
HOUSE BILL 2018

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Representative McClintock

Prefiled 12/22/23.

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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