

EDSAFE AI Alliance Announces Inaugural Cohort of Spark Fund Awardees to Move AI Governance from Policy to Practice

Ten school districts and networks selected to receive specialized assistance to deploy SAFE-aligned AI implementation strategies on the ground

Brooklyn, NY. — The [EDSAFE AI Alliance](http://www.edsafeai.org), a project of [InnovateEDU](http://www.innovateedu.org), announced the first round of grant recipients for the [EDSAFE AI Spark Fund](#), a specialized Technical Assistance (TA) program designed to support the real-world implementation of SAFE-aligned AI policies across schools, districts, and state education systems.

While many educational institutions may have AI policy drafts, most lack the internal capacity to operationalize them. The Spark Fund bridges this gap between high-level policy and everyday practice. This program goes beyond traditional cash grants by matching awardees directly with the EDSAFE AI Alliance's network of vetted Technical Assistance partners. These specialized, expert teams provide direct, hands-on support to help leaders address specific "problems of practice," ensuring governance structures become actionable in real-world learning environments.

"Writing an AI policy is only the starting line. The real challenge is turning those high-level frameworks into daily classroom practice," said Erin Mote, CEO of InnovateEDU. "We aren't just giving education leaders guidance and wishing them luck. We are placing expert teams alongside them to ensure that AI governance is human-centered, rigorous, and actionable, and above all anchored in protecting the safety and well-being of young people."

The inaugural cohort represents a diverse cross-section of educational leadership across the nation, ranging from urban charter networks and virtual schools to large county systems and suburban districts:

- East Bernstadt Independent School District
- New Trier Township High School District 203
- Norwalk Public Schools
- Phalen Leadership Academies
- Snoqualmie Valley School District
- The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School
- Traverse City Area Public Schools
- Washington Leadership Academy & DC AI Collaborative
- Knox County Public Schools
- Winterset Community School District

Throughout the coming year, these ten awardees will take steps to tackle critical AI implementation challenges. These types of challenges include student data privacy safeguards, human-in-the-loop academic integrity protocols, equity and access in AI procurement, and staff AI literacy programs.

“This first round of awardees is ready to do the hard, necessary work of operationalizing AI governance,” said Andrea Claver, Project Manager for EDSAFE AI. “By pairing these district teams with specialized Technical Assistance partners, we’re giving them the direct support needed to solve their unique challenges and build sustainable capacity for the long haul.”

Lessons learned and model practices developed by this inaugural cohort will be documented and shared across the national EDSAFE network to help inform policy and practice for school systems nationwide. To follow updates on these groundbreaking implementation projects throughout the year or to learn more about future funding rounds, visit [Website Link].

About the EDSAFE AI Alliance

The EDSAFE AI Alliance, a project of InnovateEDU, uses the [SAFE Benchmarks Framework](#) to align stakeholders toward equitable outcomes for learners and better environments for educators. By providing targeted guidance and guardrails, our benchmarks transform disparate efforts into a unified path for safe, ethical progress.

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