

HOUSE BILL 26-014

By Senator(s) Stimpson
also Representative(s) Mitchell, Morton

AN ACT**CONCERNING THE USE OF PERSONAL DEVICES IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS.**

Be It Enacted by the General Assembly of the State of San Andreas:

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This bill shall be known and cited as the “Device-Free Learning Act.”

SECTION 2. LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT.

(a) The General Assembly finds that excessive use of personal electronic devices in educational settings has been shown to disrupt instruction, reduce student engagement, and negatively impact academic outcomes.

(b) Teachers and school administrators require clear and consistent policies to maintain effective classroom environments free from unnecessary distractions.

(c) Personal electronic devices, including cellular phones and similar communication devices, may interfere with student learning and social development during instructional time.

(d) Schools retain responsibility to provide appropriate educational technology necessary for instruction.

(e) It is the intent of the General Assembly to prohibit the use of personal electronic devices by students during the school day in compulsory education settings while permitting devices provided or authorized for educational purposes.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.

For purposes of this Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

(a) “Department” means the Department of Education.

(b) “Compulsory education” means public education provided to students required by law to attend school.

(c) “Personal electronic device” means any privately owned electronic device capable of communication, internet access, recording, or entertainment, including but not limited to cellular phones, smart watches, tablets, and personal gaming devices.

(d) “Educational device” means a device issued, approved, or authorized by a school or school district for instructional purposes.

(e) “Instructional time” means the period during the school day when students are engaged in scheduled classroom instruction or other educational activities directed by school personnel, excluding lunch periods, passing periods, and extracurricular activities.

SECTION 4. PROHIBITION ON PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

- (a) Beginning with the 2026–2027 academic year, students enrolled in compulsory education shall not use personal electronic devices during instructional time while on school grounds or participating in school-sponsored instructional activities, except as otherwise provided in this Act.
- (b) Personal electronic devices shall be powered off and stored in accordance with school or district policy during instructional hours.
- (c) School districts shall adopt policies governing storage procedures and enforcement consistent with this Act.
- (d) Enforcement policies adopted pursuant to this Act shall emphasize progressive discipline and shall not result in suspension, expulsion, or referral to law enforcement solely for violation of personal electronic device restrictions.
- (e) Nothing in this section shall prohibit a student from possessing a personal electronic device on school grounds, provided the device remains powered off or stored in accordance with school district policy during instructional time.
- (f) School districts shall provide written notice to students and parents or guardians regarding the policies adopted pursuant to this section prior to the start of each academic year.

SECTION 5. PERMITTED USES AND EXCEPTIONS.

- (a) This Act shall not prohibit:
- (I) The use of educational devices provided or authorized by the school for instructional purposes;
- (II) Use of personal devices as part of an approved individualized education program (IEP), Section 504 plan, or documented medical accommodation;
- (III) Use authorized by a teacher or administrator for a specific educational purpose;
- (IV) Emergency use when reasonably necessary to ensure student health, safety, or communication during an emergency situation, including school safety incidents or medical emergencies;
- (V) Reasonable communication between a student and parent or guardian outside instructional time.
- (b) School districts may establish limited exceptions for extracurricular or non-instructional periods consistent with maintaining an effective learning environment.
- (c) School districts may permit limited use of personal electronic devices during non-instructional periods, including lunch, passing periods, or before and after the instructional day, provided such use does not disrupt school operations or student safety.
- (d) Enforcement policies adopted pursuant to this Act shall emphasize progressive discipline and shall not result in suspension, expulsion, or referral to law enforcement solely for violation of personal electronic device restrictions.
- (e) Nothing in this Act shall limit the authority of a classroom teacher to authorize temporary use of a personal electronic device for instructional, research, translation, accessibility, or classroom management purposes.

(f) A student participating in career and technical education programs may use a personal electronic device when such device is reasonably necessary for coursework, certification training, or participation in workforce preparation activities.

(g) School districts may permit limited use of personal electronic devices by students in grades nine through twelve during designated non-instructional periods if authorized by local policy.

SECTION 6. IMPLEMENTATION.

(a) The Department of Education shall provide guidance to school districts regarding implementation and best practices for device-free instructional environments.

(b) School districts shall adopt or update local policies prior to the start of the 2026–2027 academic year.

(c) Nothing in this Act shall require schools to purchase additional devices beyond those already necessary for instructional purposes.

(d) School district policies implemented under this Act shall be applied in a manner that does not disproportionately impact students based on disability status, socioeconomic background, or documented educational needs.

(e) Implementation guidance issued by the Department shall include recommended practices for secure storage of personal electronic devices that minimize loss, theft, or damage and avoid financial liability for school districts.

(f) The Department of Education shall develop model policies to assist school districts in implementing device-free instructional environments while preserving flexibility for local administration.

(g) Implementation guidance issued by the Department shall include recommendations for communication protocols allowing students to contact parents or guardians during emergencies without disrupting instructional environments.

(h) School districts shall ensure that policies implemented pursuant to this Act include reasonable accommodations for students who rely on personal electronic devices for translation, accessibility tools, or assistive technology.

SECTION 7. RULEMAKING AUTHORITY.

The Department of Education may promulgate rules necessary to implement this Act.

SECTION 7.5. PROGRAM REVIEW.

(a) On or before January 15, 2028, the Department shall submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly evaluating:

(I) Effects on classroom engagement and academic performance;

(II) Student behavioral outcomes;

(III) Implementation challenges faced by school districts; and

(IV) Recommendations for statutory modification if necessary.

(b) The report required under subsection (a) of this section shall include an analysis of whether device restrictions have affected student mental health, digital literacy, or access to educational technology.

(c) The report shall also evaluate whether device-free policies have improved classroom engagement and instructional outcomes across different grade levels.