

DATE:	July 31, 2025
SUBJECT:	Implementation of Texas House Bill 1481 – Student Use of Personal Communication Devices on School Property
CATEGORY:	School Board Policies
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

Overview

Texas House Bill 1481, passed during the 89th Legislative Session, requires all school systems to adopt and implement a policy prohibiting the use of personal communication devices by students on school property during the school day.

Key Deadlines

The law took effect on June 20, 2025, and school systems must have a written policy in place no later than September 18, 2025.

Requirements for School Systems

- The policy must prohibit student use of personal communication devices—as defined in Texas Education Code (TEC), §37.082(d), which includes cell phones, tablets, smartwatches, and other devices capable of telecommunication or digital communication—on school property during the school day. The term does not include an electronic device provided to a student by the district or charter school.
- School systems may comply with the requirement by either:
 - Prohibiting students from bringing devices to campus, or
 - Designating a method to securely store the devices during the school day.
- The policy must include disciplinary measures for violations and may include confiscating a device. School districts may dispose of unclaimed confiscated items after providing written notice to the student’s parent or guardian at least 90 days prior to disposal
- The policy must make exceptions for student use of personal communication devices when:
 - Required to implement an individualized education program (IEP), a Section 504 plan, or similar plan
 - Authorized by a directive from a qualified physician due to documented medical need; or
 - Necessary to comply with a legal health or safety requirement or to implement the school system’s safety protocols.
- The policy must be adopted as soon as practicable but no later than September 18, 2025.

School System Guidance and Model Policy Language

To assist with consistent and effective implementation, the Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) is providing a guidance document that includes model policy language, as required under TEC, §37.082(e). This resource is designed to support local customization while ensuring compliance with statute.

- [Texas Education Agency Model Policies and Guidance for Texas School Systems](#)

School systems are encouraged to proactively communicate policy changes to families, staff, and students prior to the September 18, 2025 deadline.

Grant Funding Available for Implementation

To support school systems in complying with HB 1481, the TEA has been allocated \$20 million in state grant funding. This funding is intended to help school systems purchase secure storage solutions and implement the infrastructure necessary to enforce the personal communication device ban. The data application for this program will be available through Qualtrics on August 7, 2025.

Allowable Uses of Funds for the 2025-2026 Phone Free Schools Grant Program:

- Grant funds may only be budgeted under object codes 6200 or 6300 for costs directly related to implementing HB 1481.
 - 6200 - Professional and Contracted Services (e.g., services related to the procurement, installation, or support of secure storage systems)
 - 6300 - Consumable and Durable Supplies and Materials (e.g., secure storage pouches, cabinets, lockers, or other containment devices)
- Administrative costs are limited to the school systems restricted indirect cost rate at a maximum. The school system should minimize the use of indirect costs where applicable.

Funding Allocation Process

Step One: Priority Point Calculation

Each school system is assigned priority points based on the following criteria:

- Rural Status (3,000 or less total student enrollment): 3 points if rural, if not rural 0 points.
- Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Student Percentage (based on SC5000 data in the Title I, Part A application for funding):
 - 0 to 24.99% - 0 points
 - 25 to 49.99% - 1 point
 - 50% to 74.99% - 3 points
 - 75% and greater – 4 points
- 5-day or 4-day school week: 3 points if a 5-day school week, if a 4-day school week 0 points.

Step Two: School System Ranking

- Total priority points to rank order school systems = 10.
- School systems are ranked in descending order based on their total priority points and subsequently ranked in descending order by their Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Student Percentage.

Step Three: Funding Allocation Process

- Total available funding: \$20,000,000
- Rates of funding per pupil (based upon October 2024 PEIMS snapshot data):

- o \$12.50 per student for 65% of the total number enrolled in grades 9 to 12 in the school system.
 - o \$10 per student for 25% of the total number enrolled in grades 6 to 8 in the school system.
 - o \$7.50 per student for 10% of the total number enrolled in grades K-5 in the school system.
- Funds will be awarded in rank order, with those school systems with the highest priority score until all funding is exhausted. Partial funding may occur for the final school system that is able to receive funding based upon the rank order.
- If there is funding remaining after the allocation process, TEA will ratably increase school systems allocations until the entire amount is awarded.

Timeline and Application Process

- School systems will complete the Informal Discretionary Competitive (IDC) Data Application via Qualtrics on August 7, 2025.
- The eGrants application will be available in October 2025.

Contact Information

If you have questions related to this correspondence, please email 89th@tea.texas.gov.