

Sept. 4, 2024

Dear parents/guardians:

Starting in September, new rules about vaping and cell phones will be in place for all elementary and secondary schools. Here's what you need to know:

Anti-vaping policy

What it is: Students possessing, using, or providing a vape will have the device taken away and disposed of, with notification to parents/guardians. Repeat offences will result in progressive discipline according to school board policy, and the involvement of Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington Public Health (KFLAPH), as per the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, including the possibility of charges/fine.

Why this is important: Approximately 12 percent of students in Grades 7 to 12 report vaping in the past year (LDSB School Climate Survey 2023-2024, May 2024). Vapes often contain nicotine, which has been proven to be addictive and harmful to lungs and young brains. The use of nicotine can impair memory and concentration, which are essential for academic success. It can also increase feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression, negatively impacting overall well-being.

How you can help: [Talk to your child](#) about the risks of vaping. Consider using apps like "Quash" that can help them quit if they already vape. Be a role model, do not vape or smoke in areas where smoking/vaping is banned, including school grounds, community recreational facilities, playgrounds, and hospital properties.

How we will help: The Ontario curriculum includes teaching students about the risks of vaping.

We can also provide resources for those who want to quit or reduce their use.

Visit notanexperiment.ca or quashapp.com for information on vaping and quitting.

Cell phone policy

What it is: Students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 are not permitted personal mobile devices – which includes any electronic device that can be used to communicate or to access the internet – during the school day except in specified circumstances. Students in Grades 7 to 12 can have these devices during the school day but must have them powered down/silenced and put away during class time. Social media sites will be blocked on school devices and networks. Students in Grades 7-12 may only use their personal devices in the classroom if the teacher has permitted their use for learning purposes.

Why this is important: Having personal mobile devices like cell phones present and receiving notifications during class creates distractions which can reduce student concentration, academic performance, and working memory. Excessive screen time can also negatively impact physical health and behaviour.

The [Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines](#) recommend no more than two hours of recreational screen time per day for school-aged children, yet 78 percent of Ontario students in Grades 7 to 12

exceed three hours ([Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey, 2023](#)). Additionally, some studies link social media use to anxiety and depression; The [US Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#) states that over three hours of daily social media use doubles the risk of poor mental health. More than half of LDSB students in Grades 4 to 12 report spending this amount of time or more on social media each day (LDSB School Climate Survey, 2024).

How you can help: Talk about the new cell phone expectations with your child and the benefits of less screen time. Visit mediasmarts.ca for tips on how to help your child manage their device use. If you urgently need to contact your child, call the school. For non-emergencies, wait until break times or the end of the school day to contact them.

How we will help: We will ensure students understand these new rules and support them in reducing screen time.

Please talk to your child/children about these changes so they are prepared for the new school year. With your help, we can ensure students can focus on their learning and thrive in a healthy school setting.

For more information, read the [updated Provincial Code of Conduct](#), visit kflaph.ca, or contact your school.

Sincerely,



Dr. Piotr Oglaza,
Medical Officer of Health
Kingston, Frontenac, and Lennox & Addington Public Health



Krishna Burra,
Director of Education
Limestone District School Board