

Reframing K–12 AI Policy Executive Summary

Policy Priorities from the Rochester Provocations

In December 2025, the TeachingAbout.AI project convened school librarians, instructional leaders, university researchers, and AI experts in Rochester, New York. The panel produced eight deliberately uncomfortable statements published as the Rochester Provocations. Where the companion field report addresses educators, this report addresses the policymakers whose decisions create the conditions in which practices can change. The guiding frame is Neil Postman's ecology of technological change: a new technology is never simply added to a system, it transforms it. The arrival of generative AI has not resulted in our prior schools plus a chatbot; it has changed every interaction between teacher, student, and school. These changes cannot be isolated, contained, or reversed.

AI policy is being made with unusual speed—thirty-five states have issued formal guidance—yet most of it treats AI as a discrete technology to be governed through procurement additions and acceptable-use restrictions. That posture is necessary but not sufficient. The deepest issues AI raises—assessment validity, educator preparation, the protection of human teaching capacity, the public-health dimensions of consumer AI marketed to minors—are old, unresolved problems AI has made impossible to ignore. AI is the catalyst, not the cause. Effective AI policy is therefore an instructional initiative, not a standalone technology one.

Across the eight provocations and the resulting policy discussions, three recommendations recur: name the certified school librarian explicitly in AI policy, guidance, and funding as the most cost-effective AI capacity investment available in 2026; fund redesign, not procurement so that public dollars are going to teacher time for assessment and curriculum redesign rather than tool subscriptions; and treat consumer AI products marketed to minors as a public-health matter with a response based on harm reduction. The example priorities below translate the provocations into concrete starting points for each audience.

FOR SUPERINTENDENTS & DISTRICT LEADERS

- **Move AI from the technology office to the curriculum office.** Name a certified school librarian as co-lead of the district AI working group, and require an instructional problem statement for every AI purchase.
- **Lead with validity, not cheating.** Discontinue AI-detection subscriptions and redirect the savings to assessment-redesign professional learning; pilot Black Box and Voice-First assessment in two to three units per grade band.
- **Issue an annual permission-to-redesign memo** naming what divergence is authorized, what evidence is requested, and what supports are funded.

FOR BOARDS OF EDUCATION

- **Require a relational-capacity analysis** before approving any reduction in certificated staff offset by AI tooling; protect librarian FTE, counselor caseloads, and advisory time as stewardship of human capacity.
- **Adopt a restorative-first academic integrity protocol** and require an equity impact statement for AI policy revisions, with an annual disaggregated report on AI-related discipline outcomes.
- **Decline stand-alone “AI policy”** where updated acceptable-use and academic integrity policies suffice; ask instead for an annual instructional report on AI from the curriculum office, including the certified school librarian.

FOR STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION

- **Require a course in educational measurement for initial teacher certification.** Assessment validity cannot be defended by educators who never met the concept in their training.
- **Position AI as an instructional issue, not a technology issue.** Publish a model policy framework subordinating procurement to instructional design, provide regulatory cover for structural assessment pilots, and align AI literacy guidance with the UNESCO and OECD frameworks.

FOR STATE & FEDERAL ELECTED OFFICIALS

- **Extend social-media safety statutes to AI chatbots marketed to minors:** age verification, default privacy, and design transparency, with regulatory scrutiny of engagement-driven design.
- **Resist federal preemption of state AI regulation,** and appropriate funds for teacher release time in AI-era redesign—with public libraries funded as community AI literacy partners.
- **Fund the research gap.** Direct state and federal research dollars toward the irreducibly human components of teaching, and codify AI as a supplement to—not a substitute for—certificated services.