

AI and the Future of Learning - May 2026

Guiding Question: What must we build to ensure AI strengthens learning, protects students, and expands every student's capacity to think, create, and lead in a digital world?

[RESEARCH BRIEF](#) used to ground our exploration of the guiding question.

Overview

Participants envision a comprehensive ecosystem across the state that pairs robust guardrails with equitable resources so every district can use AI confidently and safely. They stress the importance of secure infrastructure, clear privacy protections, and a human-in-the-loop model that keeps educators at the center of all student-impacting decisions. Sustained professional learning, a K–12 scope-and-sequence, and cross-sector partnerships with industry, higher education, and legislators round out the blueprint for leveraging AI to personalize learning, foster critical thinking, and prepare every student to lead in a rapidly evolving digital world.

Elevation Check Points

Elevation Check: Current Conditions

Districts describe a landscape of high urgency but limited coherence, where early adopters surge ahead while policies, training, and guardrails struggle to keep pace. Staff capacity often lags behind student enthusiasm, prompting calls for evergreen scope-and-sequence documents, clearer guidance on data privacy, and equitable access to secure tools. Leaders agree that without a shared understanding and risk-management framework, the rapid pace of AI innovation risks outstripping the system's ability to protect learning integrity.

"The speed of change, benefits and consequences is overwhelming our system without state or local shared understanding, guardrails and risk management to protect the integrity of learning, data systems and privacy."

Key Elements



Powered by

 **ThoughtExchange**

Sign up for a custom demo
with your district data today



Superintendents Conference

THE FUTURE WE BUILD

- Need for clear AI policies and living guardrails
- Systemwide AI capacity building for staff
- Equity concerns related to infrastructure, bandwidth, and access
- Sharing hubs for tools, policies, and success stories

Elevation Check: Leadership Practices

Effective AI leadership is portrayed as a blend of courage, humility, and continuous learning that can assist leaders to make informed decisions while modeling curiosity. Participants emphasize building intentional networks and a shared vision so districts avoid isolated pilots and instead move in coherent, collective strides. A recurring theme is the need to keep human judgment at every critical AI checkpoint, ensuring that efficiency never overrides ethical decision-making and relational leadership.

"It takes emotional intelligence, time, and opportunities to connect."

Priority Leadership Practices

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES — THE FUTURE WE BUILD

AI and the future of learning

01

Lead as learners — administrators openly experiment with AI tools and share successes and failures to normalize continuous learning across the organization.

02

Form **regional or pop-up superintendent collectives** to co-design AI policies, scope-and-sequence documents, and data-security guidelines.

03

Phase implementation with clear milestones — build common understanding among staff first, then expand to students and families with the right supports.

It would be nice to develop regional work groups that could collaborate to do this work.



Powered by

 **ThoughtExchange**

Sign up for a custom demo with your district data today

Elevation Check: Advocacy and Collective Action

Participants coalesce around the need for a comprehensive AI policy framework that includes certification pathways, professional development, and dedicated funding to ensure equitable access and implementation. They see Educational Service Districts, professional associations, and cross-sector panels as natural conveners to craft standards and offer practical, regionally tailored support. Unified advocacy efforts aim to tie any new expectations to sustainable funding so districts can innovate responsibly without straining already limited resources.

"We must prepare our students to responsibly use AI. With a statewide framework, perhaps with statewide AI tools for schools and professional development."

Advocacy Priorities

AI AND THE FUTURE OF LEARNING — THE FUTURE WE BUILD

What must we build to ensure AI strengthens learning, protects students, and expands every student's capacity to think, create, and lead?

01 — POLICY

Living guardrails and policies

Clear expectations for privacy, data use, and human-in-the-loop decisions — agile enough to keep pace with rapidly changing tools.

02 — CAPACITY

System-wide capacity building

Grade-band guides, ongoing PD, and dedicated coaches to close the staff knowledge gap — from AI 101 to custom agents.

03 — EQUITY

Equitable access and infrastructure

Bandwidth, licensing, and server costs create real disparities. Small and rural districts need coordinated state support to keep pace.

04 — SHARING

Statewide sharing hub

A single trusted WASA or ESD portal for vetted tools, policy samples, and success stories — replacing reliance on word-of-mouth.

1. Develop a comprehensive AI framework with safety, ethics, and equity guardrails that can be used as a foundation for districts



Powered by

 ThoughtExchange

Sign up for a custom demo
with your district data today



2. Develop an infrastructure to provide instructional and operations P-12 employees with on-going, AI instruction that includes both job-embedded support and easy to access content that accounts for the wide-continuum people's AI knowledge, context, and comfort with generative AI technology.
3. Build urgency for funding specific to AI in the prototypical model. Funding would cover costs of AI tools, hardware, digital ed coaching, and professional development including closed AI Servers funded by the state and on-going maintenance at no cost to school districts.
4. When educators are planning instruction that incorporates AI into student learning activities they have easy access to up-to-date, research-informed recommendations that enhance student learning.
5. Convene an advisory council drawing from associations, professional organizations, educators, students, families, regional experts, industry partners, and researchers to provide timely, evidence-based recommendations that keep pace with the fast-moving evolution of AI.

Moving Forward

- Convene a cross-sector task force to draft statewide AI standards and funding mechanisms.
- Develop/Adopt a K-12 AI scope & sequence template districts can adapt locally.
- Launch professional-learning cohorts focused on safe, high-impact classroom AI applications.
- Establish a taskforce or sub-group to explore how to ensure data and information security and efficient and cost-effective AI solution deployment.
- Consider assessment/survey tools to better understand student, staff, family beliefs and perceptions about AI use.

Stories From the Climb

"I really appreciate the opportunity to get to know at a deeper level the other superintendents in the AI collective."



Powered by

 **ThoughtExchange**

Sign up for a custom demo
with your district data today



Superintendents Conference

THE FUTURE WE BUILD

“The variety of perspectives helped engagement and the chance to refine, question, modify, and debate about what we really need to do regarding something as new and fluid as AI created many opportunities for yes and as well as yes but types of dialogue.”



Powered by

 **ThoughtExchange**

Sign up for a custom demo
with your district data today

