

AI Literacy Framework for Special Education Services

Essential knowledge, skills, and ethical commitments for responsible AI use

2025 | The AI & Education Studio

Framework Overview

Artificial intelligence literacy has rapidly emerged as a critical component of education. A 2025 White House executive order established AI literacy as national policy, and as of early 2026, 28 states have published AI guidance for K–12 education.

The framework promotes human-in-the-loop use of AI tools, where technology augments but never replaces professional judgment. It is organized into four developmental levels and five domains, grounded in research from AI literacy, digital learning, and special education fields.

4

Developmental
Levels

5

Core
Domains

20+

Knowledge & Performance
Outcomes Defined

Framework Domains

Top AI literacy programs actively used in US special education

Foundational AI Concepts	K–12	Understanding how AI systems function, what they can and cannot do, and how they are embedded in educational and assistive technologies.
Ethics, Equity & Governance	K–12	Applying legal frameworks and ethical guidelines to AI use in special education, evaluating risks of bias and ensuring transparency.
AI-Augmented IEP Practice	8–12	Free. 21-module full-year curriculum for 2025–2026.
Data Literacy & Monitoring	K–12	Interpreting AI-generated data summaries, progress visualizations, and predictive analytics for student monitoring.
Communication & Advocacy	K–12	Facilitating transparent meetings with AI content and supporting families in understanding AI tools and their role.

Developmental Levels

Top AI literacy programs actively used in US special education

Level 1: Awareness	K–12	Basic understanding of what AI is and how it operates in educational tools. Recognizes AI in education and potential for biased outputs.
Level 2: Application	K–12	Guided, supervised use of AI tools for bounded tasks. Uses AI with guidance for specific tasks and checks outputs for errors.
Google AI in K–12 Education	K–12	AI embedded into instructional planning, documentation, and monitoring with attention to ethics and equity.
Level 4: Leadership	K–8	Shaping policies, mentoring colleagues, evaluating system-level impacts, and contributing to institutional governance.
Cross-Domain Alignment	K–8	Levels align with Digital Promise, ISTE, OECD, and EDUCAUSE frameworks for coherence across preparation and practice.

Domain Spotlight: Foundational Concepts & IEP Practice

Domain 1: Foundational AI Concepts

Grades: K–12 | Cost: Free

Educators develop understanding of how AI systems function, what they can and cannot do, and how they are embedded in educational and assistive technologies for students with disabilities.

Skills progress from basic conceptual knowledge to the ability to analyze claims, critique algorithms, and influence the design or selection of AI tools for inclusive learning environments.

Domain 3: AI-Augmented IEP Practice

Grades: 8–12 | Cost: Free

Full-year curriculum with 21 modules designed for weekly use during the 2025–2026 school year.

Educators use AI to help draft or refine key elements of the IEP process while verifying that AI-generated content is accurate, individualized, and legally sound.

Knowledge & Performance Outcomes

What special education service providers should know and be able to do when each domain has been addressed.

Key Knowledge & Performance Outcomes

Critical competencies across all five domains of the framework

- 1 Evaluate AI tool claims and identify when AI use is inappropriate or unsafe for students with disabilities
- 2 Apply legal and ethical guidelines to real-world decisions about AI in IEP documents and student records
- 3 Draft and revise IEP components using AI while ensuring legal and individualized accuracy
- 4 Interpret and contextualize AI-generated data flags, especially when outputs misrepresent student growth
- 5 Communicate transparently with families about when AI tools are used and how human judgment remains central
- 6 Support colleagues in developing critical data literacy and responsible AI use practices
- 7 Advocate for responsible AI use within schools and districts, contributing to policy development

Knowledge

Performance

Ethics

Advocacy

Domain Details: Concepts, Ethics & IEP Practice

Foundational AI Concepts

Knowledge: Understand how AI works in everyday education tools, recognize AI limitations with disability-related data, and know how bias manifests in AI systems.

Performance: Critically evaluate AI tool claims, identify non-inclusive tools, customize prompts for inclusive outputs, and teach AI awareness to colleagues and families.

Ethics, Equity & Governance

Knowledge: Understand legal boundaries of AI use including IDEA, Section 504, ADA, and FERPA as they apply to data collection and automated recommendations.

Performance: Apply legal and ethical guidelines to documentation decisions, reject biased AI suggestions, and communicate transparently with families about AI use.

AI-Augmented IEP Documentation

Knowledge: Understand how AI generates IEP-related text, recognize patterns of generic or biased content, and know the limits of AI in capturing student voice.

Performance: Use AI to generate draft IEP content while retaining full authorship, edit AI drafts to reflect individualized needs, and coach peers on prompt strategies.

Domain Details: Data Literacy & Communication

Data Literacy & Progress Monitoring

Knowledge: Understand how AI-generated insights are produced, recognize limitations with small or atypical datasets, and distinguish correlation from causation.

Performance: Use AI-informed data as one input among many, interpret and correct misleading AI trends, and design monitoring systems that preserve educator judgment.

Communication, Collaboration & Advocacy

Knowledge: Explain AI tools in plain language during meetings, understand family privacy concerns and mistrust, and know best practices for transparency and informed consent.

Performance: Facilitate transparent, inclusive meetings with AI content, support families in understanding AI role, and shape communication protocols and policy guidance.

Cross-Domain Integration

Knowledge: All five domains work together to ensure AI supports rather than replaces professional expertise, contextual judgment, and the legally required individualized approach.

Performance: The framework ensures coherence across K-12 and higher education, aligning with Digital Promise, ISTE, OECD, and EDUCAUSE frameworks.

Developmental Levels at a Glance

Four levels of progression in AI literacy for special education:

L1

Awareness

Recognizes AI in education tools; aware that AI can produce biased or inaccurate outputs.

L2

Application

Uses AI tools with guidance for specific tasks; checks outputs for obvious errors.

L3

Integration

Chooses and adapts AI tools to meet learner needs; explains how AI works in context.

L4

Leadership

Leads training on AI adoption; evaluates tool fit for accessibility and special education.

Implementing the Framework

Steps for building AI literacy capacity in special education:

Assess current staff awareness of AI tools used in special education and identify knowledge gaps across the five domains

Provide structured professional development aligned to the four developmental levels, starting with foundational AI concepts

Establish clear guidelines for AI use in IEP documentation, ensuring all AI-generated content is reviewed by qualified educators

Build data literacy skills so educators can critically interpret AI-generated progress monitoring insights and flags

Create feedback loops with families and colleagues to ensure transparent, inclusive AI practices across all settings

“Technology augments but never replaces professional judgment. The framework promotes human-in-the-loop use of AI tools, ensuring educators remain at the center of every decision.”

— SRI Education, CIGALE Expert Review Report (2025)

References & Sources

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Thank You

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