
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5346

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Liias, Harris, Shewmake, Dozier, Bateman, Christian, Frame, Hasegawa, King, Krishnadasan, Lovick, Nobles, and Salomon)

READ FIRST TIME 02/04/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to student use of mobile devices in public
2 schools; amending RCW 28A.650.010 and 28A.650.050; creating new
3 sections; and providing an expiration date.

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. A study from the University of
13 California, Irvine showed that it can take 20 minutes for students to
14 refocus after each phone distraction and a separate study by the pew
15 research center found that 72 percent of high school teachers in the
16 United States say that cell phone distraction is a major problem in
17 their classroom.

18 (2) The legislature further finds that mobile devices can
19 increase harm to students' mental health either by recording students
20 without consent or through increased cyberbullying. Washington
21 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 recognizes the need for students to learn how
4 to safely, ethically, responsibly, and effectively use technology
5 through digital citizenship and media literacy in schools and for
6 school policies to support best practices when it comes to the use of
7 technology.

8 (4) The legislature intends to build on this learning and help
9 public schools implement best practices by providing research on
10 student use of mobile devices and recommended best practice
11 strategies for teaching students how to use their mobile devices
12 responsibly. The legislature further intends to review information on
13 the policies and procedures that public schools are adopting
14 regarding student use of mobile devices and understand the barriers
15 that public schools experience implementing these policies and
16 procedures. The legislature will then consider the office of the
17 superintendent of public instruction's evidence-based recommendations
18 related to student mobile device use with a goal of enabling every
19 school district in Washington to implement a bell-to-bell cell phone
20 policy that is tailored to the needs of their community by 2030.

21 **Sec. 2.** RCW 28A.650.010 and 2021 c 301 s 2 are each amended to
22 read as follows:

23 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in
24 this section apply throughout this chapter.

25 (1) "Digital citizenship" includes the norms of appropriate,
26 responsible, and healthy behavior related to current technology use
27 and use of mobile devices, including digital and media literacy,
28 ethics, etiquette, and security. The term also includes the ability
29 to access, analyze, evaluate, develop, produce, and interpret media,
30 as well as internet safety and cyberbullying prevention and response.

31 (2) "Instructional hours" has the same meaning as defined in RCW
32 28A.150.205.

33 (3) "Learning device" means an internet-accessible computer,
34 tablet, or other device, with an appropriate operating system,
35 software applications, and data security, that can be used to access
36 curricula, educational web applications and websites, and learning
37 management systems, and with telecommunications capabilities
38 sufficient for videoconferencing.

1 (4) "Mobile device" means any personal mobile telephone or other
2 portable electronic communication device with which a user engages in
3 a call or writes or sends a message, or any device in which the user
4 plays a game or watches a video. "Mobile device" does not include
5 school-issued devices.

6 **Sec. 3.** RCW 28A.650.050 and 2017 c 90 s 4 are each amended to
7 read as follows:

8 (1) The office of the superintendent of public instruction shall
9 create a web-based location with links to recommended successful
10 practices and resources to support digital citizenship, media
11 literacy, and internet safety (~~for use in the 2017-18 school year.~~
12 ~~The web-based location must incorporate the information gathered by~~
13 ~~the survey in section 3, chapter 90, Laws of 2017)). The web-based
14 location must also include research on student use of mobile devices
15 and recommended best practice strategies for teaching students how to
16 use their mobile devices responsibly.~~

17 (2) Thereafter, the office of the superintendent of public
18 instruction shall continue to identify and develop additional open
19 educational resources to support digital citizenship, media literacy,
20 and internet safety in schools for the web-based location.

21 (3) Media literacy resources must consist of a balance of sources
22 and perspectives.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) By December 15, 2026, and in
24 accordance with RCW 43.01.036, the office of the superintendent of
25 public instruction shall submit an initial report to the appropriate
26 committees of the legislature with:

27 (a) A summary of the policies and procedures that have been
28 adopted by public schools in Washington and in other states limiting
29 student use of mobile devices during instructional hours; and

30 (b) A summary of the barriers that public schools have
31 experienced when implementing these policies and procedures.

32 (2) The office of the superintendent of public instruction must
33 distribute information to public schools on how to access the web-
34 based location with research and strategies related to student use of
35 mobile devices described in RCW 28A.650.050.

36 (3) By December 15, 2028, and in accordance with RCW 43.01.036,
37 the office of the superintendent of public instruction must submit a
38 final report to the appropriate committees of the legislature with:

1 (a) An updated summary of the policies and procedures that have
2 been adopted by public schools in Washington limiting student use of
3 mobile devices during instructional hours;

4 (b) An updated summary of the barriers that public schools have
5 experienced when implementing these policies and procedures; and

6 (c) Evidence-based recommendations related to student mobile
7 device use during instructional hours that support academic learning,
8 healthy social relationships and emotional well-being, and
9 recommendations for incorporating student mobile device use within
10 digital citizenship as defined in RCW 28A.650.010.

11 (4) This section expires June 30, 2029.

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