

National Association of State Boards of Education

➔ States Take Next Steps on Governing AI Use in Schools

By Winona Hao

Ever since the rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in late 2023, state education policymakers have struggled to understand its implications for teaching, learning, and student well-being. They raised concerns about cheating, data privacy, misinformation, and inequitable access, while also exploring its significant potential to support instruction and increase educator efficiency.

In 2025, the conversation shifted. In my tracking of the actions of state education leaders, I found that several states turned toward creating guidance and statewide frameworks, as well as pilot programs to build AI literacy, test curriculum and instructional tools, prepare students for college and careers, and provide professional learning for educators. In 2026, state boards of education are likely to move beyond issuing AI guidance and toward monitoring implementation and possibly developing policies.

Significant risks remain.¹ In the absence of coordinated state leadership, AI adoption in schools is often uneven, driven by local capacity and vendor offerings rather than a coherent statewide vision. These actions risk widening inequities, creating inconsistencies in student protection, and leaving educators without clear expectations for what constitutes responsible use. Conversely, strong state leadership will position AI not as a stand-alone technology initiative but as part of a coherent strategy to strengthen teaching and learning and prepare students for a rapidly changing future.

AI GUIDANCE

During the past year, more states developed

statewide guidance on AI usage in schools, bringing the total to 34 by the end of 2025.² States that do not yet have guidance may soon. For instance, the Illinois legislature directed its state board to develop such guidance by July 2026.³

State leaders who adopted guidance early have recognized it as a living document that must evolve, and they have doubled down on strategies for sustained implementation. North Carolina's governor signed an executive order creating an AI Leadership Council and an AI Accelerator, which functions as a cross-agency hub. While not education specific, the order identifies the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as a partner that is expected to support AI awareness, training, and foundational understanding for students, educators, and the broader public.⁴

After adopting guidance and a resolution affirming the importance of AI in preparing students for the workforce and civic participation, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in October 2025 voted to establish an AI committee to promote safe, thoughtful integration of AI in K-12 education.⁵

CURRICULUM AND TUTORING

Massachusetts's governor launched a pilot curriculum teachers will use to introduce more than 1,600 students across 30 districts to foundational concepts, technologies, and societal implications. Through hands-on activities, project-based learning, and ethical inquiry, the curriculum will explore how AI works, its responsible use, and applications.

Maryland's K-12 tutoring pilot is testing AI's instructional value and responsible use. Launched by the state education agency in 2024–25 and continuing into 2025–26, the pilot uses the Khanmigo tool and has reached about 4,350 students across two

counties. Implementation has focused on middle-grade mathematics tutoring in schools identified for targeted support and improvement. Maryland also has professional development resources for educators in place, and more are planned.⁶

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

AI advances are prompting policymakers to seek ways to better prepare students for college and careers. In July, Oregon's governor signed an agreement with Nvidia to enhance workforce development in "AI-driven roles in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and healthcare innovation" as well as facilitating foundational AI literacy in K-12 and collaboration with universities.⁷ Mississippi's governor also signed an agreement with Nvidia to embed AI education and training within postsecondary institutions and workforce programs while building educator capacity to teach emerging technologies.⁸

Microsoft announced a statewide effort to bring Microsoft Copilot and Teams for Education to Washington classrooms for free starting in 2026 and continuing for three years. The goal is to strengthen students' reading and digital literacy, boost productivity, and build critical thinking.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Throughout 2025, educator professional development on AI became increasingly embedded within broader initiatives, though the consistency and quality of implementation were frequently unclear. A survey found that districts typically developed AI training in one of three ways during the 2024–25 school year: a do-it-yourself approach, reliance on nonprofit or other educational organizations' resources, or through training provided by technology companies.⁹ District leaders also noted that the need to balance AI training with other high-priority professional development demands creates a complex landscape, often limiting the depth and breadth of AI-focused opportunities.

New Jersey awarded \$1.5 million to 12 school districts to experiment with AI tools

for teaching and learning, building students' AI literacy, and providing educators professional development on responsible, effective AI use. Some of the funding supports career and technical education pathways, helping students gain hands-on experience with AI and robotics.¹⁰

Another **Massachusetts** pilot is designed to equip high school educators with the knowledge, tools, and collaborative networks needed to integrate AI meaningfully into teaching and learning. The professional development pilot includes curriculum design workshops, training on ethical applications, and ongoing peer and expert collaboration.¹¹

States have used surveys, interactive tools, and public forums to inform district leaders and educators about emerging AI policies, guidance, and statewide initiatives. Some states have convened AI summits to raise awareness, build shared understanding, signal expectations and priorities, and support implementation.

Delaware's AI Innovation Education Summit in January 2026 was open to educators, administrators, school board members, and district technology staff statewide. The state had already developed guidance.¹² The summit, which highlighted initiatives underway, made clear that Delaware has moved beyond the question of whether AI should be used in schools. The need for guardrails was a central theme. The education agency emphasized safety, privacy, and accessibility, including plans to provide districts with guidance, vetted resources, and best practices.

North Carolina has hosted an AI summit for educators for two consecutive years in which educators learn about emerging trends, share best practices, and build a common understanding of the state's AI guidance and initiatives. North Carolina also developed a robust suite of on-demand workshops, webinars, demonstrations, and instructional materials.¹³

DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Because policymakers must remain grounded in evidence-based decision making, it is encouraging that several states have begun collecting data on how AI tools are being used and what results they produce. For a pilot

using Khanmigo that reached 45,244 students in 112 schools, **Indiana's** state education agency surveyed teachers at the end of the 2023–24 school year.¹⁴ Results and site observations were presented to the Indiana State Board of Education. A similar report for 2024–25 is expected in spring 2026.

Maine's education agency is also studying how schools are integrating AI tools, with findings expected in spring 2026. Platforms like MagicSchool have thousands of educator accounts statewide, and state leaders recognized they need data to inform policy, guidance, and professional learning supports rather than relying on informal observations and anecdotal feedback.¹⁵

WHAT STATE BOARDS SHOULD EXPECT NEXT

With more than 30 states having AI guidance documents in place, the focus in 2026 will likely shift toward their evolution: clarifying expectations for districts and aligning AI use with broader goals for teaching, learning, workforce readiness, and student well-being. State boards will face growing pressure to ensure that AI is neither reserved for a few schools nor driven by vendors but instead reflects a coherent statewide vision that balances innovation with equity, safety, and local control. In 2025, **Ohio** became the first state to require every K-12 school district to adopt a formal AI use policy—either the state model or a locally developed policy aligned with it—by July 1, 2026.

At the same time, demand for evidence of effectiveness will intensify. As pilot programs proliferate and initiatives expand, state boards will be asked to support data collection, research, and evaluation to understand AI's impact on instruction and student outcomes. Professional development will remain a central challenge, likely expanding at scale but varying in quality, which will require state-level leadership to set guidelines, coordinate resources, and reduce reliance on ad hoc or vendor-led training.

Leading states will distinguish themselves in 2026 not by how quickly they adopted AI but by how thoughtfully they governed it, measured its impact, and supported educators through sustained, system-level strategies.

AI in education remains a priority for state board members. For this reason, NASBE convened its EdTech Advisory Group in October 2025 to examine emerging best practices and state policy trends related to AI. The group will continue to convene in 2026 to learn from experts, share experiences, and advance policies that support the responsible, strategic, and equitable use of AI to strengthen teaching and learning.

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NOTES

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14 Indiana Department of Education, "AI-Powered Platform Pilot Grant Final Report: 2023–2024."

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