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Detroit Free Press

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2026 | [FREEP.COM](http://freep.com)

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Seidel: Tigers giving us a sneak preview of 2027 **SPORTS, 1C**

ANALYSIS

UNPLUGGED



Schools rethink technology use in the classroom, examine student screen time

Janice Mak
Arizona State University | THE CONVERSATION

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced in-person classroom instruction to go virtual, students suddenly needed to have their own laptops or tablets in order to interact with teachers and complete assignments.

Most states used federal pandemic funding to address the digital divide. This refers to the gap between students and families who had their own tablets, computers and high-speed internet, and those who did not.

While most schools resumed in-person classes by 2021, many of them continued to rely heavily on online platforms and apps to help their students do their work.

Today, however, more and more schools are reconsidering how technology fits into teaching and learning, with many districts establishing clearer expectations about when technology should be used, for what purpose and at what ages.

So far, as of late July, lawmakers in at least 17 states had introduced or debated legislation addressing classroom screen time or student use of digital devices. Six states had already enacted



Experts say students need to learn more than how to use a laptop or an artificial intelligence chatbot; they should also understand how data is collected and used, how AI and other computing systems work and how technology affects people and society. PHOTO AND ART BY GETTY IMAGES

For older students, technology may remain central to learning, particularly when students are using it to program, analyze data, model complex systems and critically evaluate information.

STATE AGENCIES INVOLVED

Group's missing money probed

American Arab Chamber subject of investigations

Niraj Warikoo
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

State agencies have launched investigations into alleged embezzlement and frozen some payment activity at the largest Arab American business group in Michigan, which recently fired its executive director.

Last month, on Aug. 21, the Dearborn-based American Arab Chamber of Commerce announced it terminated Bilal Hammoud, its executive director since February 2024, saying that some "funds could not be accounted for." Now, state agencies tell the Detroit Free Press they have launched investigations and reviews of some state funding for the chamber and its business incubator, Tejara, which in recent years has received millions of dollars in state money.

Hammoud was described as Tejara's CEO in a news release from Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in May 2025, when she appointed Hammoud to the Michigan Workforce Development Board. The chamber and Tejara share a similar address, but are listed as separate groups on their Form 990s, tax records show.

See **INVESTIGATIONS, Page 7A**

Company seeks to alter potash, salt mining plan

Keith Matheny
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

The company behind a \$2 billion mining project for table salt and the mineral potash proposed for Osceola and Mecosta counties near Evart is asking the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to approve changes to two proposed injection wells, and to add three additional injection wells, to dispose of its brine and other fluid wastes deep underground.

Michigan Potash & Salt Co. seeks to use solution mining — injecting brine water thousands of feet underground to dissolve potash and bring it to the surface, where it would then be dried and reconstituted. The operation would also generate marketable, table-grade salt.

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