

Date of Hearing:

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Darshana R. Patel, Chair
AB 302 (Bauer-Kahan) – As Amended June 30, 2026

SUBJECT: Pupil and parental communication: extracurricular activities: addictive feeds

SUMMARY: Prohibits, beginning with the 2027-28 school year, a local educational agency (LEA) from excluding students who do not use addictive feeds from extracurricular activities, and from using addictive feeds as the only means of contacting students or parents and guardians. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Prohibits, beginning with the 2027-28 school year, an LEA from excluding a student from participating in any extracurricular activity, including sports and clubs, due to the student not having or using addictive feeds.
- 2) Prohibits, beginning with the 2027-28 school year, an LEA from using addictive feeds as the only means of contacting pupils or pupils' parents or guardians.
- 3) Encourages LEAs to inform students and parents or guardians of the restrictions on addictive feed communications in a student handbook or similar document made generally available to students and their parents or guardians.
- 4) Defines addictive feed in accordance with existing law.
- 5) Defines LEA as a school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Defines addictive feed as an internet website, online service, online application, or mobile application, or a portion thereof, in which multiple pieces of media generated or shared by users are, either concurrently or sequentially, recommended, selected, or prioritized for display to a user based, in whole or in part, on information provided by the user, or otherwise associated with the user or the user's device, unless any of the following conditions are met, alone or in combination with one another:
 - a) The information is not persistently associated with the user or user's device, and does not concern the user's previous interactions with media generated or shared by others.
 - b) The information consists of search terms that are not persistently associated with the user or user's device.
 - c) The information consists of user-selected privacy or accessibility settings, technical information concerning the user's device, or device communications or signals concerning whether the user is a minor.
 - d) The user expressly and unambiguously requested the specific media or media by the author, creator, or poster of the media, or the blocking, prioritization, or deprioritization of such media, provided that the media is not recommended, selected, or prioritized for

display based, in whole or in part, on other information associated with the user or the user's device, except as otherwise permitted by this chapter and, in the case of audio or video content, is not automatically played.

- e) The media consists of direct, private communications between users.
 - f) The media recommended, selected, or prioritized for display is exclusively the next media in a preexisting sequence from the same author, creator, poster, or source and, in the case of audio or video content, is not automatically played.
 - g) The recommendation, selection, or prioritization of the media is necessary to comply with this chapter or any regulations promulgated pursuant to this chapter. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 27000.5)
- 2) Requires the governing board of a school district that serves any students in grades 7 to 12, inclusive, as a condition for the receipt of specified school funding allocations, to establish a policy regarding participation in extracurricular and cocurricular activities. (Education Code (EC) 35160.5)
 - 3) Establishes the intent of the Legislature that opportunities to participate in athletics be provided on an equitable basis to all students. (EC 49021)
 - 4) Authorizes the governing board or body of a school district, COE, or charter school to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit social media use by pupils when at a schoolsite or under the supervision and control of an employee. (EC 48901.8)
 - 5) Requires, for purposes of the Protecting Our Kids from Social Media Addiction Act, the Attorney General to adopt regulations regarding age assurance by January 1, 2027. (HSC 27006)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed non-fiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author's office, "Schools are increasingly reliant on social media and addictive feeds for communication and networking with students and families. Children are forced to join addictive platforms in order to participate in school clubs and activities that enrich their school experience. By forcing teens onto platforms which prey on them, schools are feeding into the increasing mental health crisis largely caused by social media usage. AB 302 prohibits schools from using addictive feeds as the sole form of communication with students or parents/guardians and ensures that students have access to after school clubs and activities without having to join potentially dangerous platforms."

What are addictive feeds? This bill defines addictive feeds, in accordance with existing law, as services in which media is generated and shared by users, and then displayed to a user's device based on information provided by or associated with the user.

Addictive feeds are often used by social media platforms to capture a user's attention and prolong their engagement. They commonly include features like the ability to continuously scroll

through an infinite amount of content and automatically playing new videos without a user hitting a start button. Examples of addictive feeds provided by the author's office include TikTok, Instagram, YouTube Shorts, and Snapchat.

Under AB 302, schools and their extracurricular activities would need to find alternatives to addictive feeds when contacting students and their parents or guardians. In practice, this could mean that if a school club exclusively uses Instagram to organize meetings and communicate with parents, a student who does not have Instagram could not be barred from participating, and the club would need to find an additional communication method.

How addictive feeds may be used in school communications. There is currently limited data on the extent to which schools rely on social media, which can include addictive feeds, to communicate. Generally, for matters involving an individual student, school administrators directly contact parents and guardians through traditional means of email, phone calls, or written notices sent home with students. Recently, many schools have also launched dedicated school messaging services and apps to streamline and standardize communication. Many LEAs also maintain official social media accounts and pages to share updates, school news, and general reminders with students, their families, and community members.

This bill prohibits LEAs from using addictive feeds as the *only* means of *contacting* students and their parents or guardians. It does not prohibit LEAs from utilizing platforms that use addictive feeds to continue sharing general updates with parents and community members.

Anecdotal data suggests that some school extracurriculars rely primarily on social media to communicate about meetings and events, which then places pressure on students and families to maintain social media accounts. The author's office provided the following examples of how this has occurred:

- A Southern California student was required to create an Instagram account in order to communicate with their high school baseball team. The student's parent did not approve of Instagram, but after objecting was told to start a profile on the student's behalf. This was not feasible, as the parent already worked two jobs.
- A Southern California student was required to create a Snapchat account in order to communicate with members of their high school water polo team.
- A Northern California student shared that they were removed from their student leadership position due to them not having an Instagram account.

Extracurriculars are managed at the local level, and some are primarily run and organized by students themselves. As of 2024, the Pew Research Center found that 61% of U.S. teenagers used Instagram and 55% used Snapchat, two platforms that feature addictive feeds and have allegedly been required for participation in school extracurriculars (see above). It is perhaps not surprising that students self-organizing into clubs would use these platforms to communicate with each other.

Addictive feeds and youth mental health. In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory about the effects of social media use on youth mental health. The advisory calls for urgent action by policymakers, technology companies, researchers, families, and young people to gain a better

understanding of the full impact of social media use, maximize the benefits and minimize the harms of social media platforms, and create safer, healthier online environments. The advisory stated the following:

- While social media may offer some benefits, there are ample indicators that social media can also pose a risk of harm to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.
- Children are affected by social media in different ways, including based on cultural, historical, and socio-economic factors. Among the benefits, adolescents report that social media helps them feel more accepted (58%), like they have people who can support them through tough times (67%), like they have a place to show their creative side (71%), and be more connected to what's going on in their friends' lives (80%).
- Studies have also shown a relationship between social media use and poor sleep quality, reduced sleep duration, sleep difficulties, and depression among youth.
- More research is needed to determine the full impact social media use has on nearly every teenager across the country.

According to a 2020 article in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *Is social media screen time really associated with poor adolescent mental health?*, a greater amount of time spent on social media was associated with an increased risk of self-harm, depression, and lower levels of self-esteem in girls aged 13-15. Findings were similar for weekday and weekend use.

These findings have increased public concern over children's use of social media. According to the Pew Research Center, 56% of Americans support a social media ban for children under the age of 16. However, requiring students to have and use social media addictive feeds in order to participate in school extracurriculars restricts the ability of students and families to limit their exposure to addictive feeds.

Arguments in Support. According to the organization Common Sense Media, "AB 302 seeks to ensure that no student is excluded from extracurricular activities because they do not have or use an addictive feed. Participation in sports, clubs, and enrichment activities should be based on interest and effort—not on whether a child has joined a platform designed to keep them scrolling.

The bill also prohibits schools from using addictive feeds as the only method of contacting students or parents. Families should not be required to join algorithm-driven platforms to receive essential information about their child's education, safety, or school activities. AB 302 preserves schools' ability to use social media for broad outreach while ensuring that families always have a non-addictive, accessible communication option."

Related legislation. AB 1709 (Lowenthal) of this Session prohibits social media accounts that use addictive feeds for youth under age 16 and creates an e-Safety Advisory Commission.

SB 1412 (Rubio) of this Session provides that a parent or guardian of a student has the right to communicate with their child's teacher using a two-way telephonic service or a two-way audiovisual platform if the parent or guardian is unable to attend a meeting in person with a teacher.

AB 1644 (Muratsuchi) of this Session would have prohibited the use of smartphones by students in grades kindergarten through 8th grade. AB 1644 was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 56 (Bauer-Kahan), Chapter 671, Statutes of 2025, requires, beginning on January 1, 2027, covered platforms to display to children mental health warning labels about the harms associated with social media when the child logs on to the platform and after extended use.

AB 3216 (Hoover), Chapter 500, Statutes of 2024, requires, rather than allows, a governing board of an LEA, COE, or a charter school no later than July 1, 2026, to develop, adopt, and update every five years a policy, as specified, to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones while the pupils are at a schoolsite or while the pupils are under the supervision and control of an employee of that LEA, COE, and charter school.

SB 976 (Skinner), Chapter 321, Statutes of 2024, prohibits operators of “internet-based services or applications” from providing “addictive feeds,” as those terms are defined, to minors without parental consent and from sending notifications to minors at night and during school hours without parental consent, as provided. This bill requires operators to make available to parents a series of protective measures for controlling access to and features of the platform for their children. This bill also requires reporting on data regarding children on their platforms, as specified.

SB 1283 (Stern), Chapter 891, Statutes of 2024, authorizes a school district, COE or a charter school to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit students from using social media while at a schoolsite or under the supervision and control of an employee of the school district, county COE, or charter school.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Common Sense Media
Distraction-Free Schools California
Healthier-Tech

Opposition

None on file.

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