

Getting Started: AI Readiness & Implementation Roadmap Guide

Introduction

Implementing artificial intelligence (AI) in K–12 education is a complex and evolving journey. Districts vary significantly in their readiness, resources, and strategic priorities. To support diverse starting points, this guide combines two essential tools—the [AI Readiness Assessment Checklist](#) and the [AI Implementation Roadmap](#)—to help districts:

1. Understand their current AI readiness level.
2. Identify strengths, gaps, and areas of opportunity.
3. Select a phased implementation timeline that fits district needs.
4. Strategically use additional tools within the Toolkit.

Start Here: Use This Guide to Chart Your AI Implementation Path

This combined guide is designed to help school districts move from initial exploration to structured implementation of AI tools in education. Districts should begin by completing the [Readiness Assessment](#) to determine where they stand across critical dimensions like leadership, infrastructure, policy, and staff capacity. Based on these findings, they can then use the [Implementation Roadmap](#) to choose an appropriate rollout strategy—whether an expedited path or a longer-term integration approach.

To get started, districts should:

1. **Complete the AI Readiness Assessment Checklist:** Use the domains in the checklist—Leadership, Policy, Infrastructure, Staff Capacity, and Community Engagement—to assess your current strengths and gaps. Use the descriptions provided for Not Started, Emerging, Developing, and Established to rate your district and identify where additional focus is needed.
2. **Reflect on Readiness Results:** Review the areas where your district scored the lowest and highest. This can help prioritize what to tackle first (e.g., building leadership capacity or revising policy frameworks).
3. **Use the AI Implementation Roadmap** to select your path: Based on your readiness level, choose an implementation pathway that fits your timeline and goals. The roadmap includes an expedited path (ideal for districts with strong foundational readiness) and a longer-term phased approach (for districts still building systems).
4. **Align Next Steps with Your Readiness and Roadmap:** Once your path is selected, use the Toolkit's resources aligned with each roadmap phase. These include tools for building leadership teams, developing responsible use policies, training staff, and measuring progress.

[AI Readiness Assessment Checklist](#)

This checklist supports school districts in evaluating their preparedness for implementing artificial intelligence across leadership, policy, infrastructure, staff capacity, and stakeholder engagement. The checklist includes

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guiding questions, a readiness rating scale, and reflection space to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

How to Use This Tool:

Convene a cross-functional team that includes district leadership, instructional leaders, IT staff, and stakeholder representatives. Work through each category and prompt collaboratively to rate your district's current state, capture supporting evidence, and identify action steps. Use this tool as a baseline to guide planning, prioritize investments, and track progress over time.

Suggested Uses:

- As a self-assessment tool to begin or revisit AI implementation planning.
- To surface gaps and guide internal conversations around AI readiness.
- As a benchmarking tool for reviewing progress over time or across departments.

How to Implement:

1. Assign a facilitator to guide the assessment session.
2. Complete each section with a cross-departmental team using data, documentation, and lived experience.
3. Rate each area using the readiness scale and record evidence for your assessment.
4. Summarize follow-up actions and revisit this tool quarterly or biannually as your implementation progresses.

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Readiness Scale Descriptions

Level	Description
Not Started	The district has not begun work in this area. Awareness may be limited, and no formal planning, processes, or systems exist.
Emerging	Initial conversations have begun. One or more individuals may be exploring the topic or gathering resources, but work is still informal.
Developing	The district has begun to formalize its work in this area. Initial plans, systems, or training are being developed or piloted.
Established	The district has adopted practices or systems that are consistently applied, supported by leadership, and periodically reviewed for improvement.

1. Leadership & Vision

Reflection Prompts:

- Is there a shared district-wide understanding of AI's potential opportunities and risks?
- Has a vision or mission statement for AI use been developed or endorsed by leadership?
- Is there a designated team or task force leading AI exploration and planning efforts?
- Are leadership priorities and communication aligned around responsible and strategic AI use?
- Has the district allocated time or resources for AI planning or exploration?
- Are department leaders aligned on the role of AI in supporting student outcomes?

Assessment Table:

Readiness Level	Evidence/Notes	Follow-Up Actions
Not Started		
Emerging		
Developing		
Established		

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2. Policy & Governance

Reflection Prompts:

- Has the district created or adopted a Responsible AI Use Policy?
- Are there clear guidelines for how AI can/cannot be used by staff, students, and departments?
- Is the district actively reviewing compliance with FERPA, COPPA, NDPA, and related privacy laws?
- Does the district have systems in place to monitor AI usage for transparency and ethical concerns?
- Has the district established a review process for AI tools before approval or purchase?
- Are responsibilities for oversight and enforcement of AI use clearly defined?

Assessment Table:

Readiness Level	Evidence/Notes	Follow-Up Actions
Not Started		
Emerging		
Developing		
Established		

3. Infrastructure & Systems Readiness

Reflection Prompts:

- Do staff and student devices meet the technical requirements for AI tools?
- Is the district's internet connectivity sufficient to support cloud-based AI applications?
- Does the district have the IT capacity to support rollout, troubleshooting, and data security?
- Are data privacy, integration, and cybersecurity practices reviewed and updated regularly?
- Are existing platforms (SIS, LMS) compatible with AI tool integrations?
- Does the district have policies to manage AI-related data access and retention?

Assessment Table:

Readiness Level	Evidence/Notes	Follow-Up Actions
Not Started		
Emerging		

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Developing		
Established		

4. Staff Capacity & Professional Learning

Reflection Prompts:

- Have staff received basic training on AI concepts, limitations, and risks?
- Is professional development on AI integrated into ongoing learning opportunities?
- Are there examples of staff or departments beginning to explore or use AI tools?
- Does the district offer guidance on responsible use and evaluation of AI tools in practice?
- Are educators encouraged or supported in piloting AI tools under guided conditions?
- Is there a clear framework for evaluating the educational value and risk of AI tools?

Assessment Table:

Readiness Level	Evidence/Notes	Follow-Up Actions
Not Started		
Emerging		
Developing		
Established		

5. Community & Stakeholder Engagement

Reflection Prompts:

- Has the district engaged families, students, and community stakeholders in early conversations about AI?
- Are there channels to surface questions, concerns, or ideas from different stakeholder groups?
- Is the school board informed about and supportive of AI-related strategies and safeguards?
- Does the district plan to communicate regularly about AI efforts, including risks, goals, and wins?
- Have the equity implications of AI use been discussed with community members?
- Are students or families represented in AI planning or advisory groups?

Assessment Table:

Readiness Level	Evidence/Notes	Follow-Up Actions
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Not Started		
Emerging		
Developing		
Established		

Post-Assessment Guidance: Selecting Your Roadmap Path

After completing the Readiness Assessment Checklist, use your ratings across each domain—Leadership, Policy, Infrastructure, Capacity, and Community Engagement—to determine your district's overall readiness level:

- If most ratings fall under "Not Started" or "Emerging," begin with foundational steps such as building cross-functional leadership teams, establishing clear AI goals, and reviewing privacy policies. Use the roadmap's extended timeline to build internal systems before initiating a pilot.
- If most domains are in the "Developing" stage, consider a "hybrid approach." Begin preparing for a limited pilot while continuing to strengthen infrastructure, professional development, and stakeholder communication. Use the roadmap to plan overlapping foundational and implementation activities.
- If your district shows "Established" ratings, you may be ready to pursue the expedited roadmap. Launch a structured pilot or begin scaling a targeted use case with district-wide coordination, clear policies, and robust training supports.

Throughout the process, revisit the Readiness Assessment at key milestones to reflect on growth and adjust your strategy. The Roadmap and Toolkit resources are flexible and designed to support adaptation based on district feedback, outcomes, and evolving needs.

The AI Implementation Roadmap

The [AI Implementation Roadmap](#) is a phased, strategic guide to help school districts plan, pilot, and scale artificial intelligence in ways that are responsible, equitable, and aligned with district goals. Designed for flexibility, the roadmap allows districts to start where they are—whether just beginning to explore AI or already running early pilots—and move forward at a pace that matches their readiness, capacity, and community context.

This roadmap is part of the broader [AI Toolkit for School Districts](#), which provides customizable tools, templates, and frameworks to support every step of AI implementation. Each roadmap phase is supported by specific, actionable resources to help teams move from strategy to sustainable practice.

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Flexible Pathways: Expedited and Extended Timelines

Districts can approach implementation based on their current state:

1. **Expedited Pathway** (1–2 semesters): Designed for early adopters or districts with strong leadership alignment and foundational systems already in place. This pathway helps districts move through all five phases within a single academic year or less.
2. **Extended Pathway** (1–2 years): Ideal for districts that need more time to build readiness, engage stakeholders, and move gradually from planning to scaling. This pathway allows for more iterative feedback, professional learning, and alignment with existing district initiatives.
 - a. **Pilot** (6–12 months): Identify pilot schools or departments, build baseline AI literacy, and implement initial administrative AI tools using structured templates and evaluation plans.
 - b. **Scaling** (1–2 years): Expand AI use across departments, refine implementation practices, and begin developing sustainable policies. Establish regular monitoring and stakeholder feedback cycles.
 - c. **Full Adoption** (3–5 years): AI becomes integrated into district operations, supported by routine evaluation, staff onboarding, and a sustained AI Leadership Task Force. Policies, tools, and practices are continuously refined to align with evolving district needs.

AI Implementation Roadmap Phases

Phase 1: Strategy, Planning & Responsible Use

Phase 1 lays the strategic foundation for effective and responsible AI implementation. This phase is focused on forming a representative leadership team, aligning the district's AI mission with its goals, and setting up core policies that guide responsible and ethical use. Establishing this groundwork ensures that all future planning and implementation efforts are built on shared vision, compliance, and transparency.

Key Activities:

- [Establish AI Leadership Task Force](#) (Tool 1.1)
Creates a cross-functional leadership structure to coordinate AI efforts and ensure shared ownership.
- [Define AI Mission and Vision](#) (Tool 1.2a)
Clarifies the purpose of AI in the district and ensures alignment with educational priorities and community values.
- [Guiding AI Use in Schools](#) (Tool 1.2b)
Helps districts engage in meaningful conversations about AI use and translate their vision into clear, safe, and practical implementation strategies.
- [Draft Responsible Use Policy](#) (Tool 1.3) and [Review Compliance](#) (Tool 1.4)
Builds guardrails for ethical AI use and ensures alignment with privacy and legal standards.
- [Understanding AI in Education Starter Guide](#)
Encourages shared understanding across boards, administrators, staff, and community.

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- Districts may find it helpful to use the [Definitions of Key AI Terms \(Appendix A\)](#) to establish a shared foundation, and the [Stakeholder Input Summary \(Appendix C\)](#) to document stakeholder perspectives when shaping their AI vision.

Linked Tools & Resources:

- [Tool 1.1: AI Leadership Task Force Decision Guide](#): Supports the formation of a representative, cross-functional team to oversee AI strategy and planning.
- [Tool 1.2a: Defining the AI Mission and Vision for Your District](#): Guides collaborative reflection and alignment of AI initiatives with district goals and community values.
- [Tool 1.2b: Guiding AI Use in Schools](#): Equips districts to lead thoughtful conversations on AI use and develop clear, actionable plans that align with their vision and ensure safe, responsible implementation.
- [Tool 1.3: AI Responsible Use Policy Template](#): Provides a customizable starting point for setting ethical and responsible use expectations for AI in education.
- [Tool 1.4: AI Compliance Checklist](#): Ensures that selected AI tools and practices align with FERPA, COPPA, and other data privacy requirements.
- [Understanding AI in Education Starter Guide for Stakeholders](#): Supports early conversations, training sessions, and board engagement — *before* any major decisions are made.
- [Definitions of Key AI Terms \(Appendix A\)](#): Supports in building shared understanding across leadership teams and stakeholders (e.g., workshops, kickoff meetings).
- [Stakeholder Input Summary \(Appendix C\)](#): Ensures that a variety of stakeholder input is collected during the implementation process.

Phase 2: Infrastructure & Procurement

Phase 2 focuses on building the infrastructure needed to support AI in K–12 settings. This includes assessing interoperability, network capacity, and security standards, as well as aligning procurement decisions with district goals and compliance requirements. Laying this operational foundation ensures that future AI pilots and implementations are secure, sustainable, and scalable.

Key Activities:

- Use the [AI Infrastructure Implementation Checklist](#) to identify needs (Tool 2.2)
Ensures that foundational technology systems are in place to support AI tools securely and efficiently. Ensure that systems support interoperability, data privacy, and ethical use. Protect students and staff while ensuring systems work together seamlessly for effective implementation.
- Review the [Procurement & Vendor Selection Guide](#) to vet tools (Tool 2.1)
Supports responsible vendor selection with an emphasis on interoperability, privacy, and long-term fit.

Linked Tools & Resources:

- [Tool 2.1: AI Technology Procurement & Vendor Selection Guide](#): Helps districts responsibly evaluate and select AI tools based on legal compliance, interoperability, and alignment with district goals.
- [Tool 2.2: AI Infrastructure Implementation Checklist](#): Assists in reviewing technical systems and infrastructure readiness, including data security and third-party integration.

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Phase 3: Pilot Design & Implementation

Phase 3 turns strategic plans into action through carefully designed pilot programs. This stage allows districts to test AI tools in a controlled setting, build staff capacity, and gather data on what works. Intentional pilot design enables iterative learning, reduces risk, and helps build community understanding and trust around AI use.

Key Activities:

- Use the [Structured AI Pilot Program Guide](#) to define pilot goals and design implementation (Tool 3.2). Provides a framework for identifying clear pilot goals aligned with district priorities and creating a structured, purposeful rollout plan.
- Build pilot evaluation plan using [Structured AI Pilot Program Guide](#) (Tool 3.2). Supports accountability and continuous learning by helping districts establish clear evaluation metrics, data collection methods, and review timelines.
- Implement staff training with the [AI Professional Development Guide](#) (Tool 4.1). Supports AI-related professional learning across roles, building internal confidence and capacity for thoughtful AI use in district operations.
- Engage families and communities using [AI Parent & Community Engagement Strategy](#) (Tool 4.2). Offers customizable communication materials and engagement approaches to build trust, address concerns, and promote transparency in AI-related initiatives.
- Establish pilot communication protocols with [Transparency & Trust Framework](#) (Tool 4.3). Helps districts develop clear messaging and feedback channels to ensure that pilot activities are well-understood, accessible, and responsive to stakeholder input.
- Complete the [AI Tools Inventory Template \(Appendix B\)](#) when selecting or vetting pilot tools, making sure everything is properly tracked before launch.

Linked Tools & Resources:

- [Tool 3.2: Structured AI Pilot Program Guide](#): Provides a step-by-step guide to launching pilot programs that support thoughtful experimentation and data collection.
- [Tool 4.1: AI Professional Development Guide](#): Supports AI-related professional learning for staff across roles to build confidence and readiness.
- [Tool 4.2: AI Parent & Community Engagement Strategy](#): Equips districts with communication materials and strategies to build understanding and trust with families and community stakeholders.
- [Tool 4.3: Transparency & Trust Framework \(AI Communication Plan\)](#): Helps districts establish clear, transparent communication plans around AI tools and use cases.
- [AI Tools Inventory Template \(Appendix B\)](#): Supports transparency by tracking tools under consideration.

Phase 4: Evaluation & Scaling

Phase 4 focuses on gathering data from pilot efforts and refining AI strategies based on evidence. Districts evaluate implementation progress, monitor impact on students and staff, and determine whether, how, and when to expand. This phase also emphasizes transparency and documentation to inform internal improvement and broader field learning.

Key Activities:

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- Use the [AI Implementation Progress Discussion Guide](#) (Tool 5.1) to collect pilot data and assess progress toward goals. Provides a structured framework for comparing implementation outcomes to original pilot goals, allowing districts to identify impact and areas for improvement.
- Analyze effectiveness, user experience, and equity impact using the [AI Implementation Progress Discussion Guide](#) (Tool 5.1) and [AI Implementation Progress Monitoring Tool](#) (Tool 5.2). Supports thoughtful evaluation by capturing both quantitative and qualitative data on how AI tools are performing and affecting stakeholders.
- Use the [AI Implementation Progress Monitoring Tool](#) (Tool 5.2) to guide decision-making around next steps. Outlines critical checkpoints to help districts determine whether to expand, refine, or sunset AI initiatives based on evaluation findings.
- Review and apply the [AI Compliance & Ethics Oversight Checklist](#) (Tool 5.3) to monitor legal, ethical, and policy alignment. Supports ongoing governance by tracking compliance with privacy laws, board policies, and ethical safeguards across implementation phases.
- Review the [Case Studies](#) to reflect on lessons learned and revise internal plans. Promotes internal learning and transparency by capturing pilot outcomes and insights that inform future strategy and can be shared with broader audiences.

Linked Tools & Resources:

- [Tool 5.1: AI Implementation Progress Discussion Guide](#): Provides a structure for evaluating impact and benchmarks during and after pilot phases.
- [Tool 5.2: AI Implementation Progress Monitoring Tool](#): Outlines key checkpoints for tracking progress and decision points across implementation.
- [Tool 5.3: AI Compliance & Ethics Oversight Checklist](#): Helps districts monitor legal compliance, ethical safeguards, and ongoing governance practices.
- [Section 6: Case Studies](#): Helps districts reflect on pilot experiences and capture lessons learned for internal and external sharing.

Phase 5: Long-Term Strategy & Sustainability

Phase 5 focuses on sustaining and scaling AI efforts beyond initial pilots. This includes formalizing district-wide strategies, ensuring stakeholder alignment, and conducting regular reviews to evolve with emerging needs. Long-term sustainability depends on continued reflection, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement.

Key Activities:

- Leverage the [Family and Community Partnership Guide](#) (Tool 7.1) to build and maintain strong relationships with families and community partners.
- Use the [Equipping Leaders: Messaging and Communication Guide](#) (Tool 7.2) to support district leaders in delivering clear, consistent messaging around AI initiatives.
- Implement strategies from the [Sustaining Staff Engagement Guide](#) (Tool 7.3) to keep educators and staff aligned, informed, and engaged throughout each phase of AI adoption.
- Implement [Annual Review Rubric \(Appendix D\)](#) to support ongoing evaluation and improvement. Promotes continuous learning and accountability by guiding yearly assessments of AI policy, practice, and implementation progress.

Linked Tools & Resources:

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- [Tool 7.1: Family and Community Partnership Guide](#): Provides a proactive guide to building trust and long-term partnerships with families and communities through tailored messaging and engagement strategies.
- [Tool 7.2: Equipping Leaders: Messaging and Communication Guide](#): Provides adaptable messaging frameworks and timelines to help district leaders communicate clearly, consistently, and effectively about AI initiatives.
- [Tool 7.3: Sustaining Staff Engagement Guide](#): Offers practical strategies to engage staff in AI planning through ongoing communication, feedback loops, and professional learning supports.
- [Annual Review Rubric \(Appendix D\)](#): Helps districts assess AI policy and implementation progress on a yearly basis and make informed adjustments.