LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2026

Bill Number HM2 **Sponsor** Garratt

Tracking Number .232810.1 **Committee Referrals** HEC

Short Title Study Screen Use in Elementary Classrooms

Analyst Andrews **Original Date** 2/2/2026
Last Updated

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Memorial

House Memorial 2 (HM2) requests LESC to conduct a comprehensive study of the use of screen time for instruction and assessment in elementary classrooms, including the impacts of programs on student learning, development, and well-being.

HM2 also requests the Public Education Department (PED) to ensure required technology use in elementary classrooms is purposeful, evidence-based, equitable, and supportive of healthy child development.

FISCAL IMPACT

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Screen Time in Elementary School Classrooms. Research has revealed an association between higher total screen time and lower reading and math achievement on standardized tests in elementary school. As noted in the Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) agency analysis, the American Academy of Pediatrics does not provide a definitive recommendation regarding screen time in elementary classrooms. Rather than focusing on time, the U.S. Department of Education stresses the importance of active versus passive use of technology:

- **Active Use** involves critical thinking and includes activities such as coding, immersive simulations, media production, interaction with experts, making global connections, design, and peer collaboration.
- **Passive Use** includes activities such as filling out digital worksheet or consuming digital content without accompanying reflection, imagination, or participation.

PED's agency analysis of HM2 notes digital devices have expanded access to educational materials and instructional opportunities for students. In states with significant rural populations, such as New Mexico, access to digital instructional resources can play an important role in promoting educational equity.

Computer-Based Testing in Elementary Schools. Currently, New Mexico requires computer-based testing in elementary schools for reading, math, and science. New Mexico uses Amira's (formerly known as Istation) Indicators of Progress (ISIP) Early Reading assessment in kindergarten through second grade to track foundational reading development and inform early intervention decisions. Amira's ISIP is a web-based, computer-adaptive testing system.

New Mexico also uses the New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA) to test reading and math proficiency for grades three through eight, a computer-based, fixed-form assessment. In science, students are tested in fifth and eighth grade with the New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR), which is also a computer-based assessment. In addition, some school districts and charter schools supplement with additional interim testing, which is also web based, such as NWEA MAPS assessments for kindergarten through 12th-grade students.

Cellphones Versus Other Digital Devices. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), national data has shown the negative effects of cellphone use in schools on learning, mental health, cyberbullying, and teacher morale. However, research has also cited the potential for phones to enhance learning outcomes and serve as a line of communication in emergency situations, among other observations. NCSL notes at least 27 states and Puerto Rico have introduced legislation related to cellphone use in schools and nine states have enacted such measures since 2023. State education agencies and state boards of education in at least 11 states have acted regarding cellphone use in schools during the same period. Governors in Arkansas, Montana, Oklahoma and Virginia also have issued orders and actions to address related challenges.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Youth Time on Screens. According to an informal national survey of prekindergarten through 12th-grade teachers conducted by The New York Times in October 2025, 99 percent of teachers said their school provided devices to students to use in class. Survey results also suggest a sharp increase in schools assigning devices to students since the Covid-19 pandemic, as eight in 10 teachers said students at their school had a device assigned to them in 2025, compared with about a third who said that was the case in 2019 before the pandemic. Regarding youth time on screen in elementary classrooms, most teachers in the survey estimated that students use them for an hour or less a day.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

HM2 requests LESC to conduct a comprehensive use of screen time for instruction and assessment in elementary classrooms, including the impacts of programs on student learning, development, and well-being.

HM2 also requests PED to collaborate with families, educators, and administrators to establish developmentally appropriate guidelines for screen use in elementary classrooms. PED notes the

development of such guidelines would influence district-level instructional practices and the implementation of technology-based programs.

Administrative implications and costs are expected to be minimal for agencies requested to study issues in outlined in HM2.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD)
- Public Education Department (PED)
- Higher Education Department (HED)

MCA/clh/jkh