

## BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1459  
By: Campbell  
Education K-16  
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As Filed

### AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Restricting personal electronic devices, such as cell phones, in schools is increasingly recognized as a critical step toward creating distraction-free and safer learning environments. Studies have demonstrated that comprehensive cell phone restrictions lead to a reduction in bullying incidents and improvement in academic performance.

1. For example, a high school in Dallas implemented a strict cell phone ban and witnessed a 75 percent decrease in bullying and significant improvements in standardized test scores.

2. Despite the clear benefits, the absence of a statewide policy leaves school districts with inconsistent and inadequate guidelines. This lack of uniformity undermines efforts to maintain a focused educational environment and protect students online. Furthermore, increasing concerns about the negative impact of digital distractions on mental health and social interactions have prompted educators and parents to call for comprehensive solutions. Nine states have enacted statewide policies banning or restricting cellphone use in K-12 public schools.

#### Legislative Intent:

S.B. 1459 seeks to establish consistent statewide policies to restrict student possession of personal communication devices in public schools while enhancing Internet safety policies. The bill mandates that school districts and charter schools adopt uniform regulations to minimize distractions, improve classroom engagement, and protect students from cyberbullying and digital addiction. By implementing clear guidelines and monitoring policies, S.B. 1459 aims to balance technological accessibility with the need to create a secure and productive educational environment.

#### Key Provisions

Key Provision	Section Reference	Description
Policy Adoption and Public Transparency	Section 37.082	Requires school boards and charter school governing bodies to adopt written policies restricting personal communication devices during the school day, with public notice and comment.
Exemptions for Necessary Use	Section 37.082(b)	Allows exceptions for students with individualized education programs (IEP), 504 plans, or medical directives, ensuring accommodation while maintaining policy integrity.
Implementation and Monitoring	Section 37.0821	Requires each school district and charter school to establish an effective monitoring plan to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of policies, progress reporting, and alignment with best practices.
State Guidance and Model Policy	Section 37.082(e)	Directs the Texas Education Agency to develop a model policy based on current research and best practices, ensuring consistency across districts.

As proposed, S.B. 1459 amends current law relating to public school policies regarding student possession of personal communication devices and Internet safety.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 37.082, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 37.082. POSSESSION OF PERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEVICES. (a) Requires the board of trustees of a school district and the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school, subject to Subsection (b), to adopt a written policy prohibiting a student from possessing a personal communication device while on school property during the school day. Requires that the policy establish disciplinary measures to be imposed for violation of the prohibition. Deletes existing text authorizing the board of trustees of a school district to adopt a policy prohibiting a student from possessing a paging device while attending a school-sponsored or school-related activity on or off school property. Deletes existing text authorizing the policy to provide for confiscation of the paging device.

(b) Provides that in adopting the policy, the board of trustees or governing body is required to authorize the possession of certain personal communication devices and is authorized to authorize the possession of certain personal communication devices at certain times.

Deletes existing text authorizing the policy to provide for the district to take certain actions.

(c) Requires the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of an open-enrollment charter school to adopt a policy under this section at a public meeting. Requires that the notice of the meeting include the text of the proposed policy. Requires the board or governing body, before adopting the policy, to provide a reasonable period for public comment regarding the policy.

(d) Requires the board of trustees or governing body to make the policy adopted under this section publicly available on the district's or school's Internet website and provide a copy of the policy to parents or guardians of students in the district or school.

(e) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop a model policy that a school district or open-enrollment charter school may use to comply with the requirements of this section. Requires that the model policy be based on research and current best practices.

(f) Creates this subsection from existing text. Redefines "personal communication device." Deletes existing definition of "paging device."

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 37, Education Code, by adding Section 37.0821, as follows:

Sec. 37.0821. IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING. (a) Requires each school district and charter school to establish an effective monitoring plan to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of policies under this section. Requires that the plan meet certain requirements.

SECTION 3. Requires TEA, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to develop the model policy required by Section 37.082(e), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 4. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2025–2026 school year.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2025.