



LFC Requester: Liu

**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
BILL ANALYSIS
2025 REGULAR SESSION**

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:

Original Amendment
Correction Substitute

Date Prepared: 01/23 /25

Bill No: SB11

Agency Name and Code: PED - 924

Sponsor: Brantley

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Short Title: ANTI-DISTRACTION POLICY IN SCHOOLS

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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
\$10,000	N/A	Nonrecurring	GF

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27	FY28		
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	NFA

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	NFA

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: None.

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: Senate Bill 11 (SB11) would create a new section of the Public School Code focused on encouraging school boards and charter school governing bodies to adopt policies for schools that restrict student use of personal electronic devices during the school day. The Public Education Department (PED) is required to encourage the adoption of these policies and may reimburse a school district or charter school for the acquisition of specialized storage equipment for personal electronic devices.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

SB11 would appropriate \$10 million from the general fund to the PED for expenditure in FY 2026-2028 to reimburse schools districts and charter schools for purchasing specialized storage equipment necessary to implement an anti-distraction policy. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of the FY2028 shall revert to the general fund.

Many schools across the U.S. are opting to use magnetically sealed pouches during the day as part of anti-distraction policies. The pouches are slightly larger than the largest model of smartphone and can only be opened and closed with the use of a custom magnet. On average, these pouches cost \$25 per student. It would cost approximately \$7.6M to purchase a pouch for every child enrolled in public schools in the state.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Several districts in New Mexico have adopted their own policies regarding the use of personal electronic devices. For example, Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) has had a procedural directive in place for more than 10 years mandating the restriction of student electronic communication devices such as cell phones, smart watches, tablet computers, and digital audio players during the school day. Confiscation procedures regarding these devices are left to the discretion of individual schools within the school district. In September of 2024, the Taos school board passed a policy banning student cell phone use at Taos Middle School and Taos High School during the school day. The policy requires that all students place their phones in magnetically sealed pouches during instructional time.

Personnel from APS and Taos Municipal Schools have publicly reported the success of the restrictions, citing increased student engagement and the potential for decreased disciplinary actions within schools ([KRQE, 2024](#); [Taos News, 2024](#)).

In studies conducted nationwide, restricting the use of devices has been shown to support anti-bullying efforts and promote social-emotional health amongst students. In 2023, nine in 10 public schools reported occurrences of cyberbullying among their students during the school year ([KFF Research Study, 2024](#)). By limiting opportunities for students to access devices and engage in unmonitored online interactions during school hours, schools can reduce incidents of harassment.

Furthermore, student device usage during instruction time is seen as a major barrier to student learning and achievement. Seventy-two percent of high school teachers and 33 percent of middle

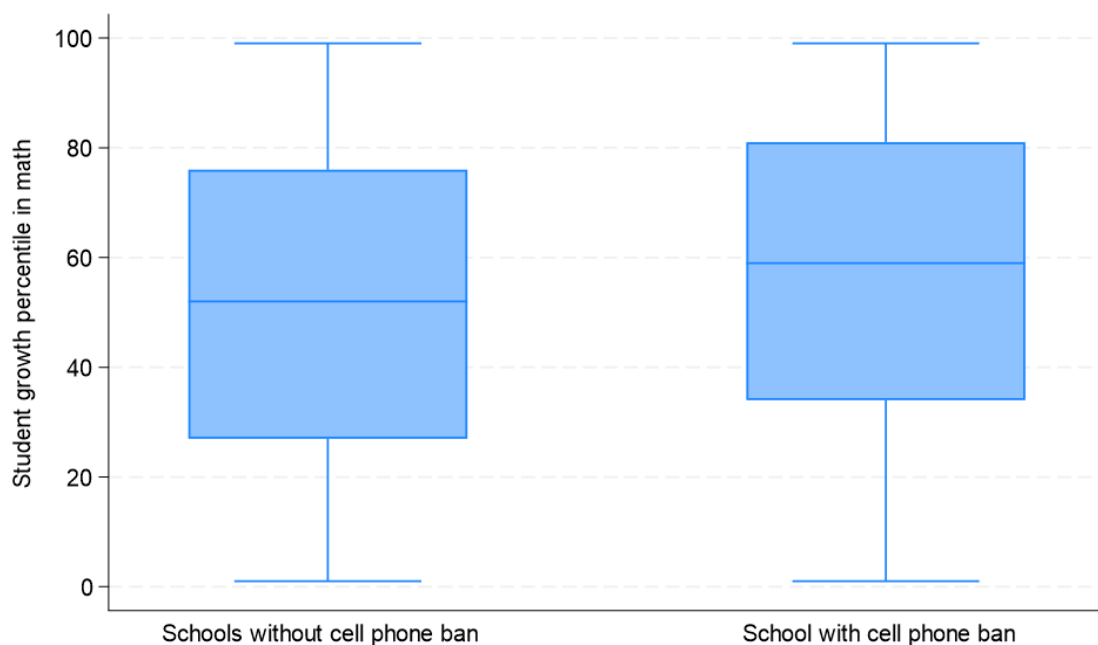
school teachers saw student cell phone distraction as a major problem in the classroom ([Pew Research Study, 2022](#)). By setting restrictions on device usage, schools aim to create a focused learning environment and enhance student engagement and academic performance.

While a majority of American adults are in favor of student cell phone restrictions, concerns about negative impacts that restrictions would have on school safety consistently arise. Among adults who oppose cell phone restrictions in schools, 60 percent cited that their opposition was due to concerns parents have about their ability to reach their child ([Pew Research Study, 2024](#)). Restricting phone access might limit students' ability to quickly contact family or emergency services, creating potential safety risks.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

In addition to the potential for increasing mental health outcomes and decreasing behavioral incidents, a 2024 study of a middle school in New Mexico that restricted the use of cell phones illustrates the potential for increased academic outcomes, particularly in math. The school showed higher results on mathematics examinations than other middle schools in the district (see, Figure 1, below).

Figure 1. Results of student growth percentile (SGP) for math assessments



ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

If enacted, SB11 would require the PED to encourage districts and schools to adopt anti-distraction policies aimed at minimizing the use of personal electronic devices. This could involve providing guidance and resources to help districts develop and implement effective policies, offering professional development, and creating model policies that districts can adapt to their unique needs. Because the bill permits reimbursement of potential expenses by school districts and charter schools, the department would likely have to promulgate rules for the review, approval, and reimbursement of funds expended for storage equipment.

If districts choose to adopt anti-distraction policies, this decision may incur additional responsibilities for school leadership and educators. These individuals may be tasked with implementing and enforcing the policies to ensure compliance. This could involve developing training programs, monitoring adherence, and addressing violations.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to SB160, which proposes a new section of the Public School Code to require PED to issue guidelines outlining minimum requirements for wireless communication device policies, which the bill would require all school districts and charter schools to adopt by August 1, 2025. Such policies are to include a prohibition from using devices during instructional hours.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The bill directs PED to “encourage the adoption of anti-distraction policies,” without further describing what form such “encouragement” should take. Additionally, the bill merely permits the department to reimburse school districts and charter schools for their purchase of specialized electronic device storage equipment, raising the possibility of a significant investment by school districts or charter schools that may not be reimbursed.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The Education Commission of the States, a non-profit and non-partisan organization, [reported](#) in October 2024 that a few states directly address the use of cell phones in classrooms. Below are examples of eight enacted state policies on cell phone possession or use in schools.

- **Alabama:** In February, the state board passed [a resolution](#) strongly encouraging local boards to adopt a policy limiting cell phone use while on school property.
- **California:** Enacted in 2019, [A.B. 272](#) authorizes the governing body of a school district, a county office of education or a charter school to adopt a policy limiting or prohibiting student use of smartphones while students are on school grounds. Students may use cell phones in case of an emergency with employee permission or when allowed through an individualized education plan.
- **Florida:** Enacted in 2023, [H.B. 379](#) prohibits students from using cell phones during instructional time and requires teachers to designate an area for cell phones during instructional time.
- **Indiana:** Enacted earlier this year, [S.B. 185](#) requires public schools, including charter schools, to adopt, implement and publish a wireless communication device policy that regulates student use of a wireless communication device, including cell phones, tablets, laptops and gaming devices.
- **Kentucky:** [Rev. Stat. Ann. § 158.165](#) requires the board of education of each school district to develop a policy regarding the possession and use of cell phones by students while on school property or while attending a school-sponsored event. The policy is to be included in the district’s standards of student conduct.
- **Ohio:** [H.B. 250](#) (enacted, 2024) requires school districts to adopt a cell phone policy that seeks to limit cell phone use during school hours.
- **South Carolina:** [Code Ann. Regs. 43-279 \(IV\)\(A\)\(2\)\(i\)](#) establishes minimum standards for student conduct that school districts must address in their local student conduct policy. Among the activities and behaviors identified is the possession of cell phones in schools.

Consequences for cell phone misuse, as defined by the district, can range from a verbal reprimand to consequences in coordination with local authorities depending on the specific school policy.

- **Virginia:** In early July 2024, Gov. Glen Youngkin issued [an executive order](#) (EO-33) directing the department of education to draft guidance for schools to adopt policies that would establish cell phone-free education. The guidance must include processes for parents to communicate with their children for reasons such as “forgotten items and changes in pick-up times, as well as protocols for students with medical needs to access their devices and for emergency communication.”

ALTERNATIVES

None.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

None.

AMENDMENTS

None.