Massachusetts Guidance for Artificial Intelligence in K–12 Education

Scan. Visit page 10 to learn more. Explore more AI in K12 Schools resources at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/ai/

AI presents exciting **opportunities** but also significant **risks** if implemented without understanding and intentionality. As with past waves of technology, the **promise of innovation** will be weighed against **equity concerns, ethical implications, and system readiness**.

Principles for Ethical AI Use

As districts adopt and integrate AI across instructional and operational settings, it is essential to ground all decisions as well as guidance and policy in **shared ethical values.** These principles reflect **Massachusetts' commitment** to a public education system that **fosters equity, transparency, trust, and human dignity.**

To help anchor local policy and guidance development, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recommends that districts adopt the following Core Principles for AI Use:

DATA PRIVACY & SECURITY

AI use complies with all relevant laws and policies related to student data, including FERPA and COPPA, and upholds strong data governance practices.

What does this look like?
Districts only approve AI tools vetted through a data privacy agreement process.

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

AI tools are explainable and understandable. Educators, students, and families deserve to know when AI is involved in learning, grading, decision-making, or access to services.

What does this look like?
Schools inform parents when AI tools are used in classrooms.

BIAS AWARENESS & MITIGATION

AI tools are critically examined for embedded bias and districts regularly assess whether certain groups are disproportionately impacted and take proactive steps to reduce harm.

What does this look like?
The procurement process for new tools includes analysis of harmful bias.

HUMAN OVERSIGHT & EDUCATOR JUDGEMENT

AI supports, but does not replace, educators. Teachers bring context, empathy, and moral reasoning that no machine can replicate.

What does this look like?
A teacher uses AI to draft personalized reading plans and adjusts recommendations based on a student's interest.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

AI is used in ways that reinforce learning with clear expectations that guide when and how students use AI tools, with an emphasis on originality, transparency, and reflection.

What does this look like?
Schools teach and encourage thoughtful integration of AI rather than penalizing use outright.

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Integrating AI into education is not a single decision or one-time rollout—it's an **ongoing change process** that requires clear priorities, stakeholder trust, professional growth, and coordinated effort across schools, departments, and communities. This is **not about selecting the right tool**—it's about building the **instructional vision**, infrastructure, relationships, and adaptive practices to **integrate AI** in ways that are **ethical, equitable, and instructionally meaningful.**

Core District Commitments

Approach **AI integration as a long-term**, multi-phase change process.
Ground guidance in a **shared understanding of AI** and treat policy and practice as living documents.

1 ADDRESSING HARMFUL BIAS AND ACCESS

AI holds the potential to advance educational equity—or to amplify existing disparities. Without intentional design and thoughtful implementation, AI systems can reproduce the very patterns of exclusion, underrepresentation, and limited access that public education seeks to dismantle.

2 LEGAL FOUNDATIONS FOR AI USE

As AI is further embedded into K-12 education, schools and districts must ensure that its use complies with legal obligations that protect students' rights. These include requirements around privacy, accessibility, data governance, and public accountability.

3 AI LITERACY: TEACHING ABOUT AI

AI is becoming a defining feature of our digital landscape. It is already shaping how we communicate, access information, and learn. As AI tools and systems increasingly influence education, schools need to do more than just introduce technology. AI literacy is critical across the entire learning community.

4 AI LITERACY: TEACHING WITH AI

AI is not just changing **what** students need to learn, it's changing **how** they can learn. Teaching with AI requires thoughtful integration of AI into classroom instruction to support personalization, accessibility, and engagement. This integration requires intentional shifts in pedagogy, assessment, and teacher practice.

5 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

AI tools are reshaping how students write, create, and engage with content. Students can generate summaries, solve problems, or draft essays, challenging long-held views about originality and authorship. This presents an opportunity to promote ethical learning by helping students reflect on their process and ownership of their learning.

6 DISTRICT OPERATIONS

AI is increasingly embedded in the tools districts use for budgeting, staffing, resource allocation, and decision-making. These tools use predictive modeling, automation, and recommendation algorithms to support leaders, and also introduce risks tied to bias, transparency, privacy, and accountability.

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Understanding Artificial Intelligence in Education

Artificial Intelligence is **no longer a future concept**; it is already **embedded** into the educational **tools and systems** used in schools. This rapid integration **offers both opportunities** and **complexities**, requiring thoughtful leadership to balance innovation with ethical considerations, equity concerns, and system readiness. **Understanding AI is crucial** as it increasingly affects multiple decisions within the educational ecosystem.

AI refers to **computer systems** that perform **tasks requiring human intelligence**, such as analyzing data, generating content, and making predictions. In education, AI can **personalize learning and streamline tasks**, but it also raises important questions about **equity, privacy, and oversight.**

PREDICTIVE

Predictive AI analyzes past data to forecast outcomes and guide decisions. In schools, it can help identify students who may need support, recommend learning pathways, and predict graduation readiness.

GENERATIVE

Generative AI produces new content such as text, images, or code. In schools, it can help students brainstorm ideas, assist teachers with lesson planning and rubrics, and generate translations for multilingual learners.

AGENTIC

Agentic AI goes beyond predicting or generating, it can act toward goals and adapt as conditions change. Emerging use in schools include AI tutors that adjust learning plans, and virtual assistants that manage schedules

AI is NOT a replacement for educators or human relationships, nor is it a perfect or self-correcting system. AI cannot fully grasp context, nuance, or ethics, and without human oversight, it is not automatically neutral or fair.

PREPARING FOR AN AI EMBEDDED FUTURE

AI is becoming an embedded, often invisible component of many educational tools. Increasingly, AI is not presented as a standalone product, but as a built-in feature shaping how platforms function. As AI is quietly influencing how information is delivered, analyzed, and assessed—it also becomes harder to monitor, govern, and explain.

IMPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT LEADERS & EDUCATORS

Education leaders should move beyond relying on products labeled as "AI tools". Focus on how tools function, the decisions they shape, and the outputs they generate.

Building AI literacy, designing for transparency, and evolving classroom practices help students and educators critically engage with AI.

Scan. Visit page 6 to learn more.
Explore more AI in K12 Schools resources at:
http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/ai/

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Implementation Framework

Integrating AI in education is an **ongoing process** that requires shared priorities, trust, and collaboration across schools and communities. **Success** depends on **aligning guidance** with classroom realities, fostering continuous learning, and engaging educators, families, policymakers, and partners to **ensure AI use remains ethical, equitable, and instructionally meaningful.**

CORE DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

- Approach AI integration as a long-term, multi-phase change process.
- Build cross-functional and inclusive leadership teams.
- Ground guidance in a shared understanding of AI and treat policy and practice as living documents.
- Involve educators, families, teachers, non-instructional staff, and students in design, implementation, and continuous improvement.
- Coordinate across departments and roles, prioritizing long-term equity and impact.

Scan. Visit page 19 to learn more.
Explore more AI in K12 Schools resources at:
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KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT TEAMS TO DISCUSS

How is your district approaching AI integration as a long-term change process?

How are different departments and leaders collaborating on AI-related decisions?

How is your district balancing policy development with practical application?

GOING DEEPER: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How is your district preparing for the unknown? What systems are in place to remain responsive to changes in AI tools and capabilities?

How is feedback gathered and used to adapt your AI strategy over time?

How will insights be collected from staff, students, and community?

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Equity and AI: Addressing Harmful Bias and Access

AI can **expand educational opportunity** but also **risk reinforcing inequities** if bias and access gaps go unaddressed. The 2024 U.S. National Educational Technology Plan highlights three key divides—access, use, and design—that shape who benefits from AI. **Ensuring equity requires** more than technical fixes; it demands **intentional design, oversight, and community voice** so AI supports all learners, not just some.

CORE DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

- Ensure equitable access
- Support inclusive design
- Center community voice
- Build equity-centered literacy
- Align with civil rights and accessibility laws
- Track and respond to equity data

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT TEAMS TO DISCUSS

How are equity goals - use, design, and access - embedded in your district's AI implementation plan?

How does community input (educators, students, and families) inform AI guidance, tool selection, or implementation decisions?

How does your AI procurement process incorporate documented bias reviews and accessibility checks?

GOING DEEPER: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How do selected AI tools support students with IEPs, multilingual learners, and those with 504 accommodations?

How are students taught to identify and critique bias in AI-generated content?

Where in your professional development for educators and staff do you address bias awareness, accessibility, and inclusive AI practices?

Scan. Visit **page 24** to learn more.
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Legal Foundations for AI Use

AI in schools **must comply** with **laws protecting student privacy, accessibility, equity, and data security**. Key frameworks include FERPA, COPPA, PPRA, Massachusetts student records regulations, IDEA, Section 504, ADA, Title VI, and Title IX. Districts must also address **data governance, procurement, copyright, and misinformation risks.** Legal compliance is not just technical—it is essential to trust, safety, and equitable use of AI in education.

CORE DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

- Ensure compliance with federal and state laws
- Conduct ongoing legal and data audits
- Integrate AI guidance into existing policies
- Empower staff with knowledge of federal and state laws
- Ensure accessibility for all students
- Establish oversight and accountability structures that provide transparency and accountability

Scan. Visit **page 29** to learn more.
Explore more AI in K12 Schools resources at:
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KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT TEAMS TO DISCUSS

How does your district identify and apply the laws that govern AI use, including FERPA, COPPA, PPRA, IDEA, Section 504, ADA, CIPA, and relevant Massachusetts laws?

How does your district regularly audit AI tools, data systems, and third-party platforms for privacy, accessibility, and data-sharing practices?

How do your vendor contracts and procurement processes address AI-specific risks and responsibilities?

GOING DEEPER: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How are your educators and school leaders are trained on legal responsibilities related to AI use?

Who in your district monitors legal and policy developments related to AI?

How does your district ensure that policies are regularly updated to reflect changes in AI capabilities and legal frameworks?

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AI Literacy: Teaching *about* AI

AI literacy is a core skill for students, educators, families, and leaders, enabling all to navigate a world shaped by AI with equity and responsibility. It combines **technical understanding with critical thinking** to recognize bias, misinformation, and ethical challenges while fostering creativity and inclusive use. Grounded in digital literacy and civic education, **AI literacy prepares learners** to manage their digital footprint, consider sustainability, and engage thoughtfully with technology, while **guiding educators and communities** to **evaluate tools, shape policy, and support transparent use.**

CORE DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

- Define AI literacy goals for all stakeholders
- Integrate AI literacy into curriculum through digital literacy
- Provide professional learning for educators and staff
- Engage students as critical thinkers and co-designers
- Involve families and community in AI awareness
- Promote ethical reflection and informed use across roles

Scan. Visit page 35 to learn more.
Explore more AI in K12 Schools resources at:
http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/ai/

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT TEAMS TO DISCUSS

Does your district use a consistent definition and framework to guide AI literacy?

How does AI literacy fit within your digital literacy integration plan for staff and students?

How is AI literacy embedded into curriculum planning in support of your overall educational vision?

GOING DEEPER: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How does AI literacy connect to your district's existing strategic planning goals and instructional strategies?

What systems are in place to support educators and non-instructional staff learning about AI with relevance to their roles?

How are families and community members invited to engage in AI literacy efforts?

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AI Literacy: Teaching *with* AI

Teaching with AI is about **thoughtfully integrating AI tools** into classroom instruction to **support personalization, accessibility, and deeper engagement**. This integration requires **intentional shifts in pedagogy**, assessment, and teacher practice where **school and district leaders** play vital roles in **creating the conditions** for effective and equitable AI use. Teaching with AI is **not about replacing educators**—it's about empowering them to facilitate rich, human-centered learning experiences in AI-enhanced environments.

CORE DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

- Align AI integration with curriculum and standards
- Promote ethical and critical use of AI
- Support universal design for learning principles
- Create equitable opportunities for student AI use
- Redesign assessment practices for an AI-rich environment
- Invest in ongoing professional learning and collaboration

Scan. Visit page 42 to learn more.
Explore more AI in K12 Schools resources at:
http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/ai/

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT TEAMS TO DISCUSS

How does your district define ***teaching with AI***? How is this aligned with academic standards, grade-level content, and learning objectives?

How does your district support teachers' learning about AI-integrated instruction?

How does your district ensure that students from all backgrounds have meaningful opportunities to learn with AI? And how are you helping students use AI thoughtfully to support inquiry, creativity, and iterative learning?

GOING DEEPER: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How does AI use in the classroom align with your district's goals for digital citizenship, academic integrity, and equity?

How does your district identify the instructional competencies needed to teach effectively with AI?

How are you supporting educators in co-designing instruction with AI for engagement, differentiation, and inclusion?

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Academic Integrity

AI tools are **reshaping how students write, create, and engage with content**, challenging long-held assumptions about **originality and authorship**. The emergence of **AI presents an opportunity** to promote ethical learning and reinforce academic integrity. As AI becomes more prevalent, **guidance will evolve** to clarify how to disclose AI use transparently. Academic integrity in the AI era requires more than rules. It **requires a shared understanding** that **rewards transparency** to move towards deeper engagement with thinking, authorship, and collaboration with AI.

CORE DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

- Define and model ethical AI use
- Create safe spaces for disclosure
- Teach academic integrity as a skill
- Redesign assessments for process and thinking
- Discourage AI detection tools
- Support educators with training and tools

Scan. Visit **page 49** to learn more.
Explore more AI in K12 Schools resources at:
http://www.doe.mass.edu/edtech/ai/

KEY QUESTIONS FOR DISTRICT TEAMS TO DISCUSS

How does your district define appropriate AI use and disclosure? For educators? For students?

How are students taught to recognize ethical boundaries and take ownership of their work when using AI?

What is your district's stance on AI detection tools?

GOING DEEPER: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

How does your district encourage open conversations and build trust-based systems that normalize responsible AI use and create a safe culture for students to disclose AI use?

How are educators supported in guiding students through ethical AI use? (e.g., resources, time, professional development)

How will your district's academic integrity policy evolve as new AI capabilities emerge, and who will ensure it is regularly reviewed?

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District Operations

AI is **increasingly embedded** in the tools that districts use for budgeting, staffing, hiring, resource allocation, and operations. These systems use predictive modeling, automation, and recommendation algorithms to support leaders—but also introduce risks related to bias, transparency, privacy, and accountability. **AI can help facilitate district operations**, but without oversight, **AI systems may reinforce inequities** in funding, hiring, or access to services. To maintain responsible use, districts may seek to **define clear oversight rules** for AI-related decisions.

CORE DISTRICT COMMITMENTS

- Ensure transparency and oversight
- Support human judgment and review
- Monitor for bias and equity risks
- Strengthen data literacy and interpretation
- Use responsible procurement practices
- Align with legal requirements and community values

BUDGETING & FINANCIAL PLANNING

How does your district support the ethical, human-directed use of AI-supported platforms for financial forecasting, budget modeling, or resource allocation?

HUMAN RESOURCES AND HIRING

Are there any AI-supported hiring or evaluation tools currently in use in your district and how do all HR decisions involve meaningful human judgement?

PROCUREMENT AND VENDOR MANAGEMENT

How do your current procurement processes account for AI? Do RFPs and purchasing decisions require vendor disclosure of where and how AI is embedded in their tools?

CROSS-CUTTING AND STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

How does your district ensure that AI use in operations reflects core values such as equity, transparency, and human-centered leadership?

Scan. Visit page 55 to learn more.
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