

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5346

Chapter 225, Laws of 2026

69th Legislature
2026 Regular Session

PUBLIC SCHOOLS—STUDENT USE OF MOBILE DEVICES

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 11, 2026

Passed by the Senate March 9, 2026
Yeas 43 Nays 4

DENNY HECK

President of the Senate

Passed by the House March 4, 2026
Yeas 63 Nays 34

LAURIE JINKINS

**Speaker of the House of
Representatives**

Approved March 25, 2026 11:42 AM

BOB FERGUSON

Governor of the State of Washington

CERTIFICATE

I, Sarah Bannister, Secretary of the Senate of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5346** as passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives on the dates hereon set forth.

SARAH BANNISTER

Secretary

FILED

March 25, 2026

**Secretary of State
State of Washington**

SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5346

AS AMENDED BY THE HOUSE

Passed Legislature - 2026 Regular Session

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, 28A.650.050, and 28A.320.135;
3 creating new 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, such as research commissioned
17 by the Washington association of school administrators, school
18 information research services.

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

23 (3) Media literacy resources must consist of a balance of sources
24 and perspectives.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** (1) By December 15, 2027, and in
26 accordance with RCW 43.01.036, the office of the superintendent of
27 public instruction shall submit a report to the appropriate
28 committees of the legislature with:

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

32 (b) A summary of the barriers that public schools have
33 experienced when implementing these policies and procedures;

34 (c) Evidence-based recommendations related to student mobile
35 device use during instructional hours that support academic learning,
36 healthy social relationships and emotional well-being, and
37 recommendations for incorporating student mobile device use within
38 digital citizenship as defined in RCW 28A.650.010; and

1 (d) Student input on the recommendations required by (c) of this
2 subsection (1).

3 (2) This section expires June 30, 2028.

4 **Sec. 5.** RCW 28A.320.135 and 1997 c 266 s 10 are each amended to
5 read as follows:

6 (1) School district boards of directors may adopt policies and
7 procedures that limit the possession and use of ((+1)) (a) paging
8 telecommunication devices by students that emit audible signals,
9 vibrate, display a message, or otherwise summons or delivers a
10 communication to the possessor, and ((-2) portable or cellular
11 telephones)) (b) mobile devices by students. When considering the
12 adoption of policies and procedures that limit student possession or
13 use of mobile devices during instructional hours, school district
14 boards of directors are encouraged to review recommendations provided
15 by the office of the superintendent of public instruction to the
16 legislature in accordance with section 4 of this act.

17 (2) For purposes of this section, "instructional hours" has the
18 same meaning as in RCW 28A.150.205, and "mobile device" has the same
19 meaning as in RCW 28A.650.010.

Passed by the Senate March 9, 2026.

Passed by the House March 4, 2026.

Approved by the Governor March 25, 2026.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 25, 2026.

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