

Date of Hearing: July 1, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Darshana R. Patel, Chair

SB 1128 (Stern) – As Amended April 14, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 33-0

SUBJECT: Pupils: technology-based materials: school-issued electronic devices

SUMMARY: Prohibits local educational agencies (LEA) from requiring a pupil in kindergarten to take home a school issued electronic device. Requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop and post on its website model policies for the age-appropriate use of school-issued electronic devices in schools. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Prohibits an LEA from requiring a pupil in kindergarten, including transitional kindergarten (TK), to take home a school-issued electronic device.
 - a) Defines electronic device as a desktop or laptop computer, handheld device, tablet, smartphone, or other electronic product or device that has a platform on which to download, install, or run any software program, code, script, or other content.
- 2) Requires the CDE, on or before July 1, 2027, to develop and post on its website model policies for the age-appropriate use of school issued electronic devices in schools. Requires the CDE, in developing these model policies, to consider the following:
 - a) Developmentally appropriate screen exposure time;
 - b) Balancing pupils' use of school-issued electronic devices with direct teacher interaction; and
 - c) The impact of school-issued electronic devices on early literacy, arithmetic, and fine motor skill development.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit pupil use of social media while pupils are at a schoolsite or while the pupils are under the supervision and control of an employee or employees of that school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school. Specifies that the above authorization does not authorize the monitoring, collection, or otherwise accessing of information related to a pupil's online activities. (Education Code (EC) 48901.8)
- 2) Requires the governing body of a school district, COE, or 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. (EC 48901.7)

- 3) 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, unless explicitly addressed in a comprehensive school safety plan;
 - 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)

- 4) Defines "distance learning" to mean instruction in which the pupil and instructor are in different locations and interact through the use of computer and communications technology. States that distance learning may include video or audio instruction in which the primary mode of communication between pupil and instructor is instructional television, video, telecourses, or any other instruction that relies on computer or communications technology. States distance learning should be utilized to meet the following goals:
 - a) Equity in education, which requires that every pupil in California's public schools, and every adult in the state, have equal access to educational opportunities, regardless of where he or she lives or how small a school the pupil attends;
 - b) Quality in education, which would be enhanced through the creative application of telecommunications, as pupils are given the opportunity to interact with pupils from other cultures and geographical locations, and with outstanding educators from other educational institutions;
 - c) Diversity among educational institutions, which has been recognized in California through the support of various types of public educational institutions as well as of independent and private colleges and universities; and
 - d) Efficiency and accountability, which receive increasing emphasis as state budget resources become increasingly restricted. (EC 51865)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, "This bill could result in one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs potentially in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for LEAs to review and revise their policies on the use of school-issued electronic devices. This estimate assumes that each LEA would require several hours of personnel time to develop the policies.

The CDE may incur one-time General Fund costs in the low to mid hundreds of thousands of dollars to develop model policies on the age-appropriate use of electronic devices in schools."

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author’s office, “Innovation is our state’s greatest strength, but it should never come at the cost of our children’s fundamental development. Today, we see five year olds coming home with school issued laptops before they have even mastered the grip of a pencil. Senate Bill 1128 is a common-sense step to bring balance back to our homes and classrooms.”

Distance learning and one-to-one programs. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, several schools began adopting and implementing “one-to-one” programs that provided each student with one laptop, tablet, or mobile device, with variations across school districts and grade levels as to whether the student was able to bring the device home. When the pandemic accelerated the need for distance learning, one-to-one programs increased to ensure all students were able to continue learning through virtual classrooms. Equity concerns became important at this time, as one-to-one programs allowed all students to access their education from home regardless of whether their families could provide them with a dedicated device.

To this effect, in 2020 and 2021, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and the CDE issued several press releases announcing partnerships with companies like ASUS, Computer Discount Warehouse (CDW), Dell, Hewlett-Packard (HP), Lenovo, Samsung, Staples, Office Depot, Apple, and T-Mobile to help schools provide discounted devices to their students, as well as initiatives aimed at closing the digital divide.

In addition to these efforts, LEAs received \$5.3 billion in one-time Learning Loss Mitigation Funding (SB 820 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 110, Statutes of 2020) to support student academic achievement and mitigate learning loss related to COVID-19 school closures. The purchase of devices or connectivity tools for in-classroom and distance learning were approved uses for these funds.

While not universal, these efforts proved effective. According to data reported by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), in Spring 2020, 67.5% of California households with students reported reliable device access. By Spring 2021, this percentage had risen to 81.8%, as LEAs used available funds and partnerships to invest in student technology.

Although public education has primarily returned to in-person instruction, it is not currently clear how many public schools are continuing to implement one-to-one policies, and at which grade spans. Continuing one-to-one programs is a significant cost to districts, COEs, and charter schools, as devices need to be continually purchased for incoming students and refreshed when they become outdated or broken for older students.

Recent efforts to reduce classroom screen time. LEAs have the authority to determine whether and how to utilize technology, such as laptops, tablets, and computers, as instructional tools. Further, educators retain discretion in designing their instruction, and in most cases may choose to utilize or not utilize technology in student learning. As students advance through grade levels, the use of technology in and outside of the classroom may increase as school issued devices are used to complete assessments and homework assignments.

In response to parent concerns about the increasing ubiquity of school device use and the impacts of prolonged screen time on students, some California school districts have introduced and adopted resolutions aimed at creating stronger guidance on technology use in classrooms.

In June 2026, the governing board of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) approved a policy to limit student screen time, at home and in the classroom, and stop issuing students school devices to take home. Screen time, including time spent on homework, will be limited as follows:

- Transitional kindergarten through 1st grade: no screen time
- 2nd-3rd grade: 1 hour 40 minutes per week (~20 minutes daily)
- 4th and 5th grade: 2 hours, 30 minutes per week (30 minutes daily)
- 6th-8th grade: 6 hours per week (~1 hour 20 minutes daily)
- 9th-12th grade: 10 hours week (~2 hours daily)

In March, the Beverly Hills Unified School District (BHUSD) passed a resolution titled, *Using Technology with Intention: Establishing Guidelines for Student Screen Time*, stating intent to adopt a Screen Time Policy that, among other things, would:

- 1) Provide expected and maximum daily and weekly screen time limits for students delineated by grade level;
- 2) Reduce the use of digital devices, including one-to-one tablets, for second grade and below, except for district-mandated formative assessments;
- 3) Operationalize how parents and guardians can annually consent/opt-in for each Google application on a to-be-created Consent to Use Digital Tools form rather than submit a blanket opt-in for all applications listed, particularly for students in grades TK-8;
- 4) Provide recommendations and strategies to safely prepare students to utilize and/or create digital tools; and
- 5) Develop and share schoolwide guidance outlining best practices for reducing and monitoring student screen time—including systematic coordination among teachers—to prevent excessive cumulative screentime.

The resolution also requires BHUSD to conduct a review of all its current systems and processes, both internal and external, to determine how to regularly track and report students' time spent on devices districtwide, disaggregated by grade level, and specific online applications.

A similar resolution was recently approved unanimously by the San Diego Unified School District, which will require the development of age-appropriate device use and limit screen time outside of established timelines.

Arguments in support. According to the Alameda County Office of Education, “LEAs see firsthand the importance of balancing educational technology with student health and engagement, and family wellbeing. Establishing statewide guidance can help schools make informed decisions that support both academic success and healthy development.

California students increasingly rely on school-issued electronic devices for instruction, communication, and educational access. While these devices provide important educational opportunities, it is equally important that schools have clear guidance regarding their appropriate use, particularly for younger students and for activities that occur outside of instructional time. SB 1128 establishes a thoughtful framework that promotes student wellbeing while preserving access to educational technology and local flexibility in implementation.”

Recommended Committee Amendments. *Staff recommends* the bill be amended to:

- 1) Include the following exemptions to the prohibition on requiring TK/K students to take home electronic devices:
 - a) If the device is required in the student’s IEP;
 - b) In the case of a local or state emergency that interferes with students’ ability to attend school in person, as determined by the LEA; and
 - c) For independent study programs
- 2) Encourage LEAs to review and update their policies related to students completing homework on electronic devices, as well as providing students with school-issued devices for work completed at home, and in doing so consider the following:
 - a) Appropriate policies for each grade span;
 - b) The one-time and ongoing financial cost of providing pupils with take-home devices;
 - c) The educational benefits and risks of students completing at-home work on electronic devices rather than other methods;
 - d) The equity implications of providing or not providing all students with personal take-home devices;
 - e) The safety risks to pupils completing homework on digital devices, school-issued or otherwise, including data privacy concerns, exposure to harmful content, and developmental impacts;
 - f) The ability of the LEA to provide ongoing technological support of school-issued devices;
 - g) The ability of the LEA to monitor and control pupil activity on school-issued devices when they are used at home; and
 - h) Encourage LEAs to solicit input from currently employed teachers and school administrators, parents and guardians of enrolled pupils, enrolled pupils, and any other relevant stakeholders when conducting this review.
- 3) Require the CDE to conduct a pilot to support LEAs who elect to end their take-home device policies, and provide participating LEAs with guidance and resources that may include the following:

- a) Guidance on how to transition existing take-home devices into dedicated classroom-based devices, or how to participate in e-waste recycling or buy-back programs;
- b) Procurement pathways or grant opportunities to purchase classroom charging carts for existing devices;
- c) Model policies or examples of offline homework design for use by educators;
- d) Targeted professional development on engaging pupils through non-digital methods;
- e) Template communications to explain policy shifts for distribution to local educational staff and parents or guardians of enrolled pupils; and
- f) Template responsible use policies that define student expectations for classroom-based device care.

Related legislation. AB 1709 (Lowenthal) of the 2025-26 Session would prohibit users under 16 years of age from creating or maintaining accounts on digital platforms with addictive feeds, and establish an e-Safety Advisory Commission for implementation.

AB 2071 (Hoover) of the 2025-26 Session would require the CDE to develop a plan to expand digital wellness instruction in California public schools.

AB 3216 (Hoover), Chapter 500, Statutes of 2024, requires the governing body of a school district, COE, or a charter school to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use by its pupils of smartphones, except in specified circumstances.

SB 1283 (Stern), Chapter 891, Statutes of 2024, authorizes a school district, a county board of education, 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, COE, or charter school.

AB 272 (Muratsuchi), Chapter 42, Statutes of 2019, provides that a student shall not be prohibited from possessing or using a smartphone under specified circumstances, and authorizes governing bodies to adopt a policy to limit or prohibit the use of smartphones by students while at school.

SB 1253 (Figueroa), Chapter 253, Statutes of 2002, allows school district governing boards to regulate the possession and use of electronic signaling devices (cell phones, pagers, etc.) by pupils while on campus or attending school functions.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alameda County Office of Education
Los Angeles Unified School District
Technet

Opposition

None on file

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