

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1128 (Stern) – As Amended July 2, 2026

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill prohibits a local educational agency (LEA), beginning with the 2027-28 school year, from requiring a pupil in kindergarten, including transitional kindergarten, to take home a school-issued electronic device unless the device is (a) part of that pupil's individualized education plan (IEP), (b) used during an emergency interfering with in-person class attendance, or (c) part of an independent study program.

The bill encourages LEAs to regularly review and update their policies regarding time spent by pupils on electronic devices in the classroom and for completing homework. The bill also requires the California Department of Education (CDE), by July 1, 2027, to develop and post on its website school-issued electronic device use model policies, as prescribed.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Potential one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs possibly in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, for LEAs, cumulatively statewide, to update policies to prohibit required issuance of an electronic device to kindergarten pupils except under specified circumstances.
- 2) Ongoing annual costs to the CDE in the tens of thousands of dollars to support the development and publication of the required model policies on the age-appropriate use of school-issued electronic devices.

COMMENTS:

1) Purpose. According to the author:

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.

- 2) **Background.** With the transition to remote learning that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting proliferation of technology into the classroom, some, such as bill supporter the Informed Policy Advocates, argue that research shows detrimental effects on

young brain development associated with screen exposure. Current law provides LEAs with discretion on how to deploy technology such as laptops and tablets to their students and does not compel schools to use them as instructional tools. Further, as noted in the Assembly Committee on Education policy analysis of this bill, some school districts, such as the Beverly Hills Unified School District and San Diego Unified School District, have even established local governing board-adopted guidelines and policies for student screen time. This bill would prohibit an LEA from requiring a transitional kindergarten or kindergarten student to take home a school-issued electronic device except under specified circumstances. However, the bill does not prohibit such a student from taking home a school-issued electronic device voluntarily. The bill 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.

- 3) Related Legislation.** AB 1709 (Lowenthal), of the current legislative session, prohibits 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 1709 is pending hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2071 (Hoover), of the current legislative session, requires CDE to develop a plan to expand digital wellness instruction in California public schools. AB 2071 is pending hearing in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Analysis Prepared by: Aaron Heredia / APPR. / (916) 319-2081