By:  Parker, et al. (Senate Sponsor - Taylor) H.B. No. 3489

(In the Senate - Received from the House May 12, 2021; May 13, 2021, read first time and referred to Committee on Education; May 19, 2021, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 11, Nays 0; May 19, 2021, sent to printer.)

COMMITTEE VOTE

                    Yea Nay Absent  PNV

Taylor            X

Lucio                X

Bettencourt          X

Hall                 X

Hughes               X

Menéndez             X

Paxton               X

Perry                X

Powell               X

Schwertner           X

West                 X

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to development of guidelines for the use of digital devices in public schools and a school district or open-enrollment charter school policy for the effective integration of those devices.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Subchapter A, Chapter 38, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 38.0231 to read as follows:

Sec. 38.0231.  GUIDELINES FOR USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES. (a) The agency, in consultation with the Health and Human Services Commission, shall develop and distribute model health and safety guidelines that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools may use to determine best practices for the effective integration of digital devices in public schools. The guidelines must:

(1)  be based on evidence-based studies and practices;

(2)  consider the needs of students with intellectual or physical disabilities;

(3)  consider the potential costs of implementation of the guidelines and affordable ways to reduce the hazards associated with the extended use of digital devices; and

(4)  address:

(A)  digital device use for varying age ranges and developmental levels;

(B)  the amount of time a student spends using digital devices in the classroom;

(C)  appropriate frequency for breaks from the use of digital devices;

(D)  physical positioning of digital devices in the classroom;

(E)  the use of digital devices to complete homework assignments;

(F)  recommended total daily screen time usage for students;

(G)  recommended practices or software to block access to inappropriate content; and

(H)  recommended teacher training regarding digital device use in the classroom to ensure implementation of the best practices.

(b)  The school board of each school district or the governing body of each open-enrollment charter school shall adopt a policy for the effective integration of digital devices in the district or school. In adopting the policy, the school board or the governing body may decide whether to adopt the guidelines developed under Subsection (a) for use in the district or school.

(c)  Each school district or open-enrollment charter school that adopts the guidelines developed under Subsection (a) may implement the guidelines in a manner that best meets the district's or charter school's individual needs and the individual needs of students in the district or school, including students with intellectual or physical disabilities.

(d)  If a school district or open-enrollment charter school adopts the guidelines developed under Subsection (a), the district or charter school shall post the guidelines publicly on the district's or charter school's Internet website.

SECTION 2.  The Texas Education Agency shall develop and distribute the guidelines for the use of digital devices required under Section 38.0231, Education Code, as added by this Act, for use beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.

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