



Checklist for US K-12 School Districts Building AI Usage Policies

Developing a responsible AI policy requires input from many stakeholders and careful thought in several areas. Here's a comprehensive checklist to help your district guide the process, focusing on instructional usage. Every district's starting point is different, so adapt the order to fit your context.

Start Here: Anchor Your Approach

Before building policy, your leadership team needs a shared position. Work through these questions together first.

- What do we believe about AI's role in teaching and learning, and where should it be limited?
- What does responsible use look like for students at different grade levels, and for staff?
- Where do we need clarity most right now: student safety, academic integrity, teacher practice, or equity?
- How will we know if our approach is working, and who owns that review?

Once you've aligned on these questions, begin with understanding what is already happening in your system.

Phase 1: Understand Current AI Use

You can't govern what you can't see.

Visibility into AI Use

- Find out which AI tools students and staff are actually using. Not what you've approved, but what's happening on school devices right now.
- Most districts discover students are using AI tools the district never vetted. You need a factual picture before you can write meaningful policy.
- Gain visibility into the content of student-AI interactions; what they're prompting, how frequently, and whether those interactions support learning.
- Usage volume alone doesn't tell you much. The nature of the interaction (academic vs. off-task, productive vs. problematic) is what should inform policy.
- Ensure monitoring extends across all major AI platforms students may access on school devices (e.g., popular LLMs and chatbots).
- Track whether AI use is academic or non-academic in nature. This data will inform both instruction and policy going forward.

Stakeholder Input

- Survey staff, students, and families to understand current AI use, concerns, and expectations. Identify a point person or small team responsible for ongoing AI monitoring and questions.

Policy Landscape

- Review existing policies (acceptable use, academic integrity, data privacy) and identify where each needs updating to address AI specifically. Consult your state school boards association for templates if available.

Phase 2: Establish Guardrails

Policy without protection is just paper.

Governance

- Define who owns this policy, who reviews it, and how often — at minimum annually given how quickly AI is evolving.
- Consider assembling a cross-functional policy committee (including perspectives from administrators, teachers, IT staff, parents, students, legal counsel, and community members).

Data Privacy & Legal Compliance

- Confirm compliance with FERPA, COPPA, and your state's student data privacy laws.
- Require data processing agreements (DPAs) with any AI vendor handling student data.
- Seek SOC 2 certification or equivalent from vendors handling student data.
- Establish a vetting process that every AI tool must pass before it enters a classroom — including a review of the vendor's data handling and terms of service. Without a formal vetting process, individual teachers make procurement decisions by default. That creates compliance exposure and inconsistent student experiences.
- Clarify what student data may be entered into AI tools. Prohibit personally identifiable information (PII) explicitly and in plain language.
- Determine data retention and deletion policies for AI-generated content and logs.

Access Control

- Establish policy-driven guardrails that align AI access with instructional goals so guardrails serve learning, not just compliance.
- Differentiate AI access controls by grade level (e.g., more restrictive for elementary, more open for high school).
- Go beyond platform-level blocking. Configure content-level filters that act on what students are actually prompting and receiving, allowing productive use while catching harmful or off-task interactions. Blocking entire platforms pushes students to alternatives you haven't seen yet.
- Targeted content filtering protects students without shutting down legitimate learning.

Securly's AI Transparency Solution

See exactly what students prompt and receive across all major third-party AI tools, including ChatGPT, Gemini, NotebookLM, MagicSchool, and Brisk.

Family Engagement

- Extend visibility and appropriate controls to parents/guardians for school-issued devices used at home, so they're partners in managing AI use rather than finding out after something goes wrong.
- Give families accessible reporting on their child's AI interactions on school devices — what's being used, how often, and whether safety flags have been triggered.
- Create channels for parents to surface concerns about AI tools and receive timely responses.

Academic Integrity

- Define acceptable vs. unacceptable student use with concrete examples, not just categories. Update academic integrity expectations to address AI-generated work, including disclosure and attribution requirements. Academic integrity is where most districts face immediate pressure. Vague policy leaves teachers without backup when they need to act.
- Set age-appropriate boundaries (e.g., different expectations for elementary vs. middle vs. high school).

Phase 3: Support Teaching & Learning

Policy compliance follows teacher confidence.

Teacher Use

- Clarify how teachers may use AI for lesson planning, differentiation, feedback, and administrative tasks and what review is expected before AI-generated content reaches students.
- Clarify expectations for when AI use supports learning and when it replaces thinking. Students and teachers both need a shared framework for making that call.
- Encourage teachers to be transparent with students about when and how AI is being used in instruction.
- Provide professional development that builds genuine understanding of AI capabilities, limitations, and biases, not just how to comply with the policy. Teachers who understand AI make better judgment calls. Those who only know the rules will either over-restrict or under-restrict.
- Create structured space for teachers to share effective practices and flag concerns. AI in education is moving too fast for top-down guidance alone.

Equity & Access

- Ensure equitable access to approved AI tools across all schools and consider equity of outcomes, not just access. A district where only well-resourced schools benefit from AI productivity gains is a district with an equity problem it created.
- Evaluate AI tools for potential bias related to race, gender, disability, language, and socioeconomic status.
- Consider the impact on English learners and students who may interact with AI tools differently.
- Address accessibility so that AI policies don't inadvertently disadvantage students with disabilities or limited technology access.
- Plan for how to address situations where an AI tool produces biased or harmful output in a school setting.

Using Data to Inform Instruction

- Use classroom-level AI usage data to inform and improve instruction, for example, identifying which AI tools students gravitate toward and whether those interactions support learning objectives.

Phase 4: Monitor, Protect, and Respond

What you can't see, you can't address.

Student Safety & Wellness

- Implement automated flagging for AI interactions that indicate self-harm, bullying, violence, or other safety concerns, with alerts routed to counselors or safety teams in real time. Without systematic flagging, a student in crisis who turns to an AI tool before a trusted adult may go undetected.
- Establish clear response protocols: who is notified when a flag is raised, what the escalation path is, and how the response is documented.
- Establish protocols for reporting and responding to inappropriate AI-generated content.
- Address the risks of AI-generated misinformation and teach students to critically evaluate AI outputs.
- Address AI-generated images, deepfakes, and synthetic media, particularly in the context of student harassment, bullying, or impersonation.

AI Visibility in Securly Aware

Set up safety alerts for student-AI interactions that indicate signs of self-harm, bullying, and violence.

Integrated Systems

- Integrate AI monitoring with your district's existing student safety and wellness systems, not as a separate tool, but as part of a unified picture. Siloed systems mean incidents fall through the cracks. A student exhibiting concerning behavior across multiple platforms is invisible if those platforms don't talk to each other.

Phase 5: Communicate and Refine

A policy no one understands isn't a policy.

Transparency

- Publish the AI policy on the district website. Communicate it in accessible language and in the primary languages spoken by families in your district.
- Notify parents and guardians about how AI tools are used, with opt-out provisions where required by law.
- Create ongoing channels for feedback from students, families, and staff.

Rollout

- If possible, pilot the policy in a limited setting before district-wide rollout to identify implementation problems early.

Ongoing Review

- Build a formal review cycle of every 6–12 months with a named owner. Use actual AI usage data, not assumptions, as the primary input to each revision. A policy written without a scheduled review will be outdated within a year. The districts that stay ahead treat their usage data as a governance tool, not just a monitoring tool.
- Track which AI tools are approved, under review, or prohibited, and keep that list current.
- Monitor state and federal legislative developments that may affect your obligations.
- Document decisions and rationale so institutional knowledge is preserved even when personnel change.



Give parents visibility and control over school-issued devices at home, including content filtering, screen time management, and real-time alerts for concerning online activity.