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**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**  
**BILL ANALYSIS**  
**57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025**

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>SB11</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Brantley</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.228845.1</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>Anti-Distracted Policy in Schools</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Davalos</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>1/27/2025</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

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## BILL SUMMARY

### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 11 (SB11) would amend current law on Local School Boards (Chapter 22, Article 5 NMSA 1978) to define “anti-distracted policy.” This policy would allow local school boards and charter school governing bodies to voluntarily adopt measures restricting student use of personal electronic devices during the school day.

Additionally, SB11 directs the Public Education Department (PED) to encourage local school boards and charter school governing bodies to implement anti-distracted policies. To support this initiative, the bill includes an appropriation of \$10 million to provide schools with specialized storage equipment for securing students’ electronic devices.

## FISCAL IMPACT

The bill appropriates \$10 million from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY26 through FY28. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY28 shall revert to the general fund.

PED would be directed to use these funds to reimburse school districts and charter schools for purchasing specialized storage equipment. Managing the reimbursement program may add administrative tasks for PED. PED must ensure effective use of allocated funds and monitor reimbursement claims. School districts and charter schools would need to provide the initial funding for purchasing specialized storage equipment as PED would reimburse schools for their purchase.

## SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

**Effects of Electronic Devices in Schools.** The widespread availability of digital devices among students reshapes their daily lives and educational experiences. According to a 2022 [survey](#) from the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan and nonadvocacy fact tank, most teenagers now have access to electronic devices: 95 percent own smartphones, 90 percent have desktop or laptop

computers, and 80 percent have gaming consoles. Additionally, the number of teens using the internet daily has increased from 92 percent in 2014 to 97 percent in 2022. Notably, the proportion of teens who report being online “almost constantly” has nearly doubled, increasing from 24 percent in 2014 to 46 percent in 2022.

According to Pew Research Center, smartphone ownership among teens aged 13 to 17 also surged, with a 22 percentage point increase since 2014, reaching 95 percent in 2022 compared with 73 percent in 2014. Many teenagers [reported](#) smartphones offer more benefits than drawbacks, highlighting their role in fostering creativity, inspiring new hobbies, and aiding academic success. However, a significant number of teens also acknowledged the adverse effects of smartphones on social skills, with many finding it more challenging to form healthy friendships.

Since smartphones serve as platforms for social media apps frequently used by teenagers, understanding their broader impact is crucial. For instance, the American Psychological Association (APA), the United States primary professional psychology organization, released a [report](#) in April 2024 addressing the influence of social media on children. [Research](#) from 2022 further underscores the challenges associated with technology use, showing excessive or problematic usage among secondary school students correlates with lower academic performance and reduced feelings of school connectedness.

According to [ExcelinEd](#), a non-profit organization focused on student-centered policies, [data](#) from the International Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows a clear correlation between electronic distractions and academic performance. Specifically, students who spend more leisure time on devices and social media, especially during school hours, tend to perform lower in math. ExcelinEd notes the use of cell phones in classrooms undermines the learning environment, contributing to decreased academic performance and increased classroom distractions, with low-income students disproportionately impacted.

Further reporting from [EducationWeek](#), a nonprofit news organization covering kindergarten through 12th (K-12) grade education, corroborates these findings. Reporting on the same data, the publication indicated approximately two-thirds of U.S. students admit to being distracted by digital devices during school hours, while 54 percent report being distracted by classmates using these resources. Teachers share similar concerns, with many emphasizing the detrimental effects of cell phones on student attention and their social emotional development.

A [survey](#) conducted in 2023 by Pew Research Center found 33 percent of U.S. public K-12 teachers identify students’ distraction due to cell phone use as a major classroom issue. The problem is more pronounced in high schools, where 72 percent of teachers report significant disruptions, compared with 33 percent in middle school and 6 percent in elementary schools.

Concerns extend beyond academic performance to student mental health. According to a [report](#) by the National Education Association (NEA), a nonprofit educational advocacy organization, over 90 percent of educators believe student mental health is a critical issue in their school. Many educators note an increase in mental health concerns in recent years, attributing this increase to factors such as social media, excessive use of personal devices, and insufficient mental health resources in schools.

**In-School Personal Device Restrictions.** The majority of educators strongly support policies limiting personal device use in schools. According to NEA, 90 percent of its members advocate restricting cell phones and personal devices during instructional time. Additionally, 83 percent

favor a full-day ban on personal devices, allowing exceptions only for essential needs such as medical or assistive technology.

Data from a 2022 survey on safety and security measures by the [National Center for Education Statistics \(NCES\)](#), a statistical agency of the U.S. Department of Education, further highlights this trend. The survey found that over 76 percent of schools nationwide have implemented policies prohibiting non-academic use of cell phones or smartphones during school hours.

**Policies on Personal Electronic Devices in New Mexico Schools.** Many school districts and individual schools in New Mexico have implemented policies restricting personal electronic devices during school hours to minimize distractions and enhance the learning environment. Notable examples include:

- **Albuquerque Public Schools:** The [Student Acceptable Use of Technology Policy](#) allows students to possess devices but requires them to be powered off and out of sight during school hours and activities. Schools may adopt additional internal procedures for stricter regulation.
- **Santa Fe Public Schools:** The [Wireless Communication Device Policy](#) prohibits personal devices at all school levels, with limited exceptions for middle and high school students at specific times. While the policy has not been amended since 2013, Superintendent Hilario Chavez announced plans to revamp it in [August 2024](#).
- **Las Cruces Public Schools:** Board of Education [policy](#) permits students to possess devices on school property and at events but imposes restrictions that vary by grade level.
- **Ruidoso High School:** The 2022-2023 [Student Handbook](#) mandates devices be silenced or powered off and stored in the student’s backpacks, pockets, or purses during school hours. Use is allowed before school, at lunch, or after school.
- **Hobbs Middle School:** The 2023-2024 [Handbook](#) prohibits device use during the school day and requires devices to remain off and out of sight.

**National Context.** As of 2024, several states have enacted legislation regulating the use of cell phones and personal devices in schools. These measures are designed to minimize distractions and improve student focus during the school day. **Figure 1. State Policies Regarding Cell Phones in Schools** below illustrates the states that have implemented restrictions on personal electronic devices in schools and the severity of these measures.

**Figure 1. State Policies Regarding Cell Phones in Schools**

Incentives Policy	Policy Recommended	Policy Required	Statewide Restriction
Arkansas	Alabama	California	Florida
Delaware	Alaska	Indiana	Louisiana
Idaho	Connecticut	Kentucky	South Carolina
Pennsylvania	Kansas	Minnesota	
	Oklahoma	Ohio	
	Oregon	Virginia	
	Washington		

Source: ExcelinEd, Education Commission of the States, and Education Week

## ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

**PED.** Managing the reimbursement program for specialized storage equipment may add administrative tasks for PED. PED must ensure effective use of allocated funds and monitor reimbursement claims. PED may need to develop guidelines or policies for implementing anti-distraction measures and using the storage equipment.

**School Districts and Charter Schools.** Schools may need to develop and enforce anti-distraction policies, potentially leading to increased accountability for students and staff. New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA) noted SB11 lacks measurable outcomes to evaluate the success of anti-distraction policies in enhancing academic success and student well-being.

#### **OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

**Federal Legislative Efforts.** In November 2023, U.S. Senators Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) and Tim Kaine (D-Va.) introduced [Senate Bill 3266, the Focus on Learning Act](#). This proposed legislation aimed to mandate that the federal Department of Education and the federal Department of Health and Human Services study and report on the effects of cell phone use on various aspects of student life, including academic performance, engagement, mental health, behavior, classroom instruction, and school climate. This bill ultimately failed to pass.

#### **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files
- Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD)
- New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA)

**ND/clh/mca/jkh**