

K-12 Artificial Intelligence Readiness

February 20, 2026

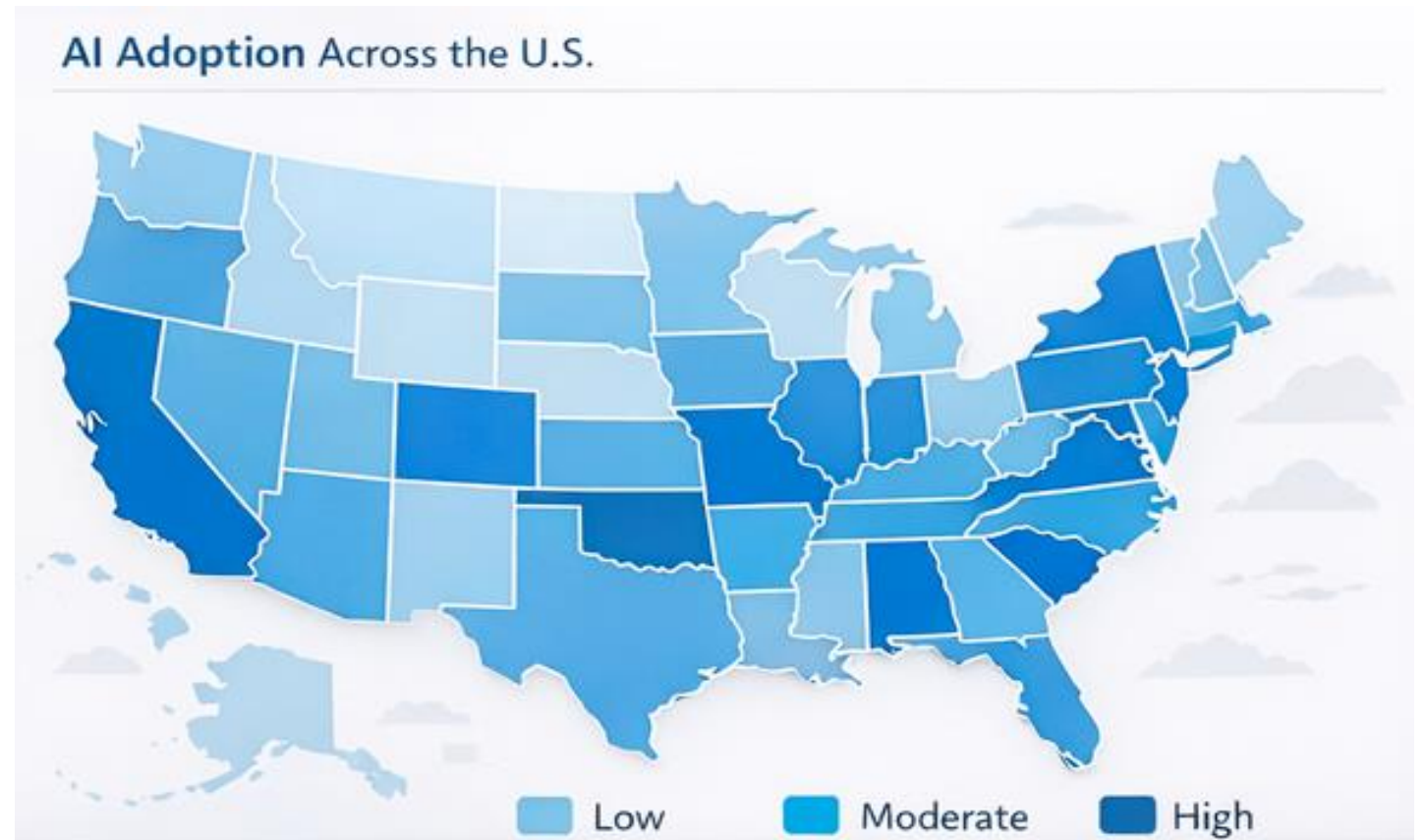


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State-Level K–12 AI Guidance Is Expanding



31 states have issued K–12 AI guidance (as of January 2026).

What this means:

- State education agencies are increasingly publishing AI guidance/toolkits to help districts set expectations for classroom and operational use.
- Most guidance is voluntary districts still have to turn it into **local policy, training, and approved-tool processes**.
- The U.S. is now a patchwork: districts in guidance states can align faster, while others rely more on internal governance + national frameworks.

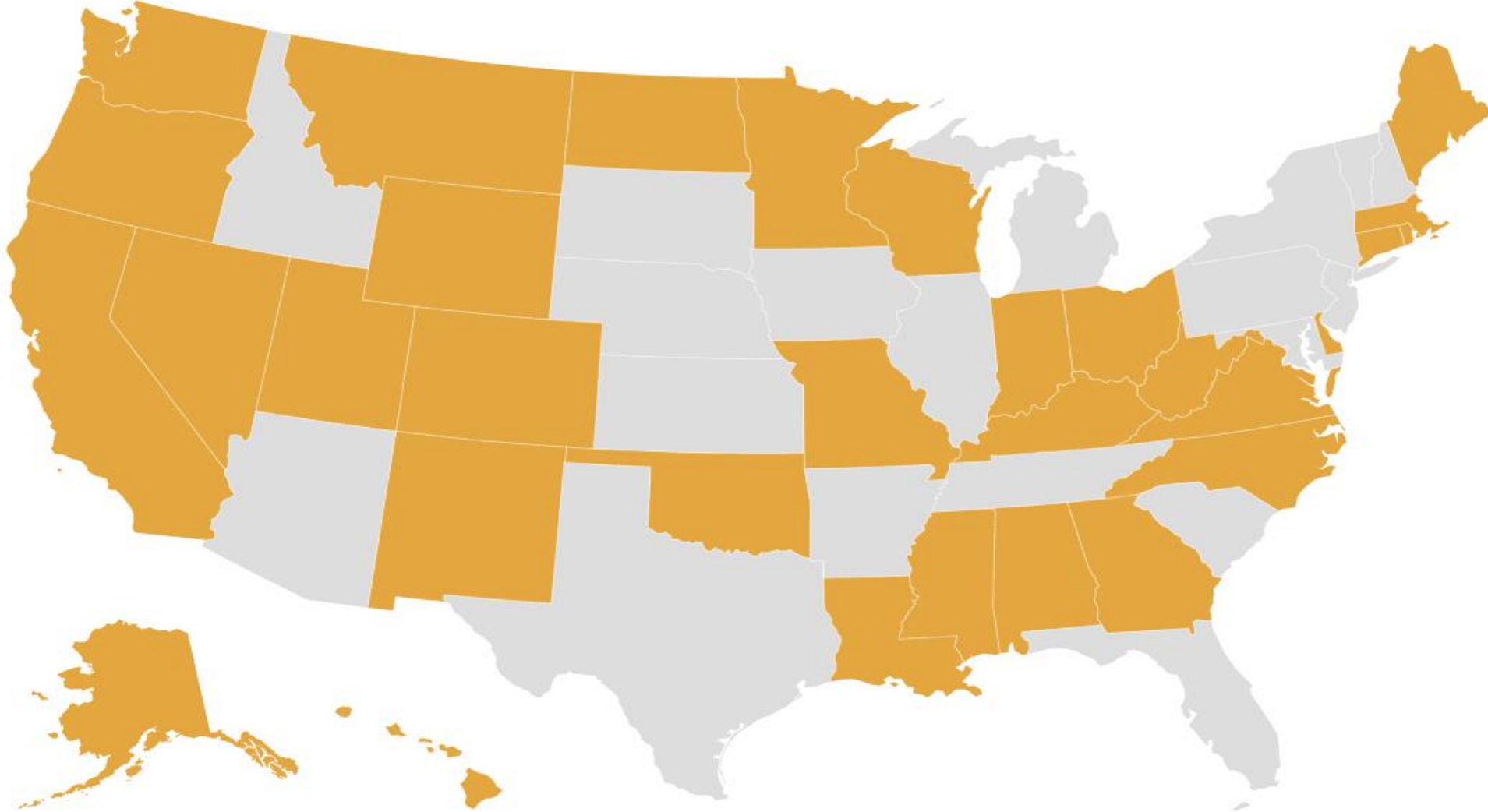
Readiness takeaway: State guidance is growing, but districts still need clear local rules, training, and oversight to make AI use consistent and safe.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| •Alabama | •Montana |
| •Alaska | •Nevada |
| •California | •New Mexico |
| •Colorado | •North Carolina |
| •Connecticut | •North Dakota |
| •Delaware | •Ohio |
| •Georgia | •Oklahoma |
| •Hawaii | •Oregon |
| •Indiana | •Rhode Island |
| •Kentucky | •Utah |
| •Louisiana | •Virginia |
| •Maine | •Washington |
| •Massachusetts | •West Virginia |
| •Minnesota | •Wisconsin |
| •Mississippi | •Wyoming |
| •Missouri | |

State Education Department AI Guidance

State education department AI guidance

Education departments in 31 states have issued AI guidance for K-12 public school districts.



Data is accurate as of January 2026

Why AI Readiness Matters Now?

AI is moving quickly from “experimental tools” to everyday classroom and district operations—from tutoring and lesson planning to analytics, communications, and student support. In 2026, “**AI readiness**” means more than adoption: it’s the ability to use AI safely, effectively, and equitably with clear governance, trained educators, secure systems, and measurable impact. This summarizes where K–12 readiness stands today and what leaders can prioritize next to move from pilots to sustainable, responsible implementation.

AI Readiness = 6 Pillars (2026)

Pillars	
Governance & Policy	Clear rules, approvals, and accountability
People & Training	Educator confidence, student literacy, support capacity
Data & Privacy	Student data protection, vendor terms, consent practices
Security & Risk	Identity, monitoring, incident response, tool controls
Responsible Use	Transparency, bias awareness, academic integrity, accessibility
Impact & Measurement	Metrics for learning, equity, efficiency, and safety

Governance & Policy

AI is already being used (by students, staff, and inside vendor platforms). Governance turns that reality into a managed program with clear rules, approvals, and accountability.

What to Build:

- **AI Steering Team + owner:** Assign an executive sponsor (Superintendent/Cabinet), a day-to-day program owner (e.g., CIO/CTO or Academic Tech lead), and cross-functional members (Curriculum, Legal/Privacy, CISO/IT, SpEd, Communications).
- **District AI policy + classroom guidance:** Define what's allowed, what's not, what requires approval, and how expectations differ by grade band.
- **Approved use-case library:** “Green/yellow/red” examples so every school isn't inventing rules.
- **Procurement standards:** AI clauses in contracts (data retention, model training use, audit rights, subcontractors, breach notice).
- **Communication cadence:** publish guidance + update cycle (quarterly refresh is realistic in 2026).

Tool approval process:

Intake form → privacy/security review → instructional review → pilot plan → approval/deny → annual re-review.

People & Training

Role-based training tracks

- **Teachers:** classroom use cases, lesson design, integrity expectations, checking AI outputs
- **Admins:** productivity, communications, compliance expectations
- **IT/Cyber:** identity, monitoring, tool controls
- **Counselors/SpEd/ELL:** appropriate supports + boundaries (privacy, bias, accessibility)

Student AI literacy (age-appropriate)

- **“AI can help—but verify”:** source checking, hallucination awareness
- **Disclosure norms:** when/how to cite or state AI assistance
- **Safe prompting + privacy:** no personal info, no student data
- **Integrity:** what crosses the line, and why

Support capacity

- AI champions in each school
- Office hours + quick-start guides
- “Example prompts + example outputs” library
- Micro-credentials/badges for staff

2026 Reality

- Over **80%** of students said teachers did not explicitly teach them how to use AI for schoolwork; only **35%** of district leaders reported providing student training.
- Weekly teacher AI users estimate saving **5.9 hours/week** on average.

Data & Privacy



AI readiness includes strict rules for **student data protection**, vendor terms, and consent - because “free tools” and embedded AI features can still move data in risky ways.

What can we type into AI?

1. **Never Enter:** student names/IDs, IEP/504 details, health info, discipline notes, addresses, or anything that identifies a student.
2. **Only in approved tools:** schoolwork that includes student information (only if the tool is vetted + contract-covered).
3. **Generally safe:** content with no identifiers (generic lesson ideas, sample problems, anonymized text).

When consider an AI tool, what should you know?

- What data is collected?
- Is data used to train the AI?
- Is data shared with other companies?
- How long is data kept + can we delete it?
- What happens if there's a breach?

Security & Risk

AI expands the attack surface (new accounts, new data flows, phishing/deepfakes). Security readiness means controls, monitoring, and an incident playbook tied to AI tools.

Cyber stats:

U.S. Department of Education notes that school districts average about five cyber incidents per week.

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) says K–12 cyber incidents are so common that there is more than one incident per school day on average.

Why this matters for AI readiness specifically:

- AI tools can create new accounts + new data flows (more “doors” to protect).
- Staff may copy/paste sensitive info into AI when they’re trying to save time.
- Attackers increasingly use AI for better phishing and impersonation attempts, which increases the chance someone clicks the wrong thing.

Takeaway

- Cyber incidents are frequent; AI readiness must include data minimization + approved tools + strong access controls (SSO/MFA) so student data doesn’t leak during everyday use.

Responsible Use

Responsible use is how you prevent chaos: transparency, bias awareness, academic integrity, and accessibility, AI supports learning without harming trust or equity.

Transparency norms	Academic integrity framework	Bias + fairness checks	Accessibility requirements
• Student disclosure expectations (“when you used AI, why, what you changed”) • Staff transparency for communications and instructional materials where relevant	• Create AI-friendly assessments (process artifacts, drafts, oral checks, in-class writing) • Avoid over-reliance on AI detection alone; focus on clear expectations and task design	• Teach how outputs can reflect bias/stereotypes • Require “equity review” for high-stakes uses (recommendations, placement, discipline-related decisions)	• Ensure AI-enabled content meets accessibility standards (captions, alt text, readable structure, accessible documents/forms)

2026 Reality (Data + Compliance):

- Only **34% of teachers** reported having AI-related integrity policies/guidance. [U.S. Department of Justice](#) notes Title II web accessibility compliance deadlines begin **April 2026 / April 2027** (by entity size), which affects public-facing school/district digital content too.
- [NIST](#) provides a widely used AI risk framework districts can map to “trustworthy AI” practices.

Impact & Measurement

AI readiness is not defined by piloting tools it's defined by the ability to demonstrate measurable outcomes, equitable impact, and controlled risk, enabling leadership to make informed decisions about what to scale, what to refine, and what to discontinue.

Adoption metrics that matter:

- **Reach:** how many staff/students are using it
- **Depth:** how well it's used (trained users, approved use cases, quality checks)
- **Consistency:** usage and benefits across **multiple schools**, not one "AI super-user" campus

Deliverables (what the district produces)

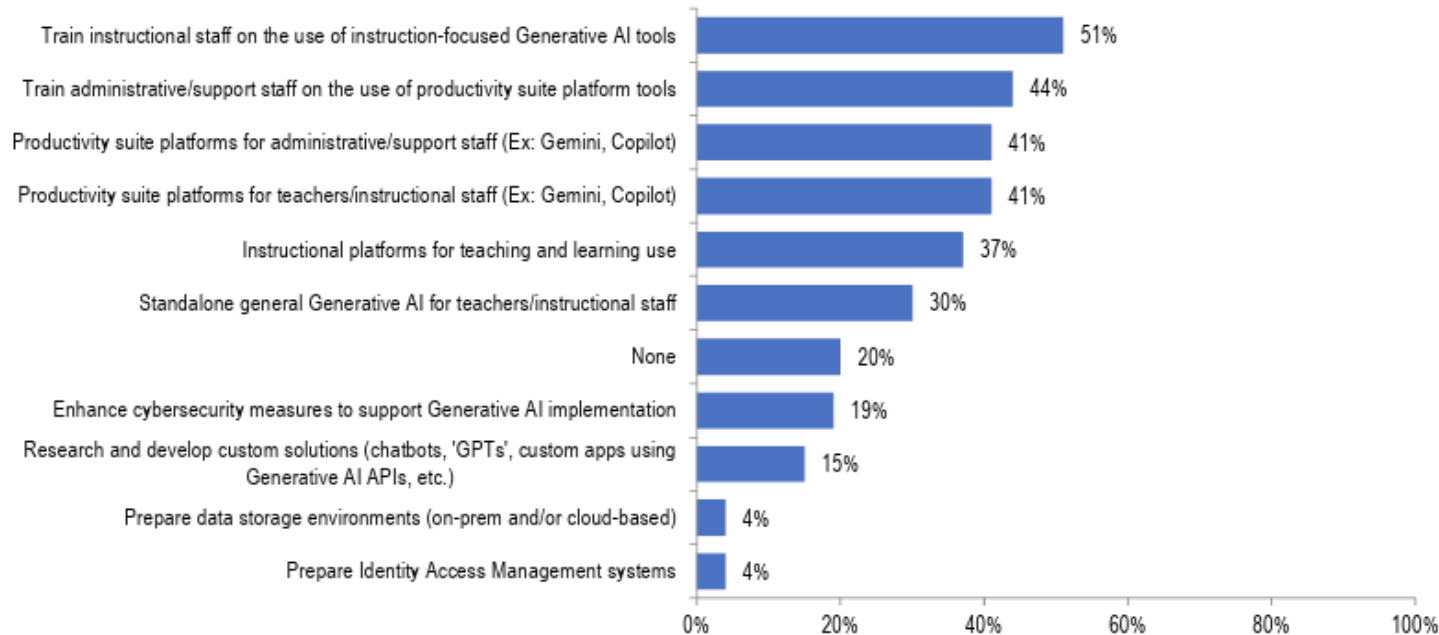
- **Monthly AI readiness dashboard** (scorecard + adoption + incidents)
- **Pilot evaluation rubric** (one standard template)
- **Quarterly leadership update** (1 slide: wins, risks, decisions needed)

2026 Data

- Teachers using AI weekly report saving **~5.9 hours/week** on average. ([source](#))
- AI use is already widespread: **54% of students** and **53% of core-subject teachers** reported using AI for school (spring 2025). ([source](#))
- CoSN reports **80%** of responding districts have GenAI initiatives and only **1%** report a complete ban—meaning **measurement is the differentiator** now.

State of EdTech District Leadership Survey

Current Generative AI Initiatives



Most K–12 districts are beginning generative AI efforts with training and staff productivity use cases.

Top initiatives:

- Training instructional staff (51%)
- Training admin/support staff (44%)
- Rolling out productivity-suite AI for staff (41%) and teachers (41%)

Less common initiatives:

- Using instructional platforms for teaching and learning (37%)
- Using standalone generative AI tools for teachers (30%)

No initiatives yet: 20% of districts report they have no generative AI initiatives.

Least common (foundational readiness controls):

- Preparing data storage environments (4%)
- Identity and access management (IAM) readiness (4%)

Overall takeaway: adoption is moving faster than the underlying data and access controls.

K-12 FY26 IT Budget

Institution	IT Budget
New York City Public School	\$800,000,000
Los Angeles Unified School District	\$380,000,000
Clark County School District	\$180,000,000
Chicago Public Schools	\$170,000,000
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	\$150,000,000
School District of Palm Beach County	\$120,000,000
Orange County Public Schools	\$120,000,000
Broward County Public Schools	\$110,000,000
School District of Philadelphia	\$100,000,000
Hillsborough County Public Schools	\$87,000,000
Fairfax County Public Schools	\$78,000,000
Montgomery County Public Schools	\$72,000,000
Gwinnett County Public Schools	\$69,000,000
Hawaii Department of ED	\$67,000,000
Wake County Public School System	\$66,000,000
Denver Public Schools	\$62,000,000
Duval County Public Schools	\$62,000,000
School District of Lee County	\$58,000,000
Prince George's County Public Schools	\$58,000,000
Baltimore County Public Schools	\$56,000,000
Houston Independent School District	\$53,000,000
Loudoun County Public Schools	\$50,000,000
Fulton County Schools	\$49,000,000

Institution	IT Budget
Dallas Independent School District	\$49,000,000
Prince William County Public Schools	\$48,000,000
Polk County Public Schools	\$47,000,000
Pasco County School District	\$46,000,000
Fresno Unified School District	\$45,000,000
Albuquerque Public Schools	\$45,000,000
Dekalb County School District	\$43,000,000
Osceola School District	\$42,000,000
Portland Public Schools	\$41,000,000
Austin Independent School District	\$41,000,000
Atlanta Public Schools	\$41,000,000
Washoe County School District	\$40,000,000
San Diego Unified School District	\$39,000,000
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	\$39,000,000
Jefferson County Public Schools	\$39,000,000
Baltimore City Public Schools	\$38,000,000
Cobb County School District	\$37,000,000
Memphis-Shelby County Schools	\$37,000,000
Seattle Public Schools	\$37,000,000
Columbus City Schools	\$36,000,000
Pinellas County School District	\$36,000,000
Charleston County School District	\$35,000,000
Charleston County School District	\$35,000,000