

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 1128 (Stern)
As Amended August 13, 2026
Majority vote

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 curate and maintain on its website resources and guidance for the age-appropriate use of school-issued electronic devices in schools.

Major Provisions

- 1) Prohibits an LEA from requiring a pupil in kindergarten, including transitional kindergarten (TK), to take home a school-issued electronic device, except under the following conditions:
 - a) If required by a pupil's individualized education program (IEP);
 - b) In the case of a local or state emergency that interferes with the ability of a pupil to attend class in-person, as determined by the LEA;
 - c) If required as part of an independent study program, pursuant to Article 5.5 of Chapter 5 of Part 28.
- 2) Encourages LEAs to review and update their policies related to pupils' screentime, including in the classroom and when completing homework, as well as providing pupils with school-issued devices. Encourages LEAs to solicit input from specified stakeholders, and 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 ability of the LEA to provide ongoing technological support of school-issued devices;
 - d) The ability of the LEA to monitor and control pupil activity on school-issued devices when they are used at home;
 - e) The educational benefits and risks of students completing at-home work on electronic devices rather than other methods;
 - f) The equity implications of providing or not providing all students with personal take-home devices; and
 - g) 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.
- 3) Requires the CDE to maintain on its website guidance on age-appropriate screen time and electronic device use in schools, how to transition take-home school-issued devices into

dedicated classroom-based devices, and how to participate in e-waste recycling or buy-back programs. Requires the guidance to consider the following:

- a) Developmentally appropriate screen exposure time at each grade level;
- b) Balancing pupils' use of electronic devices with direct teacher interaction; and
- c) The impact of electronic devices and screen time on early literacy, arithmetic, and fine motor skill development.

COMMENTS

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.

Although public education has primarily returned to in-person instruction, it is not currently clear how many public schools continue with one-to-one policies, and at which grade spans. Maintaining 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. For example, 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. Under this policy, students in transitional kindergarten through 1st grade receive no screen time. Governing bodies at Beverly Hills Unified school District and San Diego Unified School District have also indicated plans to restrict student screen time.

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.

Arguments in Support

According to LAUSD, "Los Angeles Unified Board of Education recently passed a similar resolution restricting screen time for students in transitional kindergarten through second grade. As we continue to navigate the evolving role of technology in education, our priority remains ensuring it is used in ways that support high-quality instruction, student engagement, and overall well-being. We believe it is critical that our youngest learners have the space for human interaction and play to develop foundational cognitive and social skills."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 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.

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 33-0-7**

YES: Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Becker, Hurtado, Niello, Padilla, Stern

ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-1

YES: Patel, Hoover, Alvarez, Bonta, Castillo, Lowenthal, Pellerin, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: Garcia

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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