

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

# HOUSE BILL NO. 2978

## 103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE TERRY.

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JOSEPH ENGLER, Chief Clerk

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### AN ACT

To amend chapter 160, RSMo, by adding thereto one new section relating to the use of technology in elementary schools.

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*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:*

Section A. Chapter 160, RSMo, is amended by adding thereto one new section, to be  
2 known as section 160.068, to read as follows:

**160.068. 1. As used in this section, the following terms mean:**

2       **(1) "Digital instruction", lessons, assignments, testing, or activities delivered**  
3 **through instructional technology;**

4       **(2) "Instructional technology", a laptop, tablet, computer, Chromebook, smart**  
5 **device, software platform, or other similar device or platform used for student learning;**

6       **(3) "Manipulatives", hands-on physical learning items including, but not limited**  
7 **to, blocks, counters, cubes, rulers, cards, science materials, and similar educational**  
8 **tools;**

9       **(4) "Traditional materials", printed books, paper-based workbooks, notebooks,**  
10 **handwriting materials, and physical educational resources.**

11       **2. (1) Digital instruction for elementary school students in kindergarten through**  
12 **grade five shall not exceed forty-five minutes per student per instructional day, inclusive**  
13 **of all subjects.**

14       **(2) Instructional technology shall not replace primary instruction in:**

15       **(a) Reading and literacy;**

16       **(b) Foundational mathematics;**

17       **(c) Handwriting or cursive writing;**

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [~~thus~~] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

18           (d) Science lessons requiring physical demonstration or manipulatives; and  
19           (e) Social studies content knowledge.

20           (3) At least seventy percent of student assignments for elementary school  
21 students in kindergarten through grade five shall be completed using pen or pencil and  
22 paper including, but not limited to, dedicated handwriting practice and cursive writing  
23 tasks for students in grade two through grade five.

24           (4) Each elementary school student in kindergarten through grade five shall  
25 have daily access to printed books and printed reading materials. No elementary school  
26 shall rely exclusively on digital textbooks or digital reading platforms for elementary  
27 literacy instruction.

28           (5) Elementary school classrooms shall incorporate physical manipulatives in  
29 core mathematics and science instruction for all elementary school students in  
30 kindergarten through grade five.

31           3. (1) Beginning in grade two, all elementary schools shall provide explicit,  
32 systematic instruction in cursive handwriting including, but not limited to, letter  
33 formation, connecting strokes, and fluency.

34           (2) Instruction shall be aligned with current research showing that:

35           (a) Cursive activates neural circuits used for letter recognition, decoding, and  
36 orthographic mapping, all of which strengthens reading ability;

37           (b) Students retain and comprehend more when writing by hand due to  
38 activation of visual-motor memory centers;

39           (c) The continuous strokes of cursive writing improve reading fluency, spelling  
40 accuracy, and long-term retention;

41           (d) Cursive instruction improves phonological awareness and reinforces letter  
42 sequencing; and

43           (e) Students with dyslexia benefit from cursive through reduced letter reversals,  
44 improved letter-shape stability, and enhanced decoding pathways.

45           (3) Elementary school students shall be able to read and write legible cursive by  
46 the end of grade five.

47           (4) Cursive instruction shall not be replaced with stylus-based digital  
48 handwriting, typing programs, or tablet simulations.

49           4. For elementary school students in kindergarten through grade five,  
50 technology may be used for the following purposes, which shall not count toward the  
51 daily cap under subsection 2 of this section:

52           (1) Special-education needs documented in an individualized education  
53 program, or IEP, as such term is defined in 20 U.S.C. Section 1401, as amended, or a

54 **504 plan created under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C.**  
55 **Section 794, as amended;**

56       **(2) Assistive or adaptive technology required for student access; and**  
57       **(3) Teacher-directed demonstrations on a projector or smartboard, provided**  
58 **students are not individually using devices.**

59       **5. For elementary school students in kindergarten through grade five,**  
60 **elementary schools shall not:**

61       **(1) Assign required homework that requires the use of instructional technology;**  
62       **(2) Require elementary school students in kindergarten through grade five to**  
63 **carry devices to and from school daily;**  
64       **(3) Use technology for classroom management, behavioral tracking, or**  
65 **entertainment;**  
66       **(4) Replace library time with digital reading labs; or**  
67       **(5) Substitute cursive handwriting instruction with digital handwriting or typing**  
68 **programs.**

69       **6. (1) For elementary school students in kindergarten through grade five, each**  
70 **school district shall adopt a written technology-use policy consistent with this section**  
71 **and that establishes requirements for the following:**

72       **(a) The school's daily screen-time limits;**  
73       **(b) A list of digital platforms used;**  
74       **(c) Notice of a parent's or guardian's right to request additional screen-time**  
75 **reductions for their child; and**  
76       **(d) A description of the school's handwriting and cursive instruction plan.**  
77       **(2) Each elementary school shall notify parents and guardians annually of the**  
78 **items listed in subdivision (1) of this subsection.**

79       **7. For elementary school students in kindergarten through grade five, each**  
80 **school district shall annually report:**

81       **(1) Average daily student device-use minutes by grade;**  
82       **(2) A list of software and digital platforms used by elementary school students in**  
83 **kindergarten through grade five;**  
84       **(3) Verification that printed textbooks and physical manipulatives are provided;**  
85 **and**  
86       **(4) Verification of compliance with cursive instruction requirements including,**  
87 **but not limited to, minutes of instruction and proficiency benchmarks.**

88       **8. (1) Each elementary school shall adopt a written policy governing the**  
89 **requirements of this section.**

90       **(2) Such elementary school shall develop and design such policy to promote the**  
91 **educational interests of students and to ensure that technology supports, rather than**  
92 **supplants, foundational learning and to restore evidence-based practices of handwriting**  
93 **and cursive writing that improve literacy.**

94       **(3) Each elementary school shall publish such policy on such school's website.**

95       **9. This section shall apply for the 2027-28 school year and all subsequent school**  
96 **years.**

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