Since our opening in 2018, we have noticed that these devices have become a huge distraction in class. A continued focus for us is to ensure the very best climate for learning for all students. To support this goal, we have made the decision to ban the use of mobile phones/Smartwatch's during class time because of the ongoing negative effect on student learning.

This decision was not made lightly. We have done significant research into the topic to understand the issues. For example, in a recent survey ([link is on second page](#)) in 2001, no schools banned mobile phones. By 2007, this had risen to 50% and by 2012 some 98% of schools either did not allow mobile phones on school premises or required them to be handed in at the beginning of the day. Your child will have access to technology for their education as we have ample devices (Chromebooks, iPads etc). Our catchment schools of St. Patrick's Community School and Ecole Mother Teresa Catholic School have also recently made the similar changes to their mobile phones policy.

Our experience at St. Joseph High School is that these 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 that is answered from 8:00am - 4:00 pm.

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

Students will be informed this week in class of our new expectations. The basic principles are listed below, and our school website will be updated to reflect the new procedure. (See next page.)

Policy

1. Mobile phones/Smartwatch's should be '**off and away**' during all class times in learning communities. If any device is seen or heard in class, the student will be asked to take their mobile phone/Smartwatch to the office. This will include devices tucked in clothing, in bags, or in binders.
2. Delivered devices will be returned to students at the end of the 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.
3. After three offences, should this continue to be a challenge, further discipline will follow.
4. Students are still able to use their devices prior to school, during lunch, during breaks and after school. We would appreciate if you would contact your child during these times.

Ultimately, school is a microcosm of the 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 behaviour is acceptable in some places, but not in others is at the crux of how young people can better use mobile phones/Smartwatch's and develop socially responsible behaviours. Moderation is key to enjoying the advantages that we have here in Canada.

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 a mobile phone/Smartwatch.

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.theguardian.com/education/2015/may/16/schools-mobile-phones-academic-results>

<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>