



ÉCOLE BALLENAS SECONDARY

Building Successful Students

Principal: Trish Cathrine
Vice-Principal: Heather Deering
Vice-Principal: Andrew Lee

Dear Ballenas Community,

As you are aware, the Provincial Government has taken steps to create distraction free learning environments in schools:

KEEPING KIDS SAFE ONLINE AND IN SCHOOL <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2024PREM0004-000088>

"Today, kids live with different challenges than they did a generation ago, and they face them all in the palm of their hand," said Premier David Eby. "While cellphones, the internet and social media help us connect with each other, they also present risks that can harm kids. The impact and influence of these tools is so great, and the corporations so powerful, it can be overwhelming for parents. That's why we are taking action to protect kids from the threats posed by online predators and the impacts of social media companies."

The announcement includes restricting the use of cellphones in schools.

Research shows that frequent cellphone interruption in the classroom, social media platforms with addictive algorithms and predators who seek to exploit young people all present significant risks to young people. Studies have found that children's mental health and physical safety can suffer as a result of body-image distortion, cyberbullying, images shared without consent and disturbing instances of sextortion.

The Province will work with school districts to ensure all schools have policies in place by the start of the next school year to be able to restrict students' cellphone use in the classroom.

"Having cellphones in the classroom can be a distraction from the kind of focused learning we want kids to experience at school," said Rachna Singh, Minister of Education and Child Care. "There also is a time and a place for cellphones, including when they support student accessibility purposes. By learning in a safe school environment how to use their cellphones responsibly and respectfully, including when to put them away, students will be better able to develop healthy habits around technology and social media use in their everyday lives."

Since this announcement was made last school year, we have been working with both student groups and staff here at Ballenas to think ahead to what this will look like for us going forward. We have been using resources from **"Away for the Day"** which is a great tool and support: <https://www.awayfortheday.org/research>

We have collaborated with the other Qualicum District high schools to come up with draft personal digital device guidelines for the coming school year. Please see the attachment for our guidelines. We ask that you discuss these guidelines (attached) as well as our [Code of Conduct](#) at home before the start of school. We will be reviewing them with all students in our first days. We appreciate the support as we work together on this.

Sincerely,

Trish Cathrine
Principal, École Ballenas Secondary