

What kinds of policies should we establish to set boundaries and expectations for AI use?

What the Research Says

What does the research say about policies for setting boundaries and expectations for AI use in schools? After a review of our research collection, we found that what is emphasized is that successful and ethical adoption of generative AI in schools hinges on having clear, actionable, and inclusive policies. That means that policies should do more than regulate, they must guide safe, equitable, and purpose-driven use of AI for teaching and learning. Here are a few findings from the research we reviewed.

1. Policies Must Balance Enablement with Guardrails. For example, the University of Michigan's GAIA Committee (2023) recommends policy frameworks that enable innovation while safeguarding ethical, legal, and secure AI use. Their guidance includes access control policies (who can use which tools), expectations for transparency (AI use in coursework or grading), and academic integrity frameworks that evolve with AI technologies.

2. Equity, Access, and Student Privacy Are Core Policy Pillars. For example, the ISTE Whitepaper (2024) and Center for Democracy & Technology (2024) both emphasize that bans on generative AI are often ineffective and can exacerbate inequity by limiting access for underserved students. Instead, policies should ensure equitable access to vetted AI tools, enforce data minimization and student privacy protections, and require teacher and staff training to identify and mitigate bias.

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3. AI Literacy and Professional Development Must Be Embedded.

The EDUCAUSE Horizon Report (2023) argues that without embedding AI literacy and digital responsibility into school policies, the long-term benefits of AI are unlikely to be realized. School, district, and university policies should mandate ongoing professional learning for staff, encourage student development of AI fluency and ethical use, and create safe spaces for trial, reflection, and feedback.

4. Policies Should Align with Broader Curriculum and

Assessment Strategy. Assessment is deeply affected by GenAI. According to the AI & Assessments Event Summary (2023), educational systems must develop policies that guide appropriate use of AI in formative and summative assessments, reimagine traditional assessment formats to reflect AI-integrated workflows, and define what constitutes original work in the age of AI augmentation.

5. Institutional Frameworks Help Ensure Responsible

Innovation. The Sociotechnical Safety Evaluation Framework (DeepMind, 2023) stresses that AI capabilities should be reviewed within context, involving layers of capability, human interaction, and systemic impact. Policy recommendations include ongoing risk assessments, multi-stakeholder input from teachers, students, and communities, and clear procedures for handling misuse or unexpected outcomes.

At the time of this writing several (but not all states) have developed guidance, and most recently it was stated at [UNESCO Digital Learning Week](#) that less than 10% of schools and universities have established frameworks for AI use and adoption.

An analysis of these forward thinking elements demonstrated consistency across states in the their inclusion of (1) guiding principles focused on ethical, safe, and responsible use of AI, with language about transparency, fairness, privacy, and human oversight; (2) emphasizing the need for professional learning, suggesting PD opportunities, AI literacy training, or embedded supports to help teachers navigate and model AI use; (3) the positioning of AI as a tool to support personalized learning, student agency, and in some cases, inclusion through UDL (Universal Design for Learning); (4) a strong emphasis on academic honesty, plagiarism detection, and defining appropriate vs. inappropriate use, especially in assessment contexts; and the inclusion of templates, frameworks, or suggested steps to empower districts and local education agencies (LEAs) to create their own context-specific AI use policies.

However, some states go beyond these common elements to include more forward thinking elements. Some of which include the following.

- Colorado, Washington, and Oregon emphasize equity, student well-being, and agency as design anchors for AI use.
- West Virginia, Utah, and Kentucky propose phased levels of readiness or AI integration (e.g., “emerging, developing, sustaining”).
- Connecticut, Wisconsin, and California promote cross-sector collaboration, involving families, community members, and students in shaping AI norms.
- Wisconsin and Arizona align AI with broader state digital transformation strategies, embedding AI within IT literacy and library systems.
- Washington, Indiana, and North Dakota include reflective protocols, questions, or self-assessment tools for schools and teachers.

Across Most States there were clear distinctions between generative AI, predictive AI, and acceptable tools. There were also differentiated responsibilities for administrators, teachers, students, and families. There was also fairly consistent alignment with FERPA, COPPA, and vendor vetting procedures. Lastly, AI by and large is suggested to be integrated in subjects like English, computer science, and digital citizenship.

Only a few states like Wisconsin acknowledge the role of school libraries and non-classroom learning in AI education. While states like Alabama and Georgia provide more templates or portals rather than substantive policy frameworks, leaving more up to districts. Though some states encourage stakeholder input, very few explicitly integrate student perspectives into policy co-design. Although academic integrity is heavily discussed, assessment redesign for an AI-rich world is mostly under-explored (except in places like Connecticut and North Carolina).

What a National AI and Education Policy Review Signals for the United States

There were four key themes that could be perceived as signals for national policy for AI and Education in the United States. Those include:

- Most documents aim to support innovation while managing risk.
- A values-driven approach is emerging, where AI is not just a tool, but rather an opportunity for broader educational equity and transformation.
- There is a strong bottom-up orientation, where states empower local action with adaptable resources.
- A few states are positioning themselves as national leaders, especially in linking AI to future-ready learning, well-being, and cross-sector collaboration.

Recommendations for National Alignment

In consideration of these findings and in light of more national AI initiatives emerging from the White House and others we provide the follow recommendations for national alignment to ensure a national promise to our students.

- Establish a National AI Education Framework to support coherence across states.
- Promote shared repositories of AI-aligned curricular resources, use cases, and PD tools.
- Encourage multi-stakeholder involvement, including students, in AI policy development.
- Embed AI literacy into pre-service teacher education and licensure standards.
- Invest in assessment innovation to reflect AI-era competencies like creativity, synthesis, and problem-solving.