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**HOUSE BILL 2018**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives McClintock, Couture, Waters, Rude, Reed, Cheney, Doglio, and Caldier

Prefiled 12/22/23. Read first time 01/08/24. Referred to Committee on 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.630 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.345 RCW;  
4 adding a new section to chapter 28A.320 RCW; adding a new section to  
5 chapter 28A.710 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.715 RCW;  
6 creating a new section; providing an effective date; and providing an  
7 expiration date.

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

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

17 (2) The legislature further finds that mobile devices can  
18 increase harm to students' mental health either by recording students  
19 without consent or through increased cyberbullying. Washington  
20 students are still recovering from the massive effects of school

1 closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, including severe learning loss  
2 and troubling trends in student mental health.

3 (3) The legislature intends to combat these effects with safer  
4 and more engaging learning environments for students. While the  
5 United States and nations around the world consider restricting  
6 mobile devices for students, the Washington legislature intends to  
7 explore the best strategies to implement a phone free school  
8 environment with more focus on academics, development of social  
9 skills, and students engaging with each other, through research and  
10 analysis of information collected from pilot schools. Therefore, it  
11 is the intent of the legislature to restrict student use of mobile  
12 devices in public schools during instructional hours using the  
13 strategy or strategies recommended by the office of the  
14 superintendent of public instruction, beginning in the 2027-28 school  
15 year.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.630  
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
19 study policies and procedures restricting student mobile device use  
20 during instructional hours by, among other things:

21 (a) Researching the policies and procedures that have been  
22 adopted by schools in Washington and in other states to limit student  
23 mobile device use; and

24 (b) Analyzing data and other information collected from pilot  
25 program sites, as described in subsection (2) of this section.

26 (2)(a) The office of the superintendent of public instruction  
27 must establish a two-year pilot program to study different strategies  
28 to restrict student mobile device use during instructional hours.

29 (b) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
30 select pilot sites from public schools and school districts that  
31 volunteer to implement a strategy to restrict student mobile device  
32 use during instructional hours.

33 (c) Strategies to restrict student mobile device use may include:

34 (i) Limiting use to specified time periods, designated locations,  
35 or during particular activities; and

36 (ii) Limiting use by requiring students to leave mobile devices  
37 at the front of the classroom or in an administrative office, or to  
38 place mobile devices in a secure container.

1 (d) Strategies to restrict student mobile device use may include  
2 exceptions; for example, exceptions could be made for certain  
3 emergencies, students with certain disabilities, certain English  
4 learner students, students with certain health conditions, or  
5 instructional purposes.

6 (e) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must  
7 select pilot sites with diverse site characteristics and proposals to  
8 implement a variety of strategies to restrict student mobile device  
9 use.

10 (f) At a minimum, selected pilot sites must agree to:

11 (i) Restrict student mobile device use during instructional hours  
12 for at least two years, beginning with the 2024-25 school year;

13 (ii) Survey administrators, teachers, students, and families for  
14 their perceptions of the benefits and detriments of the student  
15 mobile device restrictions; and

16 (iii) Report to the office of the superintendent of public  
17 instruction with the survey results, student outcome data, and other  
18 information related to implementing the student mobile device  
19 restrictions.

20 (g) The office of the superintendent of public instruction may  
21 distribute state and federal funds to pilot sites to support the  
22 activities required under (f) of this subsection.

23 (3) By November 1, 2026, and in accordance with RCW 43.01.036,  
24 the office of the superintendent of public instruction must report to  
25 the appropriate committees of the legislature with: (a) A summary of  
26 the research and analysis required by subsection (1) of this section;  
27 (b) recommendations for successful strategies for restricting student  
28 mobile device use during instructional hours; and (c) recommendations  
29 for exceptions to the student mobile device restrictions.

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

32 (a) "Instructional hours" has the same meaning as in RCW  
33 28A.150.205.

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

39 (5) This section expires August 1, 2027.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 3.**    A new section is added to chapter 28A.345  
2    RCW to read as follows:

3        The Washington state school directors' association shall develop  
4    a model policy and procedures for restricting student mobile device  
5    use during instructional hours as defined in RCW 28A.150.205. The  
6    model policy and procedures must be informed by and aligned to the  
7    research and recommendations contained in the report required by  
8    section 2 of this act. The model policy and procedures must be posted  
9    publicly on the association's website by February 15, 2027.

10       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 4.**    A new section is added to chapter 28A.320  
11    RCW to read as follows:

12       By the beginning of the 2027-28 school year, each school district  
13    shall adopt a policy and procedures for restricting student mobile  
14    device use during instructional hours as defined in RCW 28A.150.205.  
15    The school district policy and procedures must be consistent with the  
16    model policy and procedures developed under section 3 of this act.

17       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 5.**    A new section is added to chapter 28A.710  
18    RCW to read as follows:

19       Section 4 of this act relating to a policy and procedures for  
20    restricting student mobile device use during instructional hours as  
21    defined in RCW 28A.150.205 governs school operation and management  
22    under RCW 28A.710.040 and applies to charter schools established  
23    under this chapter.

24       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 6.**    A new section is added to chapter 28A.715  
25    RCW to read as follows:

26       Section 4 of this act relating to a policy and procedures for  
27    restricting student mobile device use during instructional hours as  
28    defined in RCW 28A.150.205 governs school operation and management  
29    under RCW 28A.715.020 and applies to state-tribal education compact  
30    schools subject to this chapter.

31       NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 7.**    Sections 3 through 6 of this act take  
32    effect July 1, 2026.

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