


California School Phone Policy Overview

- **Policy:** Phone-free Schools Act [AB3216](#)
- **Status:** Enacted statewide law in 2024
- **Effective:** 2026–2027 school year
- **Applies to:** Public school districts and public school academies (charter schools)

 California adopted a statewide baseline requirement restricting student phone use during instructional time while preserving local district authority to determine implementation and enforcement.

'The goal of the policy shall be to promote evidence-based use of smartphone practices to support pupil learning and well-being.'

 **There are two sections of this document:**

(1) Key Points highlights key aspects of AB3216

(2) Aligning with The Commons App shares how The Commons supports compliance with AB3216

Key Points: Sec. 3 48901.7

1 Governing Body Policy Mandate

- 1 The governing body of a school district... no later than July 1, 2026, develop and adopt, and shall update every five years, a policy to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones while the pupils are at a schoolsite...

2 Policy Goal and Community Engagement

- 2 The goal of the policy shall be to promote evidence-based use of smartphone practices to support pupil learning and well-being.
- The development of the policy shall involve significant stakeholder participation in order to ensure that the policies are responsive to the unique needs and desires of pupils, parents, and educators in each community.

3 Exceptions for Limited Use

A pupil shall not be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone under any of the following circumstances:

- 3
- 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, county office of education, 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 individualized education program.

4 Student Privacy

- 4 This section does not authorize monitoring, collecting, or otherwise accessing any information related to a pupil's online activities.

Aligning with The Commons App

Below are the sections of AB3216 parsed out to show how The Commons aligns with each mandate.

1

Governing Body Policy Mandate

The governing body of a school district... no later than July 1, 2026, develop and adopt, and shall update every five years, a policy to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones while the pupils are at a schoolsite...

The Commons app acts as a restriction mechanism to make it easier for students and schools to comply with AB3216

2

Policy Goal and Community Engagement

The goal of the policy shall be to promote evidence-based use of smartphone practices to support pupil learning and well-being.

The development of the policy shall involve significant stakeholder participation in order to ensure that the policies are responsive to the unique needs and desires of pupils, parents, and educators in each community.

The Commons blocks distractions from all apps besides those the school whitelists for academic, medical and emergency purposes, allowing for the cellphone to remain a tool supporting evidence-based use compliant with AB3216

Review The Commons [sample policy template](#) tailored for CA schools to comply with AB3216

3

Exceptions for Limited Use

A wireless communications device policy implemented under this section must provide exemptions for all of the following:

- In the case of an emergency, or in response to a perceived threat of danger.
- When a teacher or administrator of the school district, county office of education, 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.
- 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.
- When the possession or use of a smartphone is required in a pupil's individualized education program.

The Commons blocks distractions from all apps besides those a school whitelists inline with approved use cases a-d.

4

Student Privacy

This section does not authorize monitoring, collecting, or otherwise accessing any information related to a pupil's online activities.

The Commons is designed to support schools in meeting student privacy obligations under FERPA and COPPA and aligns with principles from the NIST Cybersecurity Framework. The Commons does not collect or store student content, browsing activity, messages, or personal communications. The system only transmits limited operational telemetry required to confirm whether a device is compliant with school phone-use policies. All data transmitted between the application, backend services, and administrative dashboard is encrypted in transit using industry-standard HTTPS/TLS protocols.

- [The Commons Privacy Policy](#)