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MARIANA D. PADILLA
SECRETARY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

June 4, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
FROM: Mariana D. Padilla, Secretary of Public Education
RE: Guidance on Senate Bill 11, Anti-Distracted Policy in Schools

Senate Bill 11, Anti-Distracted Policy in Schools, from the 2025 Legislative Session, was signed by Governor Lujan Grisham and took effect June 20, 2025. The [legislation](#) requires that each school district and charter school adopt and implement a wireless communication device policy and that the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) issue guidelines outlining the minimum requirements for a wireless communication device policy. This memorandum serves as the required PED guidance in accordance with the bill.

Background

Because of the increasing prevalence of wireless communication devices in schools, the importance of recognizing and ensuring that students have access to safe, high-quality education without disruptions is key. Schools across the country have seen success from policies restricting the use of cellphones and other wireless communication devices during instructional hours. In studies conducted nationwide, restricting the use of these 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. By limiting opportunities for students to access devices and engage in unmonitored online interactions during school hours, schools can reduce incidents of harassment.

Witness Gregory Frostad

Exhibit

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Shanon R. Myers, CCR #275

Nov 05, 2025

Student device usage during instruction time is also 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. By setting restrictions on device usage, the aim is to create a focused learning environment and enhance student engagement and academic performance.

Effective wireless communication device policy has been shown to improve academic outcomes and social wellbeing. In a [meta-analysis of several studies](#) on cell phone bans in schools, results show a positive effect on academic outcomes and a pronounced improvement on social well-being. In New Mexico, existing wireless communication device policies have helped to create a safer learning environment for students in line with other research. These existing policies have shown to increase academic achievement for New Mexican students and preliminary internal data shows an increase of 5 student growth percentile scores on average for students in a middle school with wireless communication device restrictions.

Policy Requirements and Recommendations

A key provision of the legislation is that by August 1, 2025, each school district and charter school will adopt and implement a wireless communication device policy and publish the policy to the school district's or charter school's website.

To implement SB11, school districts and charter schools will:

- Update school district or charter school policies to include a wireless communication device policy if one does not currently exist.
- Inform school administrators, faculty, and staff of the new policy.
- Communicate any changes to students and families.
- Publish the wireless communication device policy on the school district's or charter school's website.

Minimum requirements for the wireless communication device policy include:

- Having a definition for a wireless communication device that is at least as inclusive as the statutory definition provided here:
 - A portable electronic device capable of transmitting voice, text or data, including a:
 - (1) cellular phone, smartphone or smartwatch;
 - (2) tablet computer;
 - (3) laptop computer; or
 - (4) gaming device.
- Providing exemptions for students to use wireless communication devices during instructional hours, for:
 - Medical necessities,
 - Emergencies, and
 - Accommodations as prescribed by an individualized education plan, or a section 504 plan
- Providing annual and developmentally appropriate digital citizenship instruction for students in kindergarten through grade 12, with topics to include, at a minimum, the effects of screen time on children and risks associated with social media.

Recommended policies for effective implementation include:

- prohibiting a student from using a wireless communication device during instructional hours;
- authorizing a teacher to permit a student to use a wireless communication device for educational purposes during instructional hours;
- providing protections for student privacy and confidentiality related to the permissible use of a wireless communication device at school;
- providing for the permissible use of a wireless communication device during non-instructional hours; and
- providing for consequences for violation of the wireless communication device policy.

A sample wireless communication device policy is provided in Appendix A of this memorandum.

Submission of Wireless Communication Device Policies

Please submit wireless communication device policies to safe.healthyschools@ped.nm.gov by August 31, 2025.

Talking Points for Parents and Families

The following talking points may be used when messaging families about wireless communication device policies.

Safer Learning Environment

- Policies help reduce cyberbullying and promote an academic focus during class.
- Students are less distracted, leading to stronger engagement in learning.

Improved Academic Performance

- Research shows that limiting phone use boosts attention and achievement.
- New Mexico schools have already seen positive outcomes with similar policies.

Exceptions for Health Needs

- Students can still access their devices as related to a medical necessity, an accommodation for a disability, or an individualized education program.
- Assistive technologies (text-to-speech, speech-to-text) are fully supported.

Consistent Communication Access

- Parents and families can contact the school to reach their children during school hours.

MDP/gf/dt

Cc: Gregory Frostad, Assistant Secretary of Policy and Technology
Denise Terrazas, Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs

APPENDIX A Sample Policy

Responsible Entity: _____ Board of Education

USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES BY STUDENTS

I. PURPOSE

To implement the policy of the Board of Education with regard to the use of all wireless communication devices by all students.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Wireless Communication Device* (WCD) means a portable electronic device capable of transmitting voice, text or data, including a: cellular phone, smartphone, or smartwatch; tablet computer; laptop computer; or gaming device.

III. GUIDELINES

- A. Students are prohibited from using a wireless communication device during instructional hours.
- B. The prohibition against student use of WCDs during instructional hours shall not apply:
1. if a teacher permits student use of a wireless communication device for educational purposes,
 2. for a medical necessity,
 3. as an identified accommodation in an individualized education plan or section 504 plan for a student with a disability.
- C. Schools shall provide annual and developmentally appropriate digital citizenship instruction to students in kindergarten through grade 12, with topics to include, at a minimum, the effects of screen time on children and risks associated with social media.
- D. Each school principal, or his or her designee, shall monitor student violations of the WCD policy.

IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This regulation shall take effect on August 1, 2025.

Signatory

Date Approved

