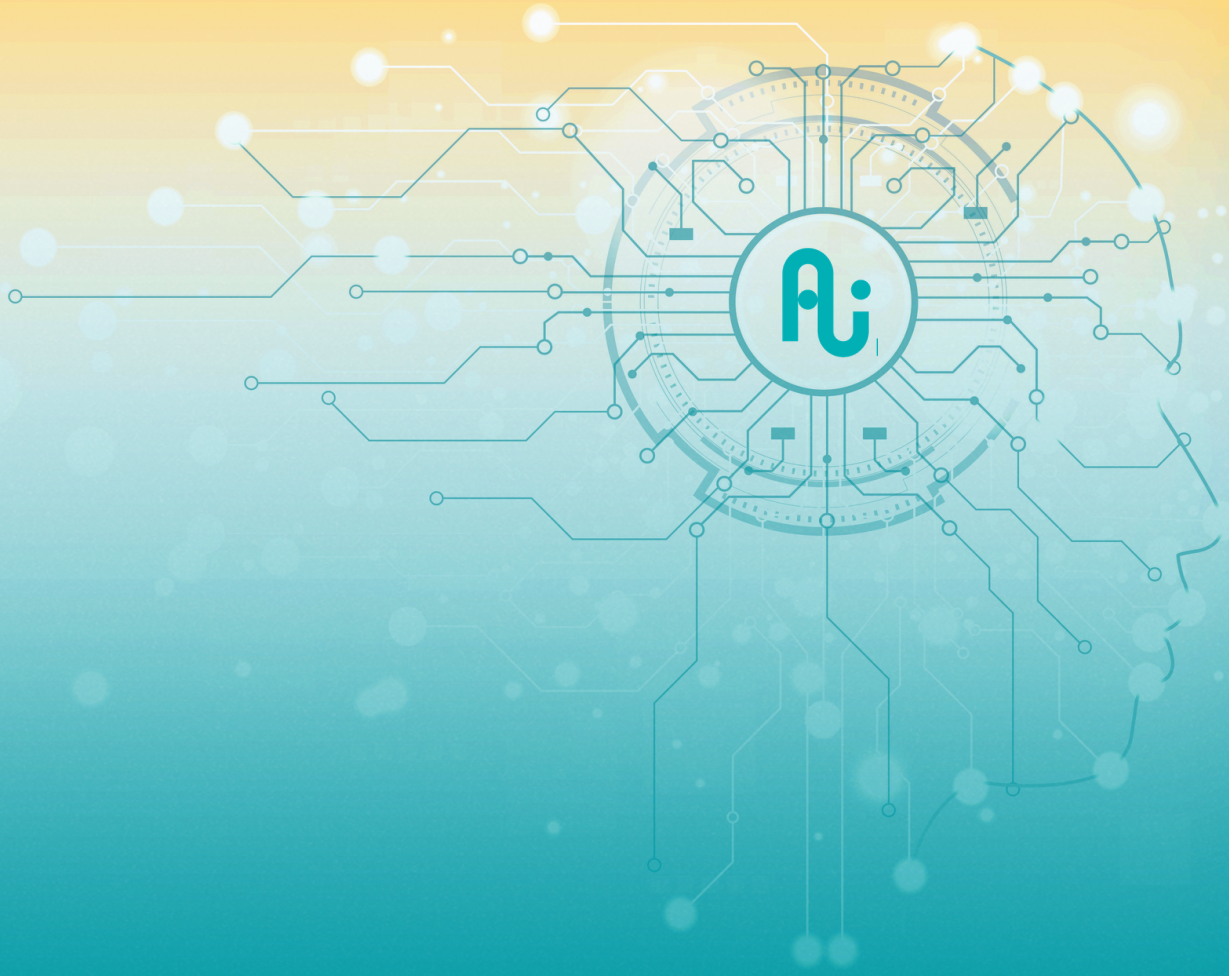
HISD

Houston Independent School District

AI Guidebook



Document Purpose

This document provides an overview of the Houston ISD strategy, guidelines, and resources available for staff and students to engage with generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology. This is Version 3 of a living document. We anticipate we will update this document as generative AI technology continues to evolve. This document was last updated November 4, 2026.

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Our “Why” and Future Aspirations	5
What is Generative Artificial Intelligence?	7
Houston ISD Generative AI Principles & Framework	8
Generative AI Use Guidelines for All Stakeholders	10
Generative AI Use Guidelines for Students	11
Generative AI Use Guidelines for Staff	15
Houston ISD Vetted Generative AI Tools List	18
Monitoring Tools and Processes	20
AI Support Team Overview	21
Generative AI in Board Policy	21
Frequently Asked Questions	22

Sources

This guidebook was informed by the following sources:

- AI For Education
- Houston ISD Artificial Intelligence Advisory Committee composed of a group of experts from across industries:
  - BCG
  - Dale Chu
  - Google
  - Hewlett Packard Enterprises
  - Intel
  - NOV
  - Oxy
  - Texas Center for Advanced Computing
  - Westlake
- ISTE
- Principles of AI Usage, Concept Paper, Mike Miles
- TeachAI Toolkit
- United States Office of Educational Technology

SECTION
01

Introduction

The rapid development of generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) presents both unprecedented opportunities and critical responsibilities for public education.

GenAI has the potential to augment teaching and learning through personalized instruction, content creation, and workflow support. However, as public education faces a fundamental shift in the nature of work and knowledge, Houston ISD views generative AI not merely as an add-on technology to be constrained by traditional practices, but as a catalyst to deliberate system redesign. The world our students will enter—particularly in the 2030 to 2035 timeframe—demands higher-level competencies, critical thinking, and AI collaboration.

This document outlines Houston ISD's comprehensive strategy for engaging with AI tools in an ethical, safe, and outcome-driven manner. Its purpose is to provide all district stakeholders—students, families, teachers, administrators, and staff—with a shared vision and framework for AI adoption.

By establishing robust safeguards around data privacy, academic integrity, age-appropriate access, and human accountability, the district ensures that safeguards act as protective guardrails rather than barriers to progress. Ultimately, these guidelines serve to future-proof Houston's educational experience, ensuring all students gain vital AI literacy and problem-solving skills required for success after graduation.

> This guidebook is a living document and will continue to evolve alongside changes in generative AI technology and district strategy.

The district prioritizes the safety and security of our students and staff alongside the opportunity for engagement with technology of the future.

"Instead of asking how artificial intelligence can be constrained to preserve the current system, education leaders should be asking how artificial intelligence could be used to redesign the system so that it produces better outcomes for students."

— Mike Miles, Superintendent

HISD's AI Journey

HISD's approach to AI is designed to evolve. As the technology and the world of education and work continue to change, the district has progressively expanded from establishing responsible-use guidelines to building AI literacy, increasing access, and integrating AI into learning and professional practice.

Each milestone represents another step toward preparing students and staff to learn, work, and lead in an AI-enabled future.



Our "Why" and Future Aspirations

SECTION 02

This generation of Houston ISD learners represents our greatest opportunity yet *to instill the future-focused skill sets that will drive success beyond the classroom.*

As middle-skilled jobs shrink and higher-skilled roles become more prevalent, aptitudes like critical thinking, lifelong learning, teamwork, information literacy, communication, and AI collaboration will be crucial to success in the workplace.[1]

By embracing cutting-edge technologies like generative AI, Houston ISD can empower students to develop proficiency in vital 2035 competencies. Responsible, safe, and equitable access to generative AI will open new avenues for personalized learning, accelerated skills acquisition, and augmented creativity and problem-solving. Moreover, cultivating robust generative AI literacy across our community will ensure our students graduate future-ready and well-equipped to thrive.

While this transition brings challenges, Houston ISD views it as a tremendous opportunity to help transform education. With the right strategies and support systems in place, our students can lead the way as resourceful, tech-savvy innovators and leaders in the era of artificial intelligence.

In Houston ISD, generative AI is not used to replace thinking or professional judgment. Instead, it is intentionally used to raise the level of thinking—reducing time spent on first drafts and surface-level tasks so students and staff can focus on reasoning, critique, synthesis, and decision-making.

The table below outlines our aspirations and the ways in which students and staff can expect to engage with generative AI in the next several years.

1. Jobs for the Future Report. https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2023/

	Students	Staff
Our Goal	Students can leverage generative AI tools to enhance their learning and prepare for Destination 2035 careers. They understand what generative AI is and isn't, its opportunities and limitations, and ways to apply the tools judiciously to augment their own knowledge, creativity, and problem-solving abilities in their studies.	Staff can leverage generative AI tools to enhance their work efficiency but also create enriched learning environments for our students. They understand what generative AI is and isn't, its opportunities and limitations, and ways to facilitate engagement of these tools within the classroom.
Opportunities	• Students below 6th grade will engage with generative AI Chatbots through teacher modeling only. Furthermore, they can interact with educational tools with AI capabilities, such as Amira or Microsoft Reading Coach • Students 6th grade and above who have parental consent will engage with generative AI Chatbots in both a Teacher-guided and/or supervised manner • 11th and 12 Grade Students at all High Schools can enroll in the semester-long Foundations of AI Elective Course	• AI Literacy and Guidelines Training for Staff • Optional professional development and ongoing opportunities for professional development

District Inititatives to Increase AI Literacy

FutureReady Cohort (Staff)

The FutureReady Cohort serves as the district's foundational training initiative designed to equip all staff—including both campus-based personnel and central office employees—with the knowledge and skills necessary to ethically and effectively integrate generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) into their daily responsibilities. The core purpose of the training is to improve personal and professional workstreams by teaching participants how to use district-approved AI tools and apply best practices for responsible GenAI engagement.

The grand overview of the cohort is rooted in the mission to prepare students for the future and ultimately improve student outcomes by making it easier for adults to apply AI into their practice. This journey requires all employees to continually adapt and grow their skills, with the program guiding staff through an AI Competency Continuum toward a goal of reaching at least the "AI Navigator" stage. The training ensures all staff understand the district's overall AI strategy and implementation , covering critical areas such as defining GenAI, discussing its ethical implications, exploring use guidelines, and prioritizing safety and privacy concerns.

HISD AI Competency Continuum

AI Explorer AI as a TOOL	AI Navigator AI as a PARTNER	AI Innovator AI as an INITIAL BUILDER	AI Pioneer AI as a CATALYST
I can use AI to complete a task.	**I can work with AI to improve my thinking and work.**	**I can use AI to build and improve solutions.**	**I can use AI to improve how others work.**
• Draft everyday work products • Write effective prompts • Review before using or sharing	• Analyze documents or data • Refine outputs through conversation • Adapt outputs for audience & purpose	• Build resources, tools, or workflows • Test and improve AI-built solutions • Use files/context to improve results	• Redesign recurring team workflows • Create reusable AI-supported practices • Help others adopt and improve AI use

AI + CTE Pathways (Students)

The core purpose of integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into Career and Technical Education (CTE) is to build AI literacy and cultivate future-ready skills across the modern workforce. Recognizing that industries increasingly require AI competencies, the district's strategy is to proactively build AI readiness by embedding AI literacy and the use of AI-specific tools directly into CTE instruction. This grand vision prepares students for future occupations by introducing tools that enhance key functions across various pathways.

For instance, AI automates system monitoring and cyber threat detection in IT, optimizes traffic and identifies intrusions in Networking, improves productivity and automates testing in Programming, and enhances CAD design while supporting robotics in Engineering. Furthermore, AI assists in diagnostic imaging and predictive analytics in Health, guides weld-quality analysis and facilitates smart construction in the Trades, and drives individualized education program (IEP) drafting and real-time translation in Human Services.

The overall goal is to ensure students, whether in the initial pilot pathways (Advanced Cloud Computing/ Fundamentals of Computer Science and Principles of Applied Engineering) or other future-integrated pathways, are equipped with the skills needed as AI adoption becomes standard across industry sectors. HISD will continuously refine AI integration in CTE pathways through ongoing feedback from industry partners to ensure alignment with evolving workforce expectations.

What is Generative Artificial Intelligence?

SECTION 03

To begin, it is important to have a basic understanding of what AI is (and what it isn't). Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is a branch of computer science aimed at creating machines that mimic human intelligence. It's used to perform tasks that usually require human thought, like understanding language, recognizing patterns, or making decisions. Types of AI range from systems doing specific tasks, like recommending movies or correcting typing errors to more advanced forms that can generate new content or predict future outcomes. AI is also behind self-driving cars and AI assistants, like Siri or Alexa. Essentially, AI allows machines to learn, adapt, and perform tasks like humans, often more quickly and accurately. It's a rapidly evolving technology that's already a part of our everyday lives.

2. Bringing AI to School: Tips for School Leaders (ISTE); https://cms-live-media.iste.org/Bringing_AI_to_School-2023_07.pdf
3. AI for Education

How Generative AI Works

Generative AI starts with a very large dataset (which might include text files, web pages, images, and more). The data is used to train a computer algorithm known as a Large Language Model (or LLM). LLMs, which can identify and predict patterns in language, are the underlying plumbing of generative AI.

Once an LLM is trained, applications like ChatGPT or DALLE-2, can be built upon them, thereby creating powerful tools that can generate customized content based on a user's specifications. While these tools are impressive, they have their limitations and their output is dependent on the quality and diversity of the data they were trained on as well as the skills and knowledge of the human prompting the input.[2] In this document, we will refer to tools like Copilot, Gemini, ChatGPT, and others as generative AI tools.

Types of Generative AI

Conversational AI (Chatbots)

Simulate human-like interactions, allowing users to engage in text or voice-based conversations with artificial intelligence.

Examples: ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot

Multimedia AI

Processes, understands, and produces various types of media, including images, video, and audio simultaneously.

Examples: DALL-E, Adobe Firefly

Generative Search

Produces dynamic search results in a variety of formats in response to natural-language questions and queries.

Examples: Perplexity, Andi Search

AI Writing Support Tools

Use natural language processing to analyze and enhance written content.[3]

Examples: Grammarly, Quill, HyperWrite

Houston ISD

Generative AI Principles & Framework

SECTION 04

Many of the principles outlined here share common ground with guidance already developed by organizations such as the National Education Association (NEA), UNESCO, and the OECD, particularly in areas such as human oversight, transparency, and the need for careful implementation.

When we deploy Artificial Intelligence in Houston ISD, we do so to achieve two primary objectives:

1. To enrich learning and prepare students for an AI-enabled future
2. To enhance professional practice, functional efficiency, and overall system performance.

As public education adapts to a rapidly changing workforce, Houston ISD approaches AI not merely as an add-on technology, but as a deliberate lever to redesign systems and improve student outcomes.

Usage Principles

Advancing Student Outcomes

AI must directly contribute to achieving clearly defined student outcomes—including academic performance, college and career readiness, and closing achievement gaps—or improve central office operational efficiencies (such as route optimization or financial drafting) to support schools.

Centering Strong Connections

Strong teacher-student relationships remain central to learning. While AI-enabled tools provide targeted practice and real-time feedback, a human teacher of record remains strictly accountable for student learning, well-being, and instructional oversight in every classroom.

Human Ownership

Humans remain responsible for supervising and evaluating other humans. AI may analyze performance patterns and surface actionable insights, but automated systems should not replace human judgment, contextual understanding, or leadership in personnel evaluations.

Workforce Impact

AI must demonstrate a clear and substantial improvement in performance outcomes before impacting the workforce. Reallocations or staffing adjustments derived from AI efficiencies are considered only when driven by meaningful gains for students, not short-term cost savings.

Preserving Human Authority

Humans retain sole decision-making authority over high-stakes determinations affecting student placement, discipline, evaluation, safety, and employee status. Routine or repetitive operational choices may be delegated to AI systems under explicit district guardrails.

Continuous Review

AI systems must be transparent in how they function, explainable to those affected, and subject to ongoing evaluation against disaggregated student outcome data. Stakeholders must understand how AI is used, and systems must be regularly audited to eliminate bias, prevent hallucinations, and track impact across specific student populations.

Operational & Classroom Guiding Principles

The following principles were informed by various sources, including TeachAI's Toolkit for School Districts, input from local experts, as well as current guidance from the United States Office of Educational Technology.

While our principles of AI usage guide macro-level policy and system redesign, our operational principles establish the day-to-day guardrails for classroom instruction, data management, and ethical usage across all Houston ISD campuses.

Prioritizing Learning & Training

Promoting AI literacy among students and staff is foundational to the support of safe and responsible use. Creating a detailed, comprehensive, and achievable plan for ongoing AI Literacy training for staff and grade appropriate training for students is crucial to developing effective policies that guide responsible AI implementation.

Prioritizing Human Originality

Generative AI will not replace independent thought, but can be a powerful tool to enhance our work and support creativity with proper guardrails and when used appropriately. We know that 'keeping humans in the loop' is essential to ensure AI tools produce accurate and reliable content, and we must rely on teachers to use their professional expertise when incorporating AI into their practice.

Committing to Evaluation, Accountability, & Transparency

To uphold evaluation, accountability, and transparency with generative AI, Houston ISD will implement clear processes to monitor and analyze AI outputs for accuracy, track AI usage data, and require proper disclosure when AI tools are leveraged for assignments or content creation.

Promoting Accessibility & Equity

We will provide a grade approriate and equitable opportunity for engagement with AI for all of our students. In addition, we will explore the opportunities that AI provides while also critically evaluating the risks of bias, misinformation, and inequitable access.

Focusing On Safety, Security, & Privacy

AI use must align with existing regulations to protect student data privacy, including federal laws such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA). We will not share personally identifiable information with consumer-based AI systems and will ensure parental consent for student use.

Ensuring Academic Integrity

Generative AI should augment the learning process, not undermine it. Houston ISD's AI Guidebook outlines requirements for proper citation and attribution when leveraging AI-generated content. We expect students to uphold academic integrity by producing authentic work that genuinely demonstrates their own knowledge and abilities, with AI acting only as an enhancement aid.

Generative AI Use Guidelines For

All Stakeholders

SECTION 05

When we use generative Artificial Intelligence tools in Houston ISD, we do so to achieve two key objectives: for students, we use generative AI to enrich learning and prepare students for the future; for staff, we use generative AI to enhance professional practice and increase efficiency and productivity and to enhance student learning. All interactions with generative AI tools will be grounded in these objectives and informed by the principles below:

Five General Core Use Guidelines For All Stakeholders: Students and Staff

01 **Keep Data Private:** Students and staff should use enterprise-level generative AI tools. If staff elect to use consumer-based AI platforms, staff should never input personal, sensitive or confidential data into any system.

02 **Ensure Parental Consent:** Maintain awareness of age restrictions on generative AI tools, as some restrict usage to those 18 years of age and older, while others permit access from age 13 with parental consent. Ensure parental consent has been obtained and documented before using these tools.

03 **Use Secure Devices and Vetted Programs:** Use secure devices when accessing AI tools. Make sure the device you are using is protected with the latest security updates, firewalls, and antivirus software. Furthermore, staff and students should use only approved generative AI tools and programs (See the list of approved programs on page 15).

04 **Review all generated content for factual accuracy and bias:** AI can "hallucinate," providing seemingly correct answers that are factually incorrect. These systems also have a tendency to provide biased responses. Users must be aware that they need to critically review all information provided by the generative AI tools to ensure that AI content does not perpetuate bias or discriminate against HISD stakeholders.

05 **Properly Cite AI Generated Content:** AI can and should be used to support our work. We must always attribute support when using generative AI tools and not pass off AI-generated content as one's own. As a district, however, we do not promote the use of AI detection software, as they are not sufficiently accurate.

A Note on AI Detectors: One recent study from Perkins et al. (2024) found that the 39.5% accuracy rates of six major AI detectors could be reduced another 17.4% when presented with prompts specifically designed to avoid detection. These detectors also show bias against non-native English speakers, with one detector falsely flagging 97.8% of TOEFL essays as AI-generated in a 2023 study (Zou et al., 2023)

Generative AI Use Guidelines For

Students

SECTION 06

While all Houston ISD stakeholders should follow the Use Guidelines outlined in section five, section six provides specific Use Guidelines for students as well as consequences for misuse of this technology. Students should always work with their teacher and campus to clarify guidelines and expectations for acceptable use.

Below 6th Grade

Students enrolled below 6th grade may use district-approved generative AI tools as part of teacher-directed learning.

I can...

- Use approved AI with my teacher.
- Use AI to support my learning.

I cannot...

- Use unapproved or unauthorized AI.
- Misuse AI or violate district policy.

Above 6th Grade

Students 6th grade and above may access generative AI tools for approved educational purposes under the following conditions:

- Parental Consent: Parents/Guardians must provide written consent allowing their child to access generative AI tools for educational use.
- Teacher Permission: The student must receive prior approval from their teacher outlining the permitted educational task(s) for each use of generative AI.
- Responsible and Ethical Use: Students must use generative AI responsibly at all times, adhering to all district technology usage policies.
- AI use is integrated into the Future 2 educational model to develop critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and responsible AI literacy.

I can...

- Access generative AI tools with parent/guardian consent AND teacher permission, including Google Gemini, Gemini Notebook, Adobe Creative Cloud, and other vetted applications.
- Future 2 students: Use approved generative AI.

I cannot...

- Access generative AI tools without parent/guardian consent and teacher approval for each use on school devices or networks.
- Use generative AI in a way that violates data privacy, academic integrity, or district policies.
- Access generative AI for personal or non-educational purposes on school devices or networks.

Personal vs. School Use

Students must use generative AI only for approved educational purposes when using school-issued devices, accounts, or networks. Misuse of generative AI may result in loss of access or other disciplinary consequences.

Houston ISD reserves the right to monitor student use of generative AI on its devices and networks. Violations of district use guidelines, as outlined in this guidebook, may result in disciplinary action.

Student Use Guidelines

Transparency

Students must always ensure that they have permission to use generative AI in their coursework and must disclose its use with proper attribution. Some examples of AI use that must be disclosed are:

- Paraphrasing or quoting AI-generated text
- Incorporating AI-generated images or other media
- Indirect support such as brainstorming, research, and proofreading/editing

How to Attribute GenAI Usage

Depending on the assignment - teachers can set expectations on the type and level of citation or disclosure required. In some cases, a full citation may be needed (e.g. for a formal research paper or essay). In others, a simple disclosure is sufficient (e.g. for brainstorming, email drafting, etc). Specify the extent and nature of the AI's assistance, as well as the name of the tool and the date it was used in accordance with the teacher's preferred style guide (MLA, APA, etc.).

This will generally involve the use of:

- In-text citations
- Footnotes or endnotes
- Works-cited list or bibliography

To further ensure transparency and accountability, students should be prepared to produce generative AI chat histories upon request.

Sample Citation MLA Format

Prompt, name of tool, version of tool, company, date of generation, general URL of tool

Microsoft Copilot. "Describe Hamlet's philosophical struggle with action and inaction and how it impacts the outcome of the play." Copilot, 17 March 2026, https://copilot.microsoft.com.

For more details on MLA citation with AI, visit https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/

Sample Citation: APA Format

Company, year of version, name of model including date, media descriptor in brackets, general URL of tool

Microsoft Copilot. (2026, March 17). [Chat message]. Copilot. https://copilot.microsoft.com.

For more details on APA citation with AI, visit https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt

Sample Disclosure of AI Use

AI was used in the following ways to support the research and development of my project:

- Brainstormed ideas and narrowed down topic using Microsoft Copilot
- Conducted initial research using Perplexity
- Edited and proofread final draft using Grammarly

The sample disclosure above might be used at the beginning, or at the end, of an AI-enhanced document.

The bluebonnet was named the State Flower of Texas on March 7, 1901. (Microsoft Copilot, 2026)



Image generated with Adobe Firefly using the prompt "field of Texas bluebonnets," 2026.

Cite text and images in presentations with a note naming the tool and prompt used, as well as the year.

Verification

Always check the accuracy of information obtained from generative AI chatbots and search tools. Ensure the information is current and relevant to your topic by using traditional search engines and/or databases to find similar information from recognized authorities.

In addition, students must critically evaluate all AI-generated content for bias and inaccuracies/hallucinations before submitting their work.

- **Bias:** Occurs when the AI's outputs reflect prejudiced views or unequal representation, often stemming from the data on which the model was trained.
- **Inaccuracies/Hallucinations:** Instances in which the AI presents fabricated, inaccurate, or misleading information as if it were true. When the AI encounters gaps in its knowledge, it will invent answers to fill them. generative AI chatbots have knowledge cutoffs that can impact the accuracy of outputs (e.g., ChatGPT-4o has a knowledge cutoff of October 2023).

Originality

Students should use AI to enhance, not replace, their creativity, beginning with their own ideas before turning to AI for support.

Students should maintain awareness of plagiarism and academic integrity when using AI-generated content. It is acceptable to use writing tools such as Grammarly to check for accidental plagiarism, but not to rely on these tools to 'fix' plagiarized content.

Students should always differentiate between their own creative contributions and the AI-generated content, and credit the AI tool where necessary to uphold academic integrity standards.

Safety & Responsible Use

Students must use generative AI tools in a safe, responsible manner that protects the privacy and well-being of themselves and others. Under no circumstances should students input personally identifiable information (PII) about themselves, classmates, teachers, or any other individuals into an AI system. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Full names
- Addresses
- Phone numbers
- ID numbers

Additionally, students should never prompt an AI assistant to generate any hateful, explicit, illegal, or inappropriate content related to violence, pornography, substance abuse, hate speech, or other disturbing subject matter. Generative AI should only be used for lawful, ethical purposes that align with the HISD Student Code of Conduct.

If students ever encounter concerning outputs from an AI system, they should immediately stop interacting with it and report the issue to a teacher or administrator.

Consequences for Improper Use

Below, please find guidance on proposed consequences for misuse of generative AI Tools. The district is embracing the opportunity to learn about this emerging technology, and as such, will prioritize a learning approach to address issues instead of a punitive one. If a student is unsure about what appropriate use looks like, communication with trusted adults on campus is crucial.

Action	Proposed Consequence
A student submits assignments produced by generative AI as their own without proper disclosure or citation.	This is a level II* act of misconduct, as outlined in the HISD Student Code of Conduct. Recommended Disciplinary Response: • Discipline referral and parent notification • Assignment resubmission ***Note:** Campuses should determine a campus-specific response in alignment to district guidance in Level II incidents.
A student inputs inappropriate prompts related to violence, bullying, sexual content, or other disturbing thoughts into any generative AI platform.	This is a level III act of misconduct, as outlined in the HISD Student Code of Conduct.* In compliance with State Law, the district is responsible for addressing this issue and mitigating harm done. Recommended Disciplinary Response: • Discipline referral and parent notification • Loss of generative AI/internet privileges for a period of time as determined by administration and AI Support Team and re-education on safe internet practices. • Restitution or restoration, as applicable ***Note:** Campuses should determine a campus-specific response in alignment to district guidance in Level III incidents.
A student uses a non-approved generative AI tool during school hours. **Note:** For students 6th grade and above, the only tools currently approved for student use are Google Gemini, Gemini Notebook, and Adobe Creative Cloud.	This is a Level I act of misconduct as outlined in the HISD Student Code of Conduct. Recommended Disciplinary Response: • 1:1 conversation with the student to share about the safer alternatives.

Generative AI Use Guidelines For

Staff

SECTION 07

In addition to the Use Guidelines outlined in section five, Houston ISD staff members are responsible for adhering to the additional guidelines below. Staff should work with their manager or senior district leadership to clarify guidelines and expectations for acceptable use. HISD-approved AI tools are professional thinking environments—similar to a notebook or draft workspace. They are used for planning, analysis, drafting, and refinement. AI platforms are not systems of record. Final decisions, official communications, and approved documents must always be stored in HISD-approved systems.

Staff Use Guidelines

Supervise Student Access & Use	• Ensure students have obtained proper parental consent prior to providing students access to district approved generative AI tools • Monitor use frequently and address flags for inappropriate use (refer to guidance on consequences in Student Table) • Share questions or concerns related to Acceptable Use with the AI Support Team. Information about the AI Support Team can be found on page 17.
Prioritize Safety and Data Security	• Never enter personally identifiable information (PII) into an AI tool. The definition of what constitutes PII can be found in Board Policy FL (Local). • Review and comply with the district's Acceptable Use Guidelines for all AI tools used in the classroom • Do not use unvetted AI tools without confirming FERPA and COPPA compliance • Explicitly teach students to protect their own data privacy when using generative AI
Practice and Model Responsible and Transparent Use	• Use generative AI to enhance, not replace, your professional expertise and creativity • Critically evaluate AI-generated content for bias and inaccuracies/hallucinations • Revise outputs to reflect your voice and professional expertise and judgment • Disclose the use of generative AI in formal work products and public-facing documents in alignment with Houston ISD's statement of use guidance (see page 9).
Build Your Own AI Literacy	• Take advantage of professional development opportunities • Understand what AI is and the basics of how it functions • Learn and practice effective prompting techniques • Explore both the potential benefits and the limitations/concerns of AI tools
Adapt and Enhance Pedagogy	• Ensure AI-generated content does not replace district-vetted, high quality instructional materials • Use generative AI to personalize instruction to meet student needs • Adapt assignments to accommodate AI-assisted learning where developmentally appropriate
Grading	• While AI can assist in grading, teachers must remain involved in the process to ensure fairness and accuracy, especially in subjective areas.

A Note on Approved AI Tools for Classroom and Instructional Use

Currently, only the following generative AI tools have been vetted and approved for teacher use with students in classroom settings:

- Google Gemini
- Microsoft Copilot
- Microsoft Reading Coach
- Adobe Creative Cloud Suite

Teachers are prohibited from using any other generative AI tools directly with students unless the tool has gone through the district's vetting and approval process.

If a teacher wishes to use a generative AI tool with students beyond the currently approved list (Magic School, Mizou, etc.), they may submit a request to the district's AI Support Team by emailing AI_Support_Team@Houstonisd.org.

The IT department will thoroughly vet the proposed tool for safety, privacy, accuracy, accessibility and alignment with curriculum standards before granting approval.

Staff Use of AI for Personal Productivity

For their own productivity and planning purposes, staff may choose to utilize any generative AI tools they wish. However, staff are required to maintain rigorous privacy and security practices when using AI tools that may involve any student or staff data. Violations of data privacy policies may result in disciplinary action consistent with district procedures.

Teachers should follow the guidelines below when considering when and how to provide opportunities for AI use.

What should the AI use look like?

- **Integration** during core instructional block, as long as the integrity of the lesson, as presented in the High Quality Instructional Material remains
- **Content support** for assignments during intervention or LSAE block or for support with at-home assignments

Notes: Students in grade 3-5 should engage with generative AI chats only in a teacher-modeled manner. They will not have individual access to generative AI Chats. Students 6th grade and above who have obtained parental consent can engage with generative AI chats independently. AI resources should not replace teacher/student interaction or replace materials available through the selected HQIM curriculum. Instead, it should be used to enhance learning opportunities for students and improve teacher productivity and efficiency.

Consequences for Improper Use

Guidance on proposed consequences for misuse of generative AI Tools can be found below. The district is embracing the opportunity to learn about this emerging technology, and as such, will prioritize a learning approach to address issues. At the same time, the district may apply a consequence, up to and including termination, for repeated violations in profound situations of neglect and poor judgement or those that violate other district policies or professional practices.

Action	Proposed Consequence
Teacher does not monitor student usage and/or permits irresponsible or inappropriate student use	A formal written warning, issued by school leadership, that outlines the expectations for supervising students during AI tool use and the importance of adherence to these expectations; retraining on the potential risks and benefits associated with AI tools. Notification to or from the AI Support Team: AI_Support_Team@houstonisd.org
Teacher violates student privacy by entering personally identifiable information (PII) into an AI tool	Mandatory retraining on data privacy and district technology policies. Notification to or from the AI Support Team: AI_Support_Team@houstonisd.org
Teacher relies on AI for grading and providing feedback without checking the outputs	A review of all grades and feedback provided through AI for accuracy. Notification to or from the AI Support Team: AI_Support_Team@houstonisd.org
Teacher replaces High Quality Instructional Materials for AI-created lessons	Counseling on the importance of High Quality Instructional Materials; a requirement to submit lesson plans for review for a specified period.
A staff member inputs inappropriate search terms related to violence, bullying, sexual content, or other disturbing thoughts into the generative AI tool	Temporary suspension pending an investigation to determine the extent and impact of the staff member's actions; subsequent consequences determined in consultation with legal counsel. Notification to or from the AI Support Team: AI_Support_Team@houstonisd.org
A staff member passes off AI-generated content as their own without proper citation	Mandatory retraining on the ethical use of AI in education, including proper disclosure or citation procedures; issuance of a public correction, retraction, or acknowledgment of the original AI source.

Houston ISD Vetted

Generative AI Tools List

SECTION 08

HISD uses a federated AI approach—deploying different AI platforms for different purposes (such as reasoning, workflow automation, or curriculum support). This ensures stronger security, avoids vendor lock-in, and allows each tool to operate within the most appropriate protected environment.

Microsoft Reading Coach

Who Can Use It?

Available to any student in Houston ISD.

Rationale for Selection:

This tool operates within Immersive Reader and provides students with opportunities for independent fluency practice and real-time coaching.

Adobe Firefly (Adobe Creative Cloud)

Who Can Use It?

Recommended to students, 8th grade and above with parental consent.

Rationale for Selection:

This suite of creative applications utilizes generative AI to power a number of visual effects, such as image generation, expansion, and colorization.

Google Gemini Notebook

Who Can Use It?

Available to any staff member in Houston ISD.
Available to students, 6th grade and above with parental consent.

Rationale for Selection:

Gemini Notebook is an AI research and synthesis tool that generates responses exclusively from user-uploaded source materials, supporting curriculum-aligned analysis and summarization. This source-restricted design significantly reduces hallucinations and ensures content relevance and reliability for instructional use.

Khanmigo for Teachers (Khan Academy)

Who Can Use It?

Available to any teacher in Houston ISD.

Rationale for Selection:

Khanmigo for Teachers is an AI-powered instructional assistant developed by the nonprofit Khan Academy and designed specifically for educators. It reduces administrative workload by supporting lesson planning, differentiation, assessment creation, and instructional drafting with minimal onboarding required.

Canva Magic Studio

Who Can Use It?

Available to any staff member in Houston ISD.
Available to students pending teacher and campus approval.

Rationale for Selection:

Canva Magic Studio embeds generative AI tools into the familiar Canva design platform, enabling efficient creation of visuals, text, and presentations. Built-in education safety guardrails support creative expression and digital literacy while maintaining classroom-appropriate content.

Houston ISD Vetted

Generative AI Tools List

M365 Copilot Chat

Who Can Use It?

Available to any staff member in Houston ISD.
Not available to students.

Google Gemini

Who Can Use It?

Available to any staff member in Houston ISD.
Available to students, 6th grade and above with parental consent.

ChatGPT Edu

Who Can Use It?

Available to any staff member in Houston ISD.
Not available to students.

Rationale for Selection of Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, and ChatGPT Edu:

ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot are powered by OpenAI's GPT models while Google Gemini is powered by Google's Gemini models. These generative AI tools sit within the Houston ISD domain. They are enterprise generative AI tools, which means that chat history is not used to train the models. We highly recommend these tools above as an alternative to the consumer versions of the AI tools. HISD has signed Data Sharing Agreements with OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft.

Microsoft 365 Copilot

Who Can Use It?

Available to a subset central office staff based on role.

Rationale for Selection:

This generative AI tool sits within the Houston ISD domain and plugs into the Microsoft suite of productivity tools including Word, Powerpoint, Teams, and Outlook. Through the plug-in, the tool has access to all data stored within the Microsoft suite of programs and can answer questions using that data as an input. It is an enterprise generative AI tool, which means that any sensitive data that is shared with this tool does not get shared back with the AI for training purposes.

"We see AI as the technical substrate of the next education system — one that protects children, supports staff and prepares students for a world where AI is part of every industry."

Kerri Holt
Chief Technology Officer
Houston ISD

SECTION 09

Monitoring Tools and Processes

To ensure the responsible and secure implementation of Generative AI across the District, HISD employs preventative controls designed to block the movement of sensitive data before exposure occurs, in addition to monitoring and alerting mechanisms.



Data Loss Prevention

Flags movement of sensitive data



Pop-Up Notification when users access consumer-based AI platforms

Reinforces organization's acceptable use guidelines, especially when dealing with Consumer-based AI tools



Usage Tracking Software

Provides IT with visibility into user traffic to AI-powered web tools to inform updated user support and policy



AI Support Team Referral Form

A mechanism for staff to refer issues to the AI Support and Data Governance Team. Issues include but are not limited to:

- Inappropriate Student or Staff Use
- Requests for new tools
- Request for a pilot
- Data breach

AI Support

Team Overview

SECTION 10

Team Purpose and Responsibilities:

This cross-functional team of district leaders provides support and oversight for stewarding the safe integration of generative AI tools into the district framework. Key Monitoring responsibilities include:

- Reviewing usage tracking reports to understand organizational access to generative AI platforms
- Monitoring security / data breaches collected through loss prevention software and determine appropriate response
- Determining appropriate responses to issues with acceptable use by staff and students.
- Monitoring and collect data on AI-powered pilots launched in Central Office to inform scale-up strategy
- Considering adoption of new AI tools and software, as appropriate

Team Composition:

- Chief Technology Officer
- IT Security Specialist
- Deputy Chief of Staff
- Executive Director of Academics People & Operations
- Director of AI Integration
- Director of Innovation
- Deputy Chief of Counseling, Curriculum Design & Assessment
- Senior ED of Support from each Division
- HR Lead
- Finance Lead
- Legal Team Lead
- AI Initiative Lead

Report incidents and/ or request support: AI_Support_Team@houstonisd.org

Generative AI in

Board Policy

SECTION 11

The Houston ISD School Board includes guidance on use of generative AI in Board Policy. The following policies detail the acceptable use of generative AI and reference this guidebook.

EIA Local
The district's definition of Academic Integrity includes appropriate attribution when using generative AI to support document creation

FL
This policy clarifies the importance of protecting personally identifiable information, especially when using generative AI tools

CQ
This policy outlines acceptable use of generative AI tools

SECTION 12

Frequently Asked Questions

Students

What generative AI tools can I use?

Depending on your grade level and parental consent, students have access to a suite of vetted district generative AI tools. This tool list will continue to evolve as AI technology evolves. Currently, our tool offerings are as follows:

Students in 3rd-7th grade:

- Teacher-guided experiences with Google Gemini and Microsoft Copilot Chat
- Teacher-guided experiences with Adobe Creative Cloud

Students 6th grade and above with parental consent:

- Independent, supervised use of Google Gemini
- Independent, supervised use of Adobe Creative Cloud
- Independent, supervised use of Gemini Notebook

All students:

Based on your teacher and school's selection, students may engage with other tools that may have some AI functionality embedded in the tool. For example, some educational programs (like Amira) have AI built into the program.

What happens if my parent or guardian does not provide permission for me to use generative AI?

We respect the decisions that parents or guardians make for their children. If you are not given permission to access generative AI, your teacher will work with you to make sure you have the support you need to learn and complete your assignments.

What happens if I see or experience something that confuses or concerns me when I'm using generative AI?

We recommend that you share this information with a trusted adult at your school. This way, the adult can support you with how to understand why the AI might "Hallucinate" or say something unrelated to what you asked of it. Remember, generative AI is technology. Technology is not perfect and will make mistakes.

In what ways can I use generative AI tools? Am I allowed to use it to help me with my work?

Houston ISD encourages students to use generative AI as a learning support tool to prepare for the future workforce. When permitted by the teacher, AI may be used for activities such as brainstorming ideas, organizing thoughts, conducting research, or receiving feedback.

AI may not be used to bypass learning, complete assignments dishonestly, or misrepresent original work. In CTE courses, AI may support ideation, practice, simulation, and feedback, but it may not replace hands-on skill demonstration, performance tasks, or certification-aligned assessments. Teachers will clearly communicate when and how AI use is appropriate, and students are expected to follow academic integrity expectations, including properly citing any AI-assisted content.

Frequently Asked Questions

Staff

How do I know which of my students has permission to access generative AI?

The Central Office team will manage student access to generative AI tools based on age and parental consent. Additionally, each campus is responsible for keeping a record of parent permission decisions granted for AI tool usage. Before a teacher brings generative AI into the classroom, please ensure that you review student permission. If a student does not have permission to access generative AI independently, you must ensure that the student can still participate in the learning and is not placed at a disadvantage.

Do I have to use Microsoft Copilot Chat, Google Gemini, or ChatGPT Edu? Can I use generative AI Chatbots that I've paid for myself to support my work?

We highly recommend our staff not use non-district approved chatbots for work-related activities. Sensitive data is not protected in a way that complies with FERPA policy. For example, if you uploaded a data file into your personal ChatGPT for analysis that includes student ID numbers and names, you have now violated HISD Data privacy policies. Microsoft Copilot Chat, Google Gemini, and ChatGPT Edu reside within the HISD domain and protects sensitive data. We trust that our employees will use their best efforts to access the enterprise-level generative AI tools to support their efficiency and productivity in a way that keeps district data private and secure.

Can I use generative AI tools outside of the approved list with my students?

We hope our staff continue to explore generative AI tools. And, we also know that we must take great care and responsibility to put vetted products in front of our students. Teachers should allow only students to use district approved AI tools, such as the preferred Google Gemini or Microsoft Copilot Chat, if they are at the 6th grade or above and have parent permission. Even with vetted tools, teachers must review images for appropriateness and accuracy before showing them to students. For example, a teacher might ask a generative AI image creation tool to show a picture of what a revolutionary war hospital might have looked like. Before embedding it into a lesson, the teacher is responsible for checking the image for accuracy and suitability for the students.

Who can I talk to if an issue arises on my campus or in my department concerning a generative AI tool?

It is our expectation that campus and central office staff will communicate openly about experiences with generative AI tools. This landscape is new and consistently evolving. If you run into a concerning situation, whereby the generative AI chatbot hallucinates or shares concerning or inaccurate content, it is important to share that information with the AI Support Team. Instructions for how to connect with that team can be found on page 19.

How is AI used in Houston ISD, and is it considered a system of record?

AI tools in Houston ISD are not systems of record and function only as professional planning and drafting environments. All AI-assisted work is pre-decisional, requires human review, and any finalized or official materials must be stored in HISD-approved systems (e.g., email, SharePoint, OneDrive, SIS, ERP).

Frequently Asked Questions

Families

Are generative AI tools appropriate for my child, especially if they are 6th grade or above?

Generative AI tools have different age restrictions. At this time, Houston ISD will provide access to Google Gemini to students, 6th grade and above who have obtained parental consent. The district will prioritize responsible use training for both students and staff as well as support students if content is returned that is inappropriate.

Is my student's data protected while using generative AI tools?

Student data protection is a top priority in Houston ISD. If a student uses consumer-based AI tools (such as public versions of ChatGPT) outside of district-managed platforms, any information entered may be shared with the company that operates the tool.

Houston ISD provides access to secure, district-managed AI environments, including the enterprise version of Google Gemini for staff and students at the 6th grade and above. These tools do not use student or staff data to train external AI models and operate within HISD's security and privacy requirements, including access controls, monitoring, and safeguards designed to prevent the exposure or misuse of sensitive information.

What if I have questions or concerns about how my student engages with generative AI tools?

With any new initiative, we expect our families to have questions about how their students might engage with this new technology. A family should feel comfortable in reaching out to their child's teacher with questions. In addition, families can also submit concerns to the AI Support Team. Instructions for how to connect with that team can be found on page 19.

If I do not give my student permission to access generative AI tools, are they able to still engage in learning?

Yes. Houston ISD believes AI literacy is an important skill for Destination 2035, and we respect the decisions families make regarding generative AI use. Students without parental consent will continue to receive high-quality, equitable instruction without direct AI tool interaction, including alternative learning opportunities as needed. Teachers may model AI use or provide AI-supported materials that do not require individual student accounts, and no student will be disadvantaged academically or in grading.

What has changed since the last update of the Guidebook?

From Version 2 (1.23.26) to Version 3 (8.7.2026), the Guidebook has been updated to include the new Future 2 Initiatives and Google NotebookLM was updated to Gemini Notebook.
The introduction has been updated to include context from Superintendent Miles' paper on 'Principles for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in School Systems.' Executive Leadership Principles have been added.