

Management of mobile digital devices at Picnic Point High School



About the school

Picnic Point High School is a large multicultural co-educational 7-12 high school located in South West Sydney which includes three support classes. The school has approximately 1000 students (4% Indigenous and 37% Language background other than English) and 70 teaching staff. Teachers, students and the community collaborate to enhance all aspects of teaching and learning. At the same time, a culture of innovation complements the management and use of technology and devices within the school.

About the policy

The Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services policy covers student use of all digital devices and online services in school related settings. The policy supports schools to maximise the potential of digital technology, minimise the risks of harm and equip our students with the skills they need to be safe, respectful and responsible users of technology. Schools can get support to implement a procedure to comply with the policy at Student use of digital devices and online services resources.

Overview of digital technology use



Leading up to the learning from home period in 2020, the use of technology across the school was irregular. Some teachers and faculties used a variety of technology to enhance teaching and learning programs, while others' use was sporadic. Post-Covid, staff have upskilled and are developing growing confidence in their technology competencies. To support a consistent school-wide approach to technology a Bring Your Own Device program will begin for year 7 in 2021.

Approach to the use and management of mobile digital devices

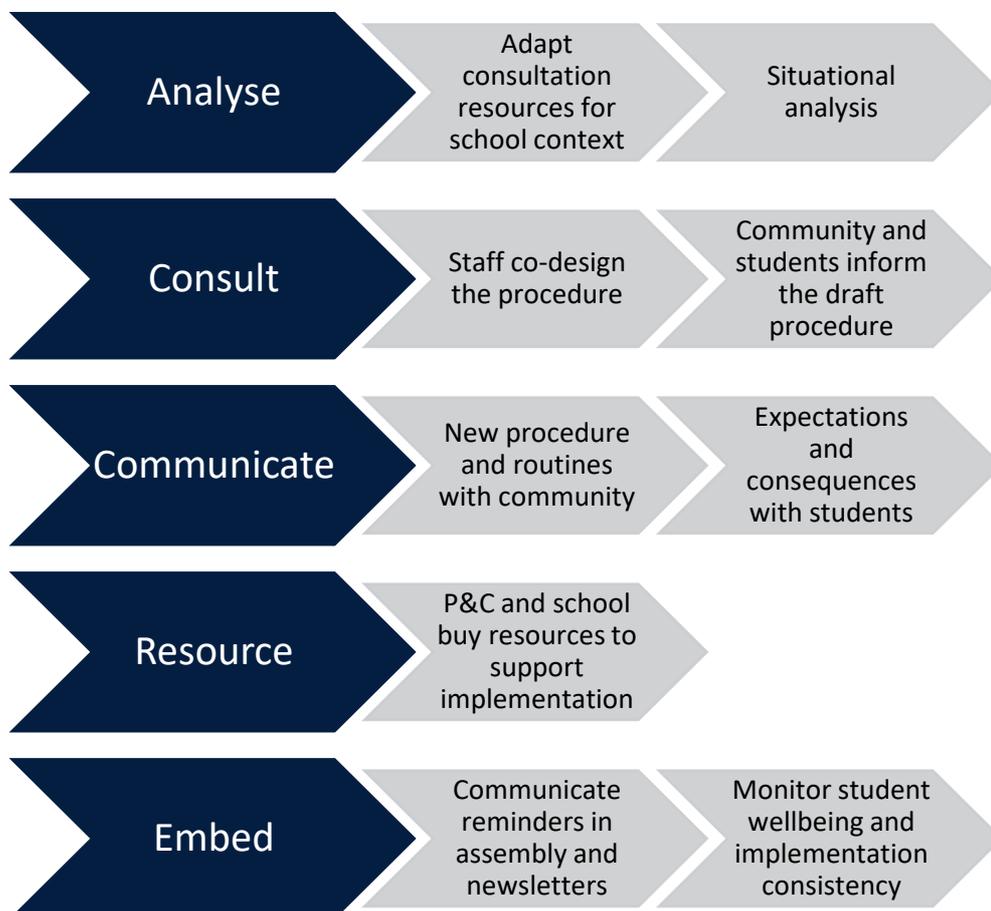
The Picnic Point High School procedure aligns with Picnic Points' core values of respect, responsibility and participation and a 'Right Place and Right Time' approach.

Summary of restrictions

Picnic Point High School's Management of Digital Devices procedure was implemented as part of the new Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Services policy. Phones are in bags during lessons unless used as a learning tool which is at the teacher's discretion. Exemptions to phone use during class apply to some students with Individual Learning Plans to support their access to learning. Students can use their phones during breaks

except on Technology Free Tuesdays. Parents are strongly encouraged to contact their child through the school office.

Implementation steps



How this approach was determined

The development of the new procedure came at an opportune time for Picnic Point High School. Staff were concerned with increasing cases of cyberbullying, devices used inappropriately and a lack of engagement during learning. The leadership team were committed to a community-supported procedure. However, it was also crucial that staff drive the final approach to device management as they would be leading the changes. Strategies to include staff in the decision-making process included staff discussions, the creation of a technology team, agreement on restrictions of device use in class and regularly sharing relevant information throughout development.



How the community was consulted

Community consultation, feedback on the draft procedure and implementation were conducted across the year allowing for a relatively smooth transition. The process began in term 1, 2020 with consultation of staff, students and parents via online questionnaires. Publishing and circulating surveys digitally was efficient and supported the distribution and collection of responses in a short time. The final procedure was published and shared via school assemblies, in newsletters and via emails to parents and the school's social media accounts.

Impact of the school's approach

The impact of Picnic Point High School's approach has been a staff-led and community-supported digital device management procedure in school. Ongoing mobile phone conflict among teachers and students is greatly resolved through the consistent 'Right Place and Right Time' messaging. At the same time, the community have supported the introduction of Technology Free Tuesdays to balance students' increased use of devices. Staff have embraced the whole school approach, which provides clear expectations and consequences to students and parents.

Technology Free Tuesdays have had a positive effect on school culture. The positive growth in relationships and engagement between teachers and students has been identified by all groups.

Students understand that they can only use their devices at teacher discretion for educational purposes, such as research, access digital notes, engage in extension work or access faculty-specific apps and websites. Students can also use their phones to borrow e-books from the school library or book a session with the school counsellor in their free time.



“It gives us a chance to work out the right time for ourselves.” Student

“Technology Free Tuesday has opened up the conversation about self-regulation with mobile phone usage. Students know their phone data usage and screen time stats are down on Tuesdays.” Teacher

Managing challenges

Change is challenging and solutions had to be created quickly by Picnic Point High School to ease the transition to the new procedure. To support the change students were given two terms lead time before the implementation. The P&C and school purchased equipment for student use. The Deputy Principal bought games such as cards, UNO and juggling balls as prizes to the question, ‘What can you do at recess and lunch on Tuesdays without your mobile phone?’. Students and staff were encouraged to discuss old school games that can be played without the use of technology.

Advice

“No one solution is correct, check with your community and design a solution for your context.” Staff

“Be consistent with the message and approach, make sure everyone has their say, student voice, parent voice, teacher voice.” Staff

“Provide alternatives for activities not just sport options.” Staff

“The Right Place and Right Time approach is good, it helps to provide the students with the opportunity to monitor when and where they use their phone.” Parent

“The introduction of TFT has been good, we all thought it would be hard and wouldn’t work, but it seems to be working, the kids seem happy with the different games etc.” Parent

“I believe The Right Time Right Place procedure is fair. It allows students to focus on their work.” Student

“Don’t take phones off students try to engage with them in the playground and encourage other options to be more social and active.” Student