
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 962
Author: Hoover (R)
Introduced: 9/3/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 6-0, 6/11/25
AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Laird
NO VOTE RECORDED: Gonzalez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 4/24/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Pupil safety: comprehensive school safety plans: use of smartphones

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill authorizes a prohibition on smartphone use of a student in the case of emergency or in response to a perceived threat of danger, if that circumstance is explicitly addressed in a comprehensive school safety plan.

Senate Floor Amendments of 9/3/25 resolve a chaptering out conflict with AB 1216 (Assembly Committee on Education, Chapter 88, Statutes of 2025).

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the governing board of a school district, county office of education (COE), and the governing body of charter school to develop and adopt a policy by July 1, 2026, to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones by students while they are at school or under the supervision of a school employee, and to update the policy every five years. (Education Code (EC) § 48901.7(a))
- 2) Prohibits an LEA's adopted smartphone use policy from restricting a student's use of a smartphone under any of the following circumstances:

- a) In the case of an emergency, or in response to a perceived threat of danger;
 - b) When a teacher or administrator grants permission to a student to possess or use a smartphone, subject to any reasonable limitation imposed by that teacher or administrator;
 - c) When a licensed physician and surgeon determines that the possession or use of a smartphone is necessary for the health or well-being of the student; or
 - d) When the possession or use of a smartphone is required in a student's individualized education program (IEP). (EC § 48901.7(b))
- 3) Requires each school district or COE to be responsible for the overall development of all CSSPs for its schools operating kindergarten or any of grades 1 through 12. (EC § 32281)
- 4) Requires that the CSSP include an assessment of the current status of school crime committed on school campuses and at school-related functions and identification of appropriate strategies and programs to provide or maintain a high level of school safety and address the school's procedures for complying with existing laws related to school safety, including child abuse reporting procedures; disaster procedures; an earthquake emergency procedure system; policies regarding pupils who commit specified acts that would lead to suspension or expulsion; procedures to notify teachers of dangerous pupils; a discrimination and harassment policy; the provisions of any schoolwide dress code; procedures for safe ingress and egress of pupils, parents, and school employees to and from school; a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning; and rules and procedures on school discipline. (EC § 32282)
- 5) Requires the CSSP to be submitted annually to the school district or COE for approval and requires a school district or COE to notify the California Department of Education (CDE) by October 15 of every year of any school that is not in compliance. (EC § 32288)

This bill authorizes a prohibition on smartphone use of a student in the case of emergency or in response to a perceived threat of danger, if that circumstance is explicitly addressed in a comprehensive school safety plan.

Comments

- 1) *Need for the bill.* According to the author, “AB 3216 was signed into law in 2024 requiring all schools to adopt a student smartphone policy limiting their use during the school day by July 2026. With this forthcoming requirement, there is anticipated confusion in regards to any potential conflicts between student smart phone policies and school safety plans when responding to an emergency. AB 962 would provide that unless a school’s Comprehensive Safety Plan includes language that addresses student smartphone use during a school emergency, the student smartphone access requirements set by law in 2024 must apply. Eliminating this confusion will ensure smooth coordination amongst emergency responders (police, fire, EMTs) and school officials, and further protect the collective safety of students, teachers, and administrators.”
- 2) *Comprehensive School Safety Plans.* LEAs, COEs, and charter schools serving students in grades kindergarten through 12 are required to develop and maintain a CSSP designed to address campus risks, prepare for emergencies, and create a safe, secure learning environment for students and school personnel.

The law requires designated stakeholders to annually engage in a systematic planning process to develop strategies and policies to prevent and respond to potential incidents involving emergencies, natural and other disasters, hate crimes, violence, active assailants/intruders, bullying and cyberbullying, discrimination, and harassment, child abuse and neglect, discipline, suspension and expulsion, and other safety aspects.

The law requires that each school update and adopt its CSSP by March 1 annually. Before an LEA, COE, or charter school adopts their CSSP, the schoolsite council or school safety planning committee must hold a public meeting at the schoolsite to allow members of the public to express an opinion about the school safety plan. The schoolsite council or school safety planning committee must also notify the local mayor and representatives of the following:

- a) The local school employee organization.
- b) The parent organization at the school site, including the parent-teacher association and parent-teacher clubs.

- c) Each teacher organization at the school site.
- d) The student body government.
- e) All persons who have indicated they want to be notified.

Once the public meeting has been held and the CSSP is adopted, the school must submit its CSSP to its respective LEA or COE for approval. LEAs and COEs must annually notify the CDE by October 15 of any schools that have not complied with requirements. Statute also requires the CDE to develop and post on its website best practices for reviewing and approving school safety plans.

- 3) *School smartphone use policies.* Since the passage of AB 272 (Muratsuchi, Chapter 42, Statutes of 2019), LEAs have had the explicit authorization to adopt policies to limit or prohibit student use of smartphones while they are on a schoolsite or are under the supervision of an LEA employee. Alongside this authorization, AB 272 also established circumstances under which a pupil *shall not* be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone. These circumstances are as follows:

- a) In the case of an emergency, or in response to a perceived threat of danger.
- b) When a teacher or administrator of the school district, COE, or charter school grants permission to a pupil to possess or use a smartphone, subject to any reasonable limitation imposed by that teacher or administrator.
- c) When a licensed physician and surgeon determines that the possession or use of a smartphone is necessary for the health or well-being of the pupil.
- d) When the possession or use of a smartphone is required in a pupil's IEP.

With the passage of AB 3216 (Hoover, Chapter 500, Statutes of 2024), this authorization afforded to LEAs became a requirement, thus requiring the governing boards of LEAs, to develop and adopt a smartphone use policy by July 1, 2026, and update that policy every five years thereafter.

- 4) *Mixed messaging.* This bill aims to address a point of confusion that has arisen as LEAs prepare to adopt smartphone use policies in compliance with the new

requirement. According to the bill's proponent, the Association of California School Administrators:

"The CSSP, developed in collaboration with school communities and emergency responders, often includes policy limiting student smartphone use during emergencies unless at the direction of school personnel. This is for several reasons including mitigating the spread of misinformation as well as protecting against location sharing that could inadvertently increase the risk for a student and those around them.

".. [C]urrent law related to student smartphone use policies provides some exceptions to restricting smartphone use, including in the case of an emergency, or in response to a threat of danger. Our members have expressed concerns about potential inconsistencies with their CSSP and we believe addressing the issue now will help ensure a more seamless policy adoption and revision process."

Examples of CSSP provisions that address smartphone use during emergencies include the following:

"While in the area under threat, all cell phones, beepers and hand-held radios should be turned off since many explosive devices can be triggered by radio transmissions. Bomb threat experts recommend no radio transmission within 500 feet of a device, or suspected location of a device. Use of any electronic device within the 500' restriction zone must be cleared in advance with the Incident Commander."

"In the event of an emergency, the safety and well-being of the students is the top priority. In certain emergency situations, students will be allowed access to their cell phones, and staff will ensure that students can use their devices when it is deemed safe and necessary."

"This measure (smartphone use) is intended to allow students to communicate with their families to give and receive important updates. Our staff is trained to assess emergency situations and will guide students appropriately to ensure that the use of cell phones does not interfere with safety protocols or emergency procedures."

This bill addresses this conflict by establishing that if a comprehensive school safety plan has provisions that address smartphone use during emergency

situations or incidences of perceived threats, then those provisions serve as a permitted exception to the mandated access provisions under existing law.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: No Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/3/25)

Association of California School Administrators
California Association of School Business Officials
California IT in Education
California School Nurses Organization
Small School Districts Association

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/3/25)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-0, 4/24/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Chen, Gallagher, Harabedian, Lackey

Prepared by: Therresa Austin / ED. / (916) 651-4105
9/8/25 21:29:48

**** END ****