
SENATE BILL 5346

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Lias, Harris, Shewmake, Dozier, Bateman, Christian, Frame, Hasegawa, King, Krishnadasan, Lovick, Nobles, and Salomon

Read first time 01/17/25. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to improving student outcomes by restricting
2 mobile device use by public school students; adding a new section to
3 chapter 28A.600 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that student use
6 of mobile devices in schools has had a multitude of negative effects
7 on student outcomes. Mobile devices can be a constant distraction
8 that disrupts the learning environment for all students. According to
9 a study from the London School of Economics and Political Science,
10 and as replicated by other researchers, the mere presence of a
11 smartphone by a neighboring student lowers a nonphone student's test
12 performance by about six percent.

13 (2) The legislature further finds that mobile devices can
14 increase harm to students' mental health either by recording students
15 without consent or through increased cyberbullying. Washington
16 students are still recovering from the massive effects of school
17 closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, including severe learning loss
18 and troubling trends in student mental health.

19 (3) The legislature intends to combat these effects with safer
20 and more engaging learning environments for students. While the
21 United States and nations around the world consider restricting

1 mobile devices for students, lessons can be learned from states and
2 school districts that have already implemented mobile device
3 restrictions. These lessons can be used to identify the best
4 strategies to implement a phone-free school environment with more
5 focus on academics, development of social skills, and students
6 engaging with each other. Therefore, it is the intent of the
7 legislature to restrict student use of mobile devices in public
8 schools during instructional hours using the strategy or strategies
9 recommended by the office of the superintendent of public
10 instruction, beginning in the 2026-27 school year.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.600
12 RCW to read as follows:

13 (1)(a) By December 15, 2025, and in accordance with RCW
14 43.01.036, the office of the superintendent of public instruction
15 shall report to the appropriate committees of the legislature with:

16 (i) A summary of the policies and procedures that have been
17 adopted by schools in Washington and in other states to limit student
18 mobile device use during instructional hours;

19 (ii) Recommendations for successful strategies for restricting
20 student mobile device use during instructional hours, which may
21 include limiting use: To specified time periods; to designated
22 locations; during particular activities; or by requiring students to
23 leave mobile devices at the front of the classroom or in an
24 administrative office, or to place mobile devices in a secure
25 container; and

26 (iii) Recommendations for exceptions to the student mobile device
27 restrictions. For example, exceptions could be made for certain
28 emergencies, students with certain disabilities, certain English
29 learner students, students with certain health conditions, or
30 instructional purposes.

31 (b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
32 share draft recommendations with the Washington state school
33 directors' association as soon as practicable so that the association
34 can meet the deadline for developing a model policy and procedures
35 under subsection (2) of this section.

36 (2)(a) The Washington state school directors' association shall
37 develop a model policy and procedures for restricting student mobile
38 device use during instructional hours. The model policy and

1 procedures must be informed by and aligned to the recommendations
2 contained in the report required by subsection (1) of this section.

3 (b) The model policy and procedures required by this subsection
4 (2) must be posted publicly on the website of the Washington state
5 school directors' association beginning March 15, 2026.

6 (3) (a) By the beginning of the 2026-27 school year, each school
7 district shall adopt a policy and procedures for restricting student
8 mobile device use during instructional hours. The policy and
9 procedures must be consistent with the model policy and procedures
10 developed under subsection (2) of this section.

11 (b) The policy and procedures required by this subsection (3)
12 must be shared with students and the parents and guardians of the
13 students at least annually.

14 (c) This subsection (3) governs school operation and management
15 under RCW 28A.710.040 and 28A.715.020 and applies to charter schools
16 established under chapter 28A.710 RCW and state-tribal education
17 compact schools subject to chapter 28A.715 RCW.

18 (4) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this
19 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

20 (a) "Instructional hours" has the same meaning as in RCW
21 28A.150.205.

22 (b) "Mobile device" means any personal mobile telephone or other
23 portable electronic communication device with which a user engages in
24 a call or writes or sends a message, or any device in which the user
25 plays a game or watches a video, except that such term does not
26 include school-issued devices.

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