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Uploaded by: Beth Jarrett
Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of SB720 – Education – Artificial Intelligence – Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

February 26, 2026

FAVORABLE

Free State PTA (FSPTA) represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools, and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. ***We are offering a favorable testimony in support of Senate Bill 720.***

Put into perspective only a couple of seconds, that's how long it takes for a student to generate an entire essay. Then after spending another minute refining the style and adjusting the tone, they copy and paste the results into their assignment and hit submit. During this, artificial intelligence (AI) has the ability to collect and store student records, jeopardizing personal information. As parents, students, and educators, we have seen firsthand how AI has challenged the standard of education and continues to pose significant risks if left unregulated. These detrimental effects are already becoming apparent, ranging from academic dishonesty to the loss of critical thinking and creativity, the ability to bypass certain academic standards, and the overall threat to intellectual growth and privacy.

This bill mandates important steps to help mitigate the harmful consequences of AI in the classroom including requiring the State Department of Education to provide certain guidance on artificial intelligence to local school systems and other educational stakeholders through an online platform, the designation of a coordinator for the use of it by the county Board of Education, the establishment of the Maryland AI Education Collaborative on Artificial Intelligence in K-12 Education to study the uses of it in each local school system, and perhaps most importantly the requirement of the development of clear guidelines and practices regarding AI. As parents, students, and educators, we want to know we are under an educational system that protects our data and honors academic integrity through earned success, not one that rewards automated shortcuts and promotes a variety of safety risks.

Free State PTA urges the committee to issue a favorable report on SB720.

Thank you,
Free State PTA, Advocacy Committee

Committee Report re Chromebook Survey Results 1-26

Uploaded by: Betsy Tao

Position: FAV

Technology Committee Report:

Community Feedback on School Chromebook Use

Montgomery County Council of PTAs

Date: January 26, 2026

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Executive Summary

The MCCPTA Technology Community disseminated a survey seeking community feedback on school Chromebook use on November 20, 2025. Based on the 1,003 responses received from November 20, 2025 to January 12, 2026, the clear majority of respondents

- Believe there is too much overall Chromebook use,
- Have concerns about how Chromebooks are used,
- Have encountered students misusing the school-issued Chromebooks for non-academic uses like playing video games and watching videos, including age-inappropriate or disturbing content, and
- Would like increased use of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, and paper for instruction and homework.

Additionally, the free-written responses express a desire for more effective controls on what students can access through school-issued Chromebooks and for more information from schools and teachers about how Chromebooks are used in school in terms of overall screentime and in terms of what content their student accesses.

Background and Objectives

On November 20, 2025, The MCCPTA Technology Committee launched a survey to collect parent and caregiver feedback on school Chromebook use. The survey was motivated by a recently published article in the New York Times by Dr. Jean Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University, titled "The Screen That Ate Your Child's Education" (November 16, 2026). The survey was also motivated by a desire to create a forum where parents and caregivers can share their own observations and experiences with school Chromebooks, as anecdotes have been circulating informally for many years regarding observations of technology use in classrooms.

Concurrently, the Technology Committee was also working on issues relating to the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in MCPS schools, because MCPS was revising its technology policy, IGS, to account for generative AI and other "emerging technology"). In the course of that work, the Technology Committee discovered that generative AI features were already accessible on students' school Chromebooks (in the form of chatbots like CK-12 Foundation's Flexi). It became clear that any learning impacts of generative AI would be inextricably tied to the existing technology ecosystem in MCPS schools – including how much access – especially un-monitored access – students had to their school Chromebooks during the school day. That said, this survey does not specifically seek

caregiver input about AI. Rather, it seeks to understand caregiver views of Chromebook use and misuse more broadly.

Survey Method

The Technology Committee primarily disseminated the survey through existing MCCPTA listservs for PTA presidents and PTA delegates, as well as the committee's own listserv. Under Article XI of MCCPTA's bylaws, "[e]ach member local PTA shall be eligible to be represented by 2 delegates or their alternates as selected by the local PTA according to its own bylaws." This method is dependent on local PTAs' presidents and delegates to share the survey with their local school through local communication methods (e.g., newsletters, ParentSquare messages, etc.).

Survey Results

The survey consisted of several questions that offered respondents pre-determined answers to select as well as three opportunities to share free-written responses. *See* Appendix A. For this summary, we have combined and organized the free-written responses to provide samples that help elaborate and illustrate the rest of the data. The full responses to all questions, excluding any personally identifying information, are linked in Appendix B.

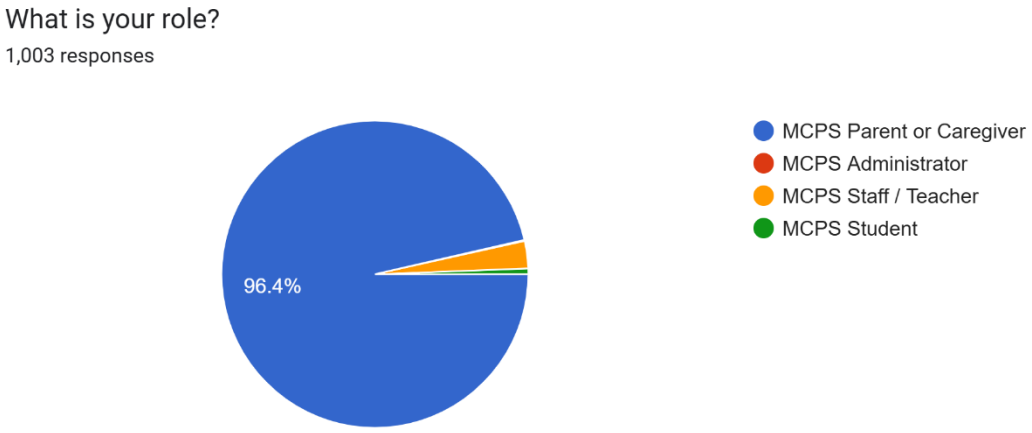
I. Demographics

The survey was open to MCPS caregivers, students, teachers, and administrators. The survey collected a total of 1,003 responses as of January 12, 2026, at 2:00 pm.

A. Responses by Role

The vast majority of respondents self-reported as a parent or caregiver. This is likely because the survey was distributed through PTA forums. Some of these respondents also serve as MCPS staff (e.g. teachers, substitute teachers).

Twenty-nine respondents self-reported as MCPS staff or teachers, six self-reported as MCPS students, and one self-reported as a MCPS administrator. Respondents are affiliated with many different schools and grade levels (due to multiple children or different roles, i.e., caregiver and teacher).



B. Responses by School

There was a particularly large volume of responses from Tilden Middle School, Thomas W. Pyle Middle School, and Wyngate Elementary School. The following are the top ten schools by number of responses to the question: "Which school does your child attend?"

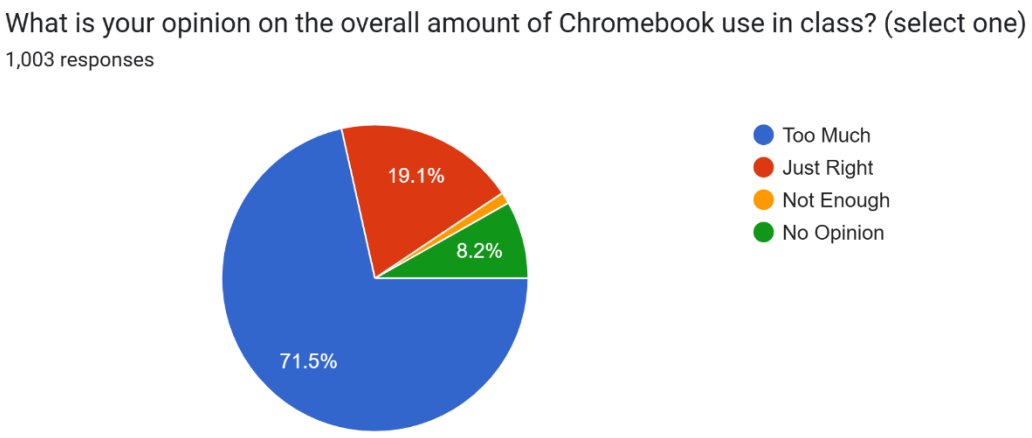
Which school does your child attend?	# of Responses
Tilden Middle School	97
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School	75
Wyngate Elementary School	57
North Bethesda Middle School	44
Poolesville High School	38
Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School	29
Sligo Creek Elementary School	28
Walter Johnson High School	25
Silver Creek Middle School	22
Forest Knolls Elementary School	22

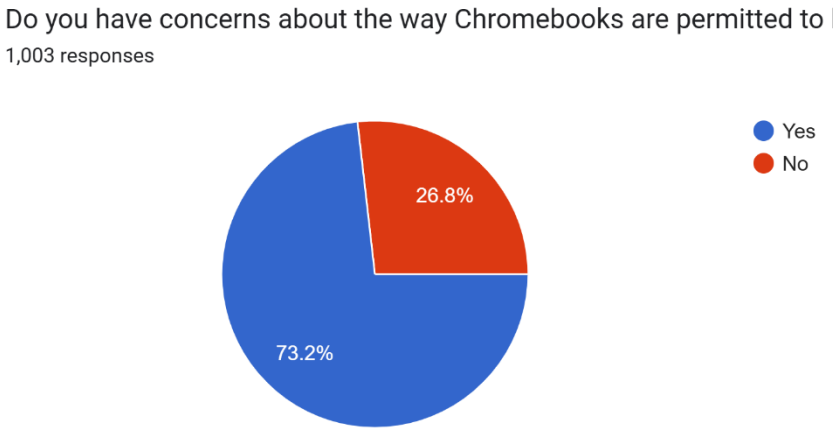
The following are the top ten schools by number of responses to the question: "If you have more than one child in an MCPS school, please select a second school option, or leave blank if not applicable." Three of the top ten responding schools in this category were also in the top ten responding schools in the category above: Walter Johnson High School, North Bethesda Middle School, Wyngate Elementary School, and Thomas W. Pyle Middle School.

If you have more than one child in an MCPS school, please select a second school option, or leave blank if not applicable.	# of Responses
Other	40
Walter Johnson High School	23
North Bethesda Middle School	21
Garrett Park Elementary School	21
Wyngate Elementary School	20
Thomas W. Pyle Middle School	17
Walt Whitman High School	16
Farmland Elementary School	16
Chevy Chase Elementary School (3-5)	16
Albert Einstein High School	16

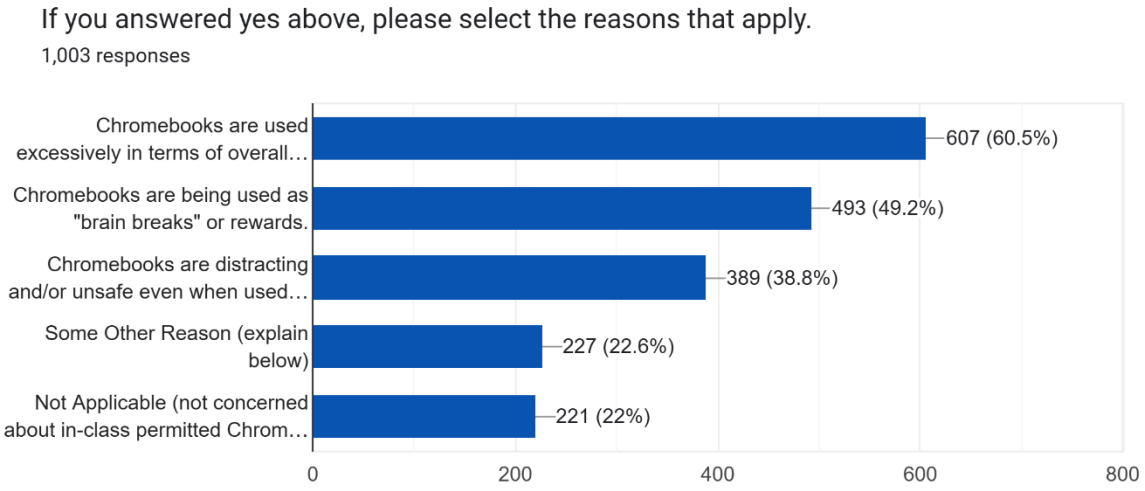
II. Clear Majority Stated There Was Too Much Overall Chromebook Use and Had Concerns About Permitted Chromebook Use

Over 70% of respondents thought there was too much overall use of Chromebooks in class (71.5% said there was too much use, 19.1% said there was just right use, 1.2% said there was not enough use, and 8.2% had no opinion). Over 70% of respondents had concerns about the way Chromebooks are permitted to be used in class (73.2% said YES they had concerns, and 26.8% said NO they did not have concerns).





Those respondents who had concerns about the permitted uses of Chromebooks were offered possible reasons for concerns and could check more than one box. Concerns selected included excessive overall screen time (60.5%), use of Chromebooks as “brain breaks” or rewards (49.2%), and that Chromebooks are distracting or unsafe even when used for educational applications (38.8%).



The free-written responses expanded on respondent concerns. Representative samples of these responses are provided below.

A. The overall time spent on screens is excessive, especially for younger students.

“I volunteered in my children’s classrooms weekly when they were in K-2 (at TPES). I was shocked at the amount of Chromebook use even by grade 2.”

“Credible, peer-reviewed, scientific studies show that screen use causes all kind of damage to children's brains and recommended use for children 6 and older is no more than 30-60 minutes a day, and yet students spend much more time than that just using their Chromebooks at school and doing homework on a device at home.”

“During open house in K, the children were on screens (either using Chromebooks or engaging w videos on smart board) for nearly 2 hours. I did not expect children so young to be so heavily using technology when developmentally they need movement, play, read-alouds and relational interaction”

“Screen time is detrimental to kids’ attention, and take away from valuable time when kids can be engaged in true learning or socializing with peers. This generation of kids will have plenty of screen time in their lifetime, and starting them at Kindergarten at school is absolutely unnecessary and detrimental.”

B. Use of education technology is harming learning and student wellbeing.

“The post-pandemic reliance on screens in school is clearly linked to poor learning for kids of all ages.”

“[A]ll of this investment in technology has not shown any improvement in achievement; on the contrary, performance has dramatically declined to crisis levels for both math and literacy.”

“I am a statistic[i]an and psychological scientist. Research shows that student use of screens in class is, on average, a huge negative. Students simply do not use screens to learn or take notes nea[rly] as often as they use them inappropriately. In fact, a careful experiment showed that students who took notes using paper and pen outperformed students who took notes using a computer.”

“I think this technology does not actually promote learning in any way that cannot be achieved or exceeded by pencil and paper. In addition, it increases overall child [] screen time and poses temptations to playing games anytime a student is bored, which is something we should be trying to reduce rather than increase. I think we need to bear in mind that these kids' brains are developing and it is not just the outcome on any given test or homework that matters, but the mental development that occurs. All indications right

now are that doing things on screens decreases learning and proper mental development relative to, e.g., writing with a pen or pencil on paper."

"Research is clear: chromebooks are terrible for learning."

"It contributes to declining literacy, attentional problems, unfettered access to our children's data, and screen addiction. Perhaps most alarmingly it decreases social skills because they're staring at a screen instead of collaborating with their classmates. Further, when the tech is down, the teaching stops, which is unacceptable."

"Most EdTech and 'educational' applications are a scam, do not teach kids as well as pencil/paper and hands-on methods, and do not improve performance."

"As a substitute teacher I have seen the students become fully unengaged with their work as Chromebook use has become nearly 100% of so much class time. In resource rooms I see kids with most or all of their assignments not turned in."

"Use of Chromebooks has been extremely detrimental to my children. It has made their education worse and put them in danger."

"In many classes like history and English, students are supposed to and required to access multiple sources which means opening multiple tabs and reading documents online and then highlighting information and copy/pasting it into a graphic organizer on a different window. As someone in my 40s, this kind of activity makes my brain go crazy because I'm constantly clicking back-and-forth and I can't figure out what window is what window. Children we know, scientifically, there is data that handwriting paper and pencil and reading on paper are better for creating memories and better for learning because of the visual distance and the speed at which they hand write versus type. It's not age-appropriate to require a 11 or 12 year-old sixth grader to have to do this."

"I've also seen assignments my older child (5th grade) completes on his Chromebook, and much of his time appears to be spent formatting slides, choosing images, and making projects visually appealing rather than engaging deeply with the content. My children are strong students and complete their work, but the unstructured access to Chromebooks creates unnecessary distractions. Even so-called 'educational' games often function as little more than mindless entertainment."

"I keep hearing that the benefits of EdTech are overblown and in many cases detrimental. A 2023 report by a UN body found that not only is there little evidence to support the benefits of digital technology use in classrooms, but the 'studies' that claim it is beneficial are funded by the very companies trying to sell it. Our kids are already on screens enough without having to be bombarded with them at school."

C. Use of Chromebooks has harmed the way teachers teach.

From an MCPS teacher: “Some teachers have stopped teaching. They play a pre-recorded video or have students lead themselves through online lessons. Classes are no longer interactive, our kids are spending 6 hours a day on chromebooks followed by 2-3 hours on them at home for homework.”

From an MCPS teacher: “I now call chromebooks pacifiers. They are being used to manage student behavior instead of engaging students or provide education opportunities. MCPS is not monitoring screen time. MCPS is not monitoring what/ how students access. Students are becoming if not already have been addicted to screens. You have removed telephones but continue to allow free reign of chromebooks. . . . As a teacher, I see students who are no longer comfortable writing on a piece of paper. They struggle to be without an electronic device in a 90 minute block. They assume that they can just find the answers later on the computer.”

“Too much exposure to screen throughout the day. It also feels like teaching has moved virtually, there are classes where kids spend time looking at lessons for a good chunk of the class - kids need teachers to teach.”

“After attending a full day with my child in class, I noticed that for some subjects, teaching is much more digitally done than I had expected. The teacher(s) were not teaching using the black board, but rather assisting the students to read the lesson on their laptop, and to do the lesson individually on their chromebook. I am surprised, that normal teaching: explaining concepts, challenging the students with a Q & A, and using stories to tell concepts didn't really happen. I think the question should be much broader than asking about the use of laptops.”

“It wasn’t until halfway through my child’s 6th grade year that I realized that she didn’t have textbooks. She was asking Siri to answer a question for her Spanish homework and I asked her why she wasn’t referencing her text book. She is now in 8th grade and said that though her teachers post slides online, some of them annotate their slides during class but don’t provide the annotated slides to the students. Therefore, the posted slides are not always useful for studying or helping with homework.”

D. Using online assignments prevents caregivers from seeing graded work and helping students study at home.

“My 4th grader is now taking all her math quizzes online only. This is a horrible way to do math. It means the parents do not get graded quizzes sent home. We cannot easily see how are kids are doing. We cannot see where they are struggling. How are we supposed to help

them? If I see in the online grade book that my child failed a quiz or test, but I never get to see that test, the questions she missed, or her work to try to solve them, I have no way to help her improve. MCPS seriously needs to rethink doing all of this online. It's NOT a good way to teach math."

"We can't see many assignments if they are submitted electronically"

"Without textbooks at home, it's hard for us to assist with homework and studying for quizzes and tests. I'm always looking for the material with my child."

"It is exceptionally difficult as a parent to support my children's educational journey where there is not a textbook being used to guide that journey. Each teacher uses canvas differently and there doesn't appear to be cohesiveness in approach and there for as parents and caregivers we are in a very difficult position when our kids ask questions of us and we can't revert back to the lesson from that day/week!"

E. Using screens as a reward leads to distraction and rushing through work.

"I don't like that they 'get to use it' in elementary school when done with work because I feel like my kid rushes through their work."

"Children being given time on chromebooks when work is done: promotes desire to rush through work and then makes is a challenge to transition back to class."

"[C]hromebooks as rewards have resulted in my child rushing through work to finish to get to the reward. Last year, my child expressed relief when they took the chromebooks back at the end of the year. I think there's a real love/hate relationship with the technology that leads to a point of stress or tension that isn't necessary in the classroom."

"In my experience letting kids (my son in particular) play even educational games on their Chromebook after their assigned work is done only motivates h[im] to rush through his work."

"According to the teacher my child will rush through the in class assignment to play games afterwards. I fear the learning portion is cut short. It also makes it hard for the teacher to complete in depth lessons with distraction in the class."

"Children rush through assignments so that they can spend time playing games."

"In first grade French immersion, students with a native French speaking parent are ahead of the class and often finish in-class work earlier than non-native French speakers. Those students have been permitted to use the Chromebook to fill time. To other students this feels like a reward that they will not be able to achieve. It is also distracting for a student

who is completing paper work when the student next to them is opening up a Chromebook and viewing content on the screen. It seems disruptive for class concentration and work completion as well as inequitable allotment of screen-time as a reward."

F. Students lack handwriting skills.

"My children's handwriting is atrocious despite our attempts at home to improve it."

"Bringing back handwriting lessons would be another terrific idea. My son is in 9th grade - he and all of his friends have completely illegible handwriting. Dropping that from the curriculum in 2011 was a huge mistake. If we go back to paper and pens, which we should - we also need to bring back handwriting. I'm so upset that my son missed out on this."

"The children are not practicing their handwriting, and some can barely write."

"PLEASE teach handwriting again. We know kids in high school who can't sign THEIR OWN NAMES for their driver's permits."

"Handwriting is terrible and we are also discovering that typing isn't taught at the ES level. If students are using computers to write they should know how to type."

"My 6th grader's hand writing is horrible - he rarely has to write by hand at school, so there isn't much practice for him."

III. Minority of Respondents Had No Concerns About Overall Amount or Manner of Permitted Chromebook Use

A minority of respondents felt that Chromebooks are used just right or not enough and are not concerned with how Chromebooks are permitted to be used. The free-written responses supplied by those in the minorities for these two questions express views with a few recurring themes.

A. Educational technology prepares students for screen-based testing, work, and life beyond school.

"It is realistic - when they graduate and become employed they will be using computers all day in many professions."

"Many kids benefit from Chromebooks and need to learn how to use the tech/programs for real world purposes. We can't just hand them pencils and papers and expect them to be prepared for college and future careers."

“I think the amount of computer work is appropriate to the current state of the workforce, etc. If we went to paper and pencil, we would only be backsliding. The way of the future is through computer.”

“This is something children/students will have to learn to navigate in life; I welcome them learning to navigat[e] the best practices and uses of tech.”

“I think it’s unreasonable to expect a kindergarten child to complete the Maps test without very much or any training at all on a Chromebook.”

“Our kids need to be computer literate and the best way for them to learn to be so is to use computers for school work. Once kids are out of school, the majority of the additional education and careers they will pursue will require them to know their way around a computer. Not every class should require them to use computers - and there should be ample time for things like PE, art, and other electives that don't require use of a computer. But some use is warranted as a way to train our kids to be successful in the future.”

“Our students need to learn how to use technology responsibly. A lot is done on the computer these days and students should be comfortable using it. I do recognize that it poses a challenge for teachers to monitor and make sure they are being used appropriately.”

“I think using a computer in school is an important skill that needs to be developed in our current society.”

“Mindfully integrating technology in schools is essential, because children must learn to navigate the digital world they will eventually live and work in. They need to understand how algorithms work and shape their experiences and develop the ability to manage distraction. Those are skills that can only be taught through guided, hands-on use of technology, not by avoiding it.”

“I think learning to use technology is key and there needs to be robust safeguards for kids so that they are not able to access content they shouldn't be accessing during times they should be learning.”

“I think Chromebook use is fine. The reality is that most white collar work is done on computers. Learning how to responsibly use the technology is important. I think schools have found a good balance. Math should be kept primarily on paper though.”

“Chromebooks are a tool that support lea[r]ning and access to content like Khan Academy.”

“Whether some people like it or not, the world beyond grade school INCLUDES technology and digital literacy. THEREFORE, I 100% think that if we decreased digital use, we would be doing a disservice to students as we would not be preparing them for what they will be required to know and use in the future. It is imperative that kids do learn how to use digital devices appropriately and in a variety of ways.”

“I think learning how to use computers is very important for our children’s future.”

“The permitted Chromebook uses I have observed so far in early elementary have been a huge benefit to my student. Applications like Happy Numbers and Boost allow my student to proceed at his own pace and get reinforcement and enrichment on specific skills as needed or appropriate. This level of individualized instruction wouldn’t be possible at a classroom level without the Chromebooks. It also allows the teacher to spend more time with the students who will most benefit from one-on-one in-person instruction. Additionally, because the curricula within the applications are taught consistently across learners, I believe these resources could be a significant boon to students who may not have a great connection with their teacher in a given year. . . . Facility with computers is an important skill and the engaging applications permitted by MCPS encourage students to learn to use computers in ways that will serve them well in the future.”

“Once a kid is in high school we need to be preparing them to be adults. I understand moving from middle to high school is an adjustment with restrictions on computers but at some point parents need to cut the cord and let the teachers decide what is best for their class. Computers are a part of every day life and trying to shield the teens from it is a waste of time. If lessons and a teacher is engaging then teens pay attention. If kids are distracted, then let them fail. That’s a life lesson. . . . Let teachers be in control of their classroom in high school. Teens need to learn how to work with distractions and still get the job done. That is life. We coddle the teens too much and they are unprepared for college or trade school or jobs. Once they leave mcps they are not being babysat anymore. If they are distracted they fail or get fired. Let them learn this in the environment of high school.”

“Computer use is a part of everyone's future. The kids need to know how to use this tool. Those who don't learn will be left behind and disadvantaged. They need to know how to type, how to take notes, how to compose and edit documents, how to research information…the list of computer skills they need for the future is quite lengthy. Another skill they need to learn is how to self-regulate their computer use. Furthermore, computers provide excellent interactive learning tools that would be unavailable without one (for example, Desmos, Duo Lingo, Quizlet, Delta Math, Khan Academy) and virtual textbooks that would be prohibitively expensive if purchased in hardcopy. I come from the generation where people were wringing their hands that calculators were going to be the end of people

learning math--the current debate over Chrome Books in the schools seems like the same discussion all over again with different words substituted. We look back at that and think how silly that was, and I predict that some day we will look back at this and think the same."

"Modern work environments for many of use requires the use of computers. Everyday life requires the use of computers, as we see through the sending of this survey via computer. Colleges require the use of computers for study. Withholding computers from our students will only set them behind as they further their education, enter the workforce, and the real world. We need to emphasize proper use, but they need to learn to use computers as part of their learning environment. And yes, computers offer distraction - but students who want to be distracted will always find ways to entertain themselves and others with computers or without."

B. Some students with disabilities benefit from technology.

"I'd appreciate better monitoring software and some breaks from staring at screens, but my child has an IEP and needs a Chromebook to support his learning/processing. Handwriting isn't an option for him and I don't want him to be singled as the lone Chromebook user forced to sit with the teacher."

"The appropriate use of Chromebooks depends on the student. Students with learning disabilities can benefit from more time on them. I trust the teachers, the learning center, and FIT/special ed teachers on making that judgement."

"My son does better typing than writing, and it is in his IEP he has access to a Chromebook."

"The use of the Chromebook has really helped my high schooler with ADHD to stay on top of his assignment submission and to focus on learning the content rather than being penalized for grammar and spelling mistakes and bad handwriting. Chromebooks provide great tools for children with learning difficulties and should therefore be allowed at school."

"First of all, thank you very much, MCPSMD, for providing Chromebook to students. My child is a special need child. He thrives on using technologies such as Chromebook at school as he learns to coordinate his hand writing. Even though he is getting better with hand writing thanks to his highschool teachers' patience, we think that our son would not be able to finish his schoolwork on time without the chromebook."

C. Providing Chromebooks to all families is convenient and equitable.

"Not everyone can afford a chromebook so it is a good thing that MCPS provided them to everyone. It is helpful especially to lower income families with multiple students."

“Chromebooks are useful for students as a source of information and access[. T]hey level the playing field and provide greater equity for students who couldn’t otherwise afford personal computers. However, too often in high schools students view them as a vehicle through which they can detach from class and disengage, rather than simply an easier way to complete work (particularly writing).”

“It's been enormously helpful to our family to have these offered free of charge.”

“The option to have one at home is fantastic. My child has used it at home for school sanctioned apps and learning platforms.”

D. Some respondents questioned the fairness of the survey.

“Don't ban or restrict the use of computers in school. Don't waste everybody's time by considering the musings of a few parents with too much time on their hands and a chronic inability (or unwillingness) to help their own children learn how to responsibly use learning technologies. The solution to parental confusion and laziness is not to go back to parchment and quill. Thank you.”

“This survey is incredibly biased. Decisions on Chromebook and tech use should be framed by teachers, MCPS instructional staff with professional expertise, and students. Parents are clueless.”

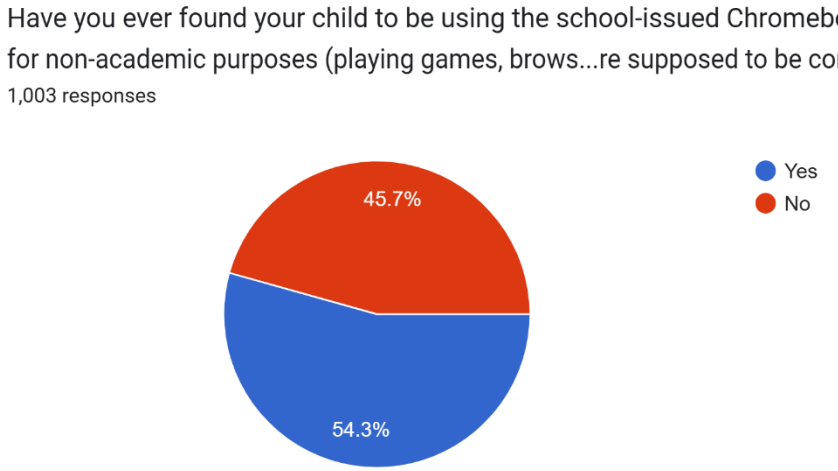
“I’m extremely concerned that the results of this survey may be used to advocate for a reduction in Chromebook usage that may not reflect the actual interests of the MCPS community. The survey distribution channels, messaging, and even the survey design (almost all questions have a negative valence) all seem likely to elicit negative feedback. . . . I sincerely hope that any reporting of the results of this survey will fully contextualize the negative biases that may have skewed responses.”

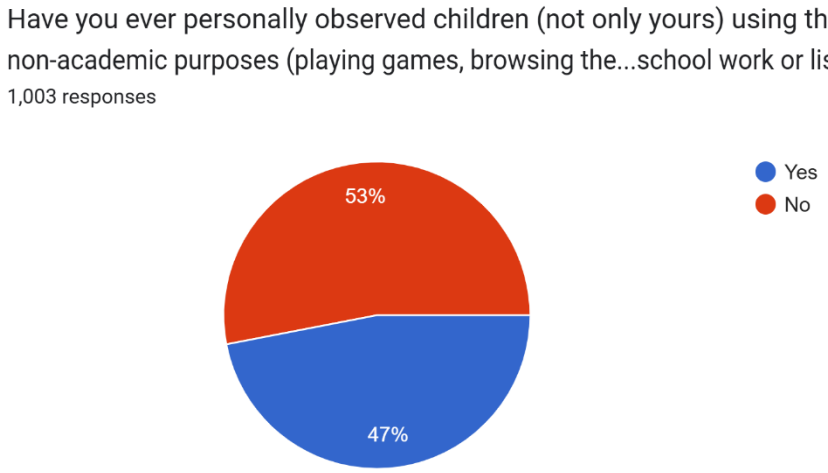
IV. Non-Academic Use is a Widespread Phenomenon

Roughly half of respondents stated that they had found their own child to be using a school-issued Chromebook or home computer for non-academic purposes at home when the student was supposed to be doing homework (“Have you ever found your child to be using the school-issued Chromebook or personal home laptop for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they are supposed to be completing homework at home?”).

Similarly, roughly half of respondents stated that they had personally observed a student in school using a Chromebook for non-academic purposes when the student should have been doing school work or listening to the teacher (“Have you ever personally observed children (not only yours) using the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes

(playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?").

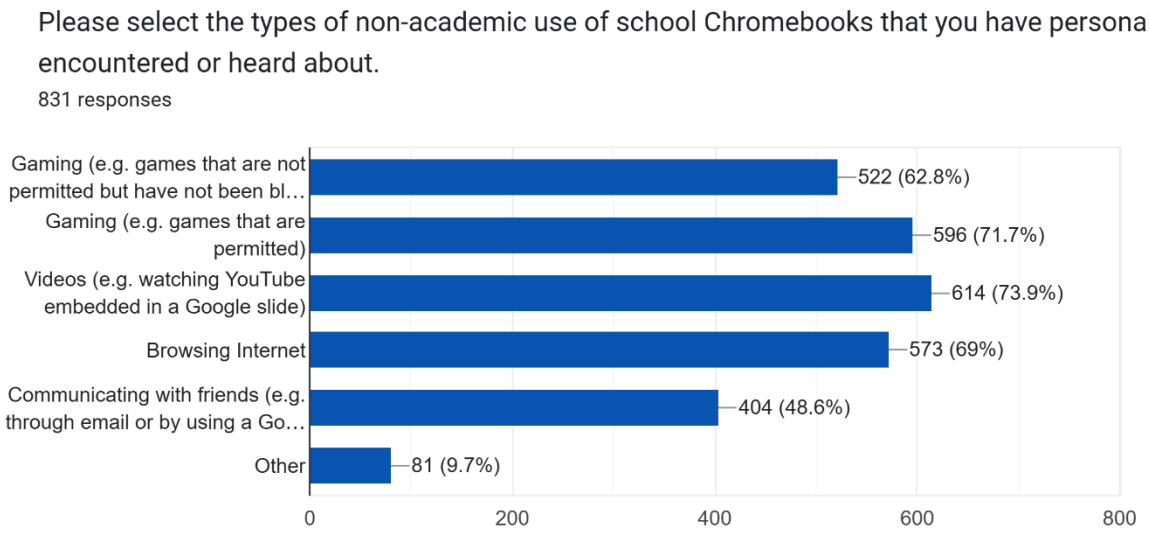




The types of non-academic uses most encountered by respondents were

- playing video games (62.8% selected "Gaming (e.g. games that are not permitted but have not been blocked yet)" and 71.7% selected "Gaming (e.g. games that are permitted)"),
- watching videos (73.9% selected "Videos (e.g. watching YouTube embedded in a Google slide)"), and
- generally browsing the internet (69% selected "Browsing Internet").

Just under half of respondents had encountered students communicating with peers (48.6% selected “Communicating with friends (e.g. through email or by using a Google doc)”).



Free-written responses regarding non-academic uses were voluminous and detailed, with several recurring themes.

A. Distraction is a widespread, widely-known problem for students using internet-enabled Chromebooks.

“I am in MCPS classrooms fairly frequently and pretty much every time students have chromebooks open and an adult is not actively watching their screens (and even sometimes when they are), there are at least a few students playing games or watching videos. It is endemic and not isolated in my experience.”

“As a substitute teacher who often works as a co-teacher I see the students playing games or otherwise using their Chromebooks inappropriately in every single class that I teach. I walk around to monitor them and redirect constantly, but they are fully addicted to the distracting activities they access on their Chromebooks. They can access any video they want and are often watching YouTube shorts. They use the cameras to take selfies and text each other through messaging programs.”

“My son has regularly - for years - spent a lot of time playing online games in school. He and his friend (and hundreds of others) regularly share links to online games, which are never blocked. If things are blocked, students find a way to get around them.”

“Any time the kids are on the computer, whether at home or at school, their attention is divided between their work and the myriad of other tabs they open at the same time - YouTube videos, games, etc. It's distracting and it leads to too much screen time.”

“[T]he effects of digital distractions are profound. They negatively impact focus, productivity, mental health and social skills. And the research backs this up. There truly is no controversy. We must be so much more vigilant when it comes to what is available on their chromebooks in the classroom. And it should be common knowledge that these distractions are built to be stronger than our will power. . . . I do think this is one of the great challenges of our time, and I hope that schools and policy makers will act aggressively to promote what is best for students, teachers and parents. Teams who help with technology in the schools must be made aware of what students can access on school sanctioned devices like chromebooks and work with school staff and students to prioritize a healthy learning environment.”

“The students use Chromebooks to access YouTube and other ‘blocked’ games during the school day. They are a constant distraction, and detract from overall learning.”

“Students use Chromebooks for steady non-academic activity. During an open house I watched an entire class switch into games when the teacher turned away. Every student near my line of sight was off task. They stayed this way until the teacher walked closer, then they switched back to the assignment without hesitation. This was not a small issue. The pattern showed deliberate avoidance. The device made it easy for students to hide their screens and ignore the lesson. The teacher had no way to maintain steady engagement. This undermines instruction and weakens the classroom environment.”

“I think Chromebooks use should be limited. Having attended class during the open doors days, I personally witnessed MANY kids on their Chromebooks playing games while the class was ongoing. It's incredibly distracting and they do not have the maturity / willpower / tools, to fight it.”

“While the chrome book can be used for educational purposes. I find my child gets distracted and is able to access YouTube and watch video when she should be focusing on her class work. Doing homework she also focus[es] more on googling things she likes instead of focusing on her homework.”

“I do know that my son uses his Chromebook for playing games and watching youtube.”

“The kids were often assigned ‘research projects’ using online encyclopedias like pebble go. As I circulated around the classroom trying to assist the teacher, I would usually find that more than half the kids had gotten totally distracted by the encyclopedia within 5 minutes (for example, they would be looking at articles about cute animals instead, which

had fun embedded features). Others wasted massive amounts of time dealing with technical glitches with their Chromebooks (dead/low battery or wouldn't boot up correctly), or playing around with silly fonts and animations in their documents."

"I observed a 9th grade history class this year at Blair. Students had laptops out for taking notes (in theory). I was seated in the back of the room and could see one child watching youtube during class, one playing a crossword puzzle, one doing another game, and one shopping. I was shocked - how can they learn in such a situation? My husband similarly observed a 7th grade comp sci class at TPMS where some kids were just playing games instead of completing assigned work, and the teacher was focused on helping one group for a long time, so others just did whatever they wanted."

"The problem is this: Kids are not learning and yet teachers are just letting it happen because the kid is sitting quietly, not making noise or disrupting class openly for others. If there is a disruption, it's in the form of the kid next to him seeing that he's playing a game, so the second kid starts playing a game. The teacher still has quiet in the classroom and just blames the kids, possibly calling the parent to complain that the child is distracted or has missing assignments, but more likely simply ignoring it and allowing the kids to miss out on learning. It's incredibly widespread. At open house, when I sat in the back of a classroom, every single computer screen I could see was at least sometimes switching between the lesson and some other window-- girls appeared to tend toward shopping and chatting and boys were browsing and gaming. Every single screen. I believe any teacher would readily acknowledge this reality if they could feel like they would not be blamed for allowing it to happen. At the same time, I don't exactly blame teachers. There are 25-30 kids in a class with one teacher. They have a lot of content to cover. This problem of screen distraction is so widespread and so continual that it would completely eat up a teacher's time and goodwill with the students if she focused on it."

"Kids have all the ways to do things they are not supposed to be doing. My kids email each other during class rather than passing notes. We all know computers are distracting."

B. MCPS's blocking software is inadequate and teachers cannot police widespread misuse by students.

"The kids easily access YouTube and Games- putting the pressure on teachers to police this- rather than actually teach. My kids play games every day! Despite multiple complaints. The teachers have no chance of keeping up."

"[T]he kids have discovered all of the workarounds to sites and materials MCPS says it blocks."

“MCPS can't keep up with the security and access of inappropriate material on the internet.”

“There is not enough monitoring/control of what the kids can access. Kids share Google docs full of info on how to circumvent controls and use shared docs as makeshift social media.”

“The Chromebooks are insufficiently secure to prevent students from accessing inappropriate content. The educational advantage of web-enabled Chromebooks is vague, at best. However, if we must have Chromebooks to achieve educational outcomes, then we should only have locked-down Chromebooks without web access. They should come pre-loaded with the necessary educational materials, and nothing else. Fundamentally, the issue is not that children are looking at screens, but rather what they are seeing on the screens, and MCPS' inability to lock down the devices.”

From an MCPS teacher: “[W]ith one teacher and 28+ students, we cannot keep them all on track at all times. There is monitoring software, but it is not perfect and teachers are never trained how to use it to its fullest potential.”

From another MCPS teacher: “It is very hard to monitor Chromebook use since losing go guardian in the classroom. Students build workarounds via zip files. I feel like I’m always chasing my tail. I have better things to do with my time but MCPS refuses to block sites we tell them are problematic.”

“[I]t would be SO HARD for teachers to have to discipline misuse because it is so rampant.”

“Teachers have no idea what the kids are doing on their Chromebooks. Our kids have told us many stories of how to bypass the filters and kids playing on their devices all day in class and then not keeping up with their classwork because they are getting distracted.”

“Students’ use is *not* monitored consistently and they are often using the computer for other activities besides the lesson. ALL the students know this.”

“Students can get around the controls and do things they aren’t supposed to be doing.”

“Chromebooks should be locked down as much as possible. Students do not have the ability to control their technology use during class time and teachers use instructional time managing misuse.”

C. Better controls or a completely different approach are needed.

“[E]verything should be locked down besides the exact website needed for the assignments. The kids can get around all of the controls and are distracted and looking at things unrelated to the assignment regularly. Expecting a child to be able to ignore all of the

fun and exciting things on the internet to focus on their assignment is unrealistic. Even we as adults are prone to wasting time when online."

From an MCPS teacher: "There is no control over these devices. Please restrict them to carts. Please manage their time. They are not old enough to manage this themselves, and you do not give families any supports to help them manage it. MCPS admin does not support teachers when they try to enforce proper use (of phones or any electronic). I am seriously considering a private school for my son that limits screen time because I see how rampant misuse is in high school, and how teaching has declined because all assignments need to be on Canvas. It's disappointing."

"My kids are using their Chromebook most of the time to watch YouTube, playing with minecraft. The Chromebook is not able to block the kids to enter to those websites. Considering this fact, either you should block those websites or just simply collect all laptops from Kids"

"What the students are doing is not being monitored or guided."

"I think kids will always find a way to get around any screen limits put in place, except if no screens are used, or are used sparingly with monitoring software. The teachers . . . seem to have given up trying to enforce or monitor anything. I think it is too hard for them to monitor everyone and discipline everyone since it is such a widespread problem. It is asking too much for teachers, especially with large classes, without an outright ban or more stringent monitoring software."

"The students who are using the tools put in front of them aren't the ones who need to be punished. It's like punishing a child for eating a cookie after putting it on their plate. MCPS who needs to clean up their digital health. The firewalls need to be stronger, YouTube needs to be a black listed, and only a white list of approved resources should be allowed in a restricted manner. If you look at the modern research, computers and social media have become a plague on the mental health and ability to learn for children of this rising generation. Furthermore, with platforms increasing the push for AI, continuing to allow free digital access is just begging for students to rely on AI resources like chatgpt instead of actually learning the content they need to be successful in life."

"The non-educational use of school-issued Chromebooks should not be treated as a disciplinary issue nor as one of "personal responsibility" on the part of children and parents. It is a classroom and educational design issue. First, screens are overused in general. Chromebooks should not be the default in the classroom but rather be held in a docking station and used for specific activities. Second, the current design of the chromebooks is inappropriate for a learning environment. The district as a whole needs to

renegotiate the relationship it has with its Educational Technology providers are demand devices and software programs that are designed from the beginning with learning in mind and that are appropriate to the brain development and self-control capacities of children and teens. Were they to do this, the result would be far different than handing kids daily access to the general internet or google documents with unlimited connectivity to classmates. It would likely be something more like a library built with education as its principal purpose. This would not be censorship, it would be common sense. There's no reason why an access-to-everything-machine needs to be the default for children and teens (nor for adults). I would like to see MCPS take this situation far more seriously than they currently are. It's possible that this is an issue that cannot be resolved within the school district - even as district as large as MCPS - but rather through a consortium of school districts (together with national parent organizations, PTAs and groups like Common Sense media) pushing ed tech providers to take a much more learning-centric/anti-addiction approach to product design."

D. Specific examples of non-academic use involve games, videos, chatting, and accessing inappropriate or disturbing content.

i. Games

"In our kindergarten year the chromebooks were used daily. They were allowed to play games and accessed some that did not seem appropriate for a school setting. My child described one where you play as a character with a gun and shoot other characters. Pixelated blood would come out when you shot someone. It was a pixelated game that was very rudimentary and not realistic which is probably how it got through into being acceptable for Chromebook. We were still disturbed that this game was accessible in school."

"In addition to my son's gaming, I observed half of a class playing video games during a middle school science class during parent open house."

"Roblox, and Bedwars"

"My son has told me that all his friends are on the same 'realm' on Minecraft on their school chromebooks. There is a 'code' they have all shared with each other to get on this Minecraft realm. My son, and I have observed at Open House, plays games when he gets bored in class and the teacher didn't notice/say anything about it."

"My son often tells me all the shenanigans he and his friends are up to on the chromebook. They share cat and anime videos in google drives. They play videogames for what seems to be hours a week (many non educational- geometry dash). He and other students have been

able to search other inappropriate topics for 9 year olds, and the MCPS protections have not protected them."

"My high school age son constantly has tabs to youtube videos (usually associated with gaming) open while he is doing homework. He is a good student and *wants* to do a good job. The distraction associated with the chromebook prolongs the time it takes for him to complete his homework resulting in a later bed time and less than sufficient sleep."

"My child does not complete class work because her internet history shows that she is using other websites for games, videos, and reading age-inappropriate, non-school appropriate materials that include explicit language and mature, sensitive topics."

"I have seen my child playing several games that were inappropriate (e.g., 1st person shooters)."

"My daughter said last year her classmates have links to 'games' that work and then find ways to make it about excluding others from playing the games by selectively sharing the secret links."

"An adult, violent video game called 'Five Nights at Freddy's' that my son was familiar with through other kids at school playing it on chromebooks. I emailed MCPS technology services about my concerns and never got any response."

ii. Watching Video Entertainment

"My son will take his school issue[d] Chromebook to his room and stay up late at night watching YouTube videos. He wakes up the next morning super tired and not ready for the school day. While we can put controls on devices we personally own, school issues devices do not give us the control of putting restrictions on them."

"My son tells me that he spends his third grade reading rotation watching YouTube videos of soccer matches."

"My middle schooler zones out on YouTube for HOURS and I loathe it. I can't log on to the laptop because he keeps [changing] the password and hearing the stupid YouTube videos or games enrages me. We took away our home Chromebook to try and cut off the YouTube access about this is a workaround that we cannot control in our house and is frying my kid's brain because he hasn't learned this type of impulse control. It undermines our parenting and creates tension and outbursts when we take it away or try to lessen the time. I want to throw the computer into the street."

"While volunteering at a class party, I saw a child watching Lord of the Rings on his computer in the corner."

“Playing games and watching youtube videos, primarily; youtube kids, in particular, is challenging as it seems that 90% of the videos are not educational but have not been blocked at least on home-use chromebooks.”

“Using the Chromebooks to access pirated movie sites - 6th graders were watching R rated movies”

“My child reported that kids were able to access movie trailers and were watching inappropriate movie clips during class time when there was a sub. They also reported kids googling inappropriate content via voice to text on the browser.”

“Kids are playing minecraft and watching Mr Beast brain rot videos via YouTube Kids, which is strangely not blocked. I understand the need for research or typing for elementary school kids, but having full internet access is like giving all the sweets in the world and hoping the kid would just sit and look at them and describe what colors and shapes they have.”

“My 2nd grade daughter has found Wild Adventure Girls on a school computer. After reviewing their youtube channel, there are videos such as ‘the horse chose my Christmas present’ which provides zero educational value and ‘POV parents at the park with their kids’ which shows kids screaming at their parents to ‘shut up’ in an attempt to make fun of different parenting styles. 99% of their channel has garbage material. When my kids are home, I've made a conscience effort to keep them off of youtube and screen time like this. Are there not simple math games that can be offered instead? Why is the school system introducing my children to brain rot type of videos when they're supposed to be learning?”

“The ability to watch YouTube videos on Google slides is appalling. My child has seen things on the internet at school that we do not allow access to at home.”

iii. Chatting with Peers using Google Docs or Google Slides

“[K]ids using google doc or slides to share memes, live updates of non-blocked websites to play games, watch youtube, etc.”

“They were putting porn into a google doc with their chromebooks at one point”

“Using Google slides to have inappropriate and unmonitored conversations.”

“Use of canva as a text thread. Ability to share with anyone with MCPS email”

iv. Disturbing and Inappropriate Content

“Children are using Chromebooks to learn gambling, develop screen addiction, and access pornography in elementary school!”

“Many [4th grade] boys in the school are already using [C]haracter AI to have very inappropriate interactions for their age level. [MCPS] must put a stop to this or it will only make the district open to liability for when students become addicted to a very dangerous interface and make destructive choices. A child in my son's class has already developed inappropriate relationships with an AI girlfriend through [C]haracter AI that he contacted at school. Now all the children in class have heard about extremely inappropriate things that are being glorified that are horrific even for adults to wrap their brains around, let alone children whose first knowledge of sexuality is now being led by completely unaccountable and unacceptable AI programs accessible to the kids at school.”

“My child was exposed to other children watching and sharing inappropriate (pornographic) content during instructional time and because these Chromebooks are far under-regulated for smart middle-schoolers.”

“Not enough sites are blocked- elementary school age kids were able to watch graphic violence videos on YouTube.”

“[T]he Epstein files are not blocked and you can easily get the redacted information so kids now know a lot of bad and gross stuff.” (from a middle school student)

“Elementary students easily get around restrictions on their Chromebooks. Explicit content on youtube is abundant.”

“Unintentionally reaching pornography on the school laptop because they put in the word explosion and it returned images of oral sex gifs. Having Elementary School aged kids having access to AI programs like character AI that allow unmonitored and unfettered access to pornographic relationships.”

“Last year he and his friend researched bombs and rifles during Chromebook reading rotations!”

“[I]n 4th grade my child was exposed to pornography on the school laptop in school and I reported to the school and nothing was done.”

“Another student took my child’s device and began to browse inappropriate Internet sites.”

“My daughter reports that a classmate watches Anime porn in class.”

“I have heard of multiple instances of elementary kids getting around firewalls and accessing extremely inappropriate content during school hours such as the adult role playing game ‘BitLife,’ which has sexual role-playing content that one of the children engaged in, or using the paste functions to paste inappropriate gifs into google docs.”

“I also asked my kids to share what they have heard about people watching on school-issued Chromebooks. Here is what they shared as being widely known at the high school level: videos of cartel executions, video of a group of men copulating with a cardboard box, video of a Ukrainian man sticking a large jar in his butt and the jar breaking, the movie Saving Private Ryan and all three Terrifier movies, livestream video of a man committing suicide by shooting himself in the head, video of a man being beaten to death with hammers, video of a man being beheaded with an ax, video of the Boston marathon bombing.”

“Youtube watching of explicit content - 4th grade.”

“Elementary and MS students have access to games with explicit content (e.g. rape, drugs, prostitution, suicide, gun violence, etc.) as well as YouTube, unsupervised.”

“Circumventing content restrictions to view mature content while in class.”

“Games, pornography, chatting with adults.”

“Gaming, watching and reading inappropriate sexual content.”

“Movies, porn, chatting, games, YouTube. Conspiracy theories, explicit music videos, literally everything bad on the internet.”

“Porn and drugs. There is rampant pornography being spread on students Chromebooks. Have also found student interacting with adults online including using Chromebook webcam inappropriately. This includes coordinating illegal drug sale/use and sexual content. This has been reported and school has done nothing to stop.”

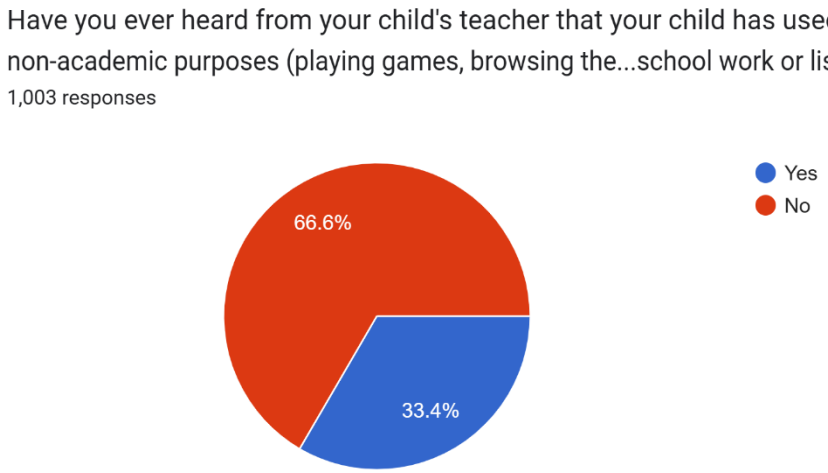
“Fifth graders are using the Chromebook's to find pornography on the Chromebooks. They have found ways around controls to watch pornography. In addition, innocent searches for GIFs can return in pornographic results. This happened when my now fourth grader was in third grade.”

“Our kids have encountered pornography using chromebooks via images/the insert image option from Google Docs. This is very troubling to us and we request stronger filters and more oversight.”

“In grade 5 my child often reported use of games with explicit sexual and violent content (by herself and others); the use of google docs/slides to communicate links to such content; the use of games with math titles that have no content related to math, etc.”

E. Student Misuse of Chromebooks – Reports Home from Teachers

Only 33.4% of respondents had ever heard from their child's teacher that their child had used the school-issued Chromebook for non-academic purposes ("Have you ever heard from your child's teacher that your child has used the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?"). The other 66.6% had not heard anything from their child's teacher.



In some cases, parents were told their child was misusing the school Chromebook, but parents were unsuccessful at having the Chromebook removed from their child:

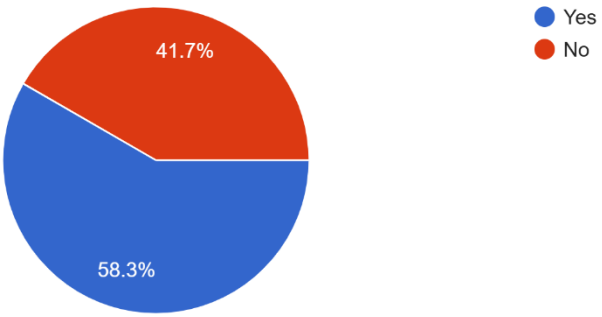
"At the middle school level, my oldest child (now in high school) was repeatedly admonished for not being on task because he was playing video games or watching YouTube videos during class. His ADHD brain just could not stay on task if he had a screen. I spoke with teachers and begged them to give him paper work, but they said that was not possible because the curriculum was online (and written work was expected to be typed, not handwritten, and the typing and submission programs were also online.)"

F. Student Misuse of Chromebooks as a Disciplinary Issue

Over half of respondents believe that misuse of school-issued Chromebooks should be handled as a disciplinary issue. Further, those respondents favored classroom-based responses and parent/guardian outreach as appropriate consequences.

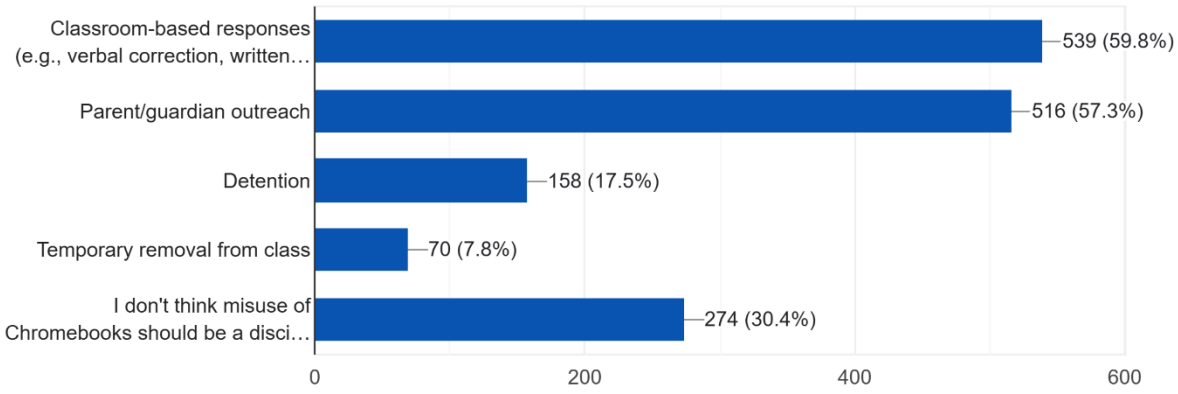
Should misuse of school-issued Chromebooks be handled as a disciplinary issue?

1,003 responses



If yes, what consequences would be appropriate for a child found to be misusing a school-issued Chromebook in class?

901 responses



G. Student Misuse of Chomebooks – Self-Control

“The problem is not that the kids are disobedient. The problem is that they have been given access to an addictive substance with no outside controls, and then are told to just resist it. You wouldn't have an alcoholic work next to an open container of alcohol. Why are we having children try to learn and focus just a click away from the dopamine hit of games, memes, videos etc. It is ridiculous. Some say they need to learn to work while having distractions, but their brains are not fully developed yet. Let them learn this in college, not as children. If anything they are learning to be become dependent on the continual stimulation available on the internet.”

“Simply having the possibility of browsing the internet, playing games, chatting with friends makes a kid's mind go toward that distracted feeling of should-I-or-shouldn't-I go for the more exciting option. Even if they exercise self control and stay on task, the energy put into exercising self control, the considering of straying off task already degrades the ability to concentrate and learn.”

“[I]t is absurd to put the blame on students when the responsibility should be on school systems to not allow such highly addictive distractions to be readily available. As I mentioned in my comments earlier, these distractions are built to hijack our brains and are stronger than us.”

“My daughter is very conscientious, but she is often browsing the internet when she should be doing classwork because it is so tempting.”

“Students are not developmentally programmed to be able to practice consistent discipline in their Chromebook use. It's not really fair to them or the teachers to have the distraction of other things besides schoolwork readily available through the Chromebooks. Teens are on their screens too much outside of school. I would strongly encourage 1) limits on the use of Chromebooks and a shift to more active discussions or paper-based work 2) stronger tech controls on Chromebooks 3) when Chromebooks must be used, please use time limits and deadlines so that students are motivated to stay on task (ie, work on this assignment for 30 minutes and turn it in).”

“Punishing kids for their Chromebook use is treating the symptom, not the disease. They are asked to sit in front of incredibly distracting technology all day before their brains have matured enough to self-regulate, and then expected not to succumb to temptation. We are setting kids up for failure and they should not be punished when so many adults struggle with the same issues. The problem is the technology, not the children.”

“When students are given tools DESIGNED for distraction (i.e. internet, chromebook) it then becomes extremely difficult to manage in classrooms. The value-add does not come close to the cost to student management, discipline, and and distraction. I would love to move to a Chromebook-free (or HIGHLY limited) environment.”

“The Chromebooks have an inherent design defect-- they are supposed to be a learning tool, but they inherently distract from learning. They are like if a text book had been printed with a comic book, a pinball machine, and a Playboy magazine right in the middle of the book. Everyone knows that children and teens are still developing their self control. It's insane to think any child or teenager can resist such temptation.”

“I don’t think misuse is a disciplinary issue, I think it’s an educational failure.”

“Putting kids in front of highly addictive, dopamine-triggering devices and then disciplining them for lack of control is like forcing an alcoholic to go to work in a bar. Adults need to step up and set limits because many kids are not mature enough to handle these devices responsibly and it’s not developmentally appropriate to expect them to.”

H. Student Misuse of Chromebooks – Lack of Parental/Teacher Control

“Chromebooks in the classroom is creating unnecessary friction between students and teachers and parents who lack oversight for these Chromebook because they [are] MCPS property, are caught in the middle. Unlike in many organizations where there are systems in place to block access to many websites, MCPS decided to allow full access to many sites and then parents get daily emails and complain[t]s about students playing games while the teacher is teaching. It is my hope that the information being gathered can be used to make a quick decision to block access to all social media sites and frankly web browsers on school Chromebook.”

“Chromebooks are over used and under monitored. Kids should not be allowed to go on the computer without proper supervision including random checks of platforms, sites, and content. Kids quickly share how to get around blocked content. There should be strong consequences for misuse (these are necessary to establish safe use). Parents should get a report of their child’s use as well.”

“I have tried for years emailing our daughters teachers, counselors, and even principals about this but my concerns are almost never addressed. Her teachers try to police her internet usage after I send an email, but her counselors and principals NEVER do anything to address it. I do not think that our daughter is the only kid in the school who engages in this. We might be the only parents who know that it is happening and are concerned with it. I no longer know what to do about it, as the teachers are too busy to focus on it, and the leadership of the schools seemingly do not care.”

“Chromebooks used in class do not have sufficient supervision and the firewalls preventing students from playing games and accessing inappropriate content are wildly insufficient. While attending White Oak MS last year, my child frequently got into trouble surrounding Chromebook use in the classroom and I had to fight with the administration to get him banned from using them. The teachers didn't like that because it's 'easier' to dump the kids into IXL or some other program instead of actually teaching and reviewing their homework.”

“This is hard to say because parents hear so little from the school/teachers about Chromebook use. This feels really intentional -- the school doesn't want parents to know how much time kids are on computers because it's likely way too much.”

“Last year his math teacher said he played snake the whole semester. The math teacher did nothing about it in real time and said he couldn't enforce not paying attention. He only alerted us at the end of semester -- very frustrating!”

“In [middle school], we only learned of our student’s non-academic use of Chromebook when we requested feedback from the school. There is no process in place for the school to communicate with families about this. When we approached the school about it, teachers and administrators simply shrug their shoulders and say it is out of their hands, impossible for them to monitor use.”

“Chromebooks seem to be the default tool for assignments in the classroom. Sure, they are used for assignments, but often times, instead of doing assignments, students play games or do other things besides schoolwork. And it seems like a lot of teachers just don't care/want to police their use. Some teachers even give their own games for students to play, of low or questionable educational value. It all just seems to be too much of a distraction for students and for doing good work. I'd like to see a return to more paper assignments.”

“My MS child has said he used his computer to play video games during class when there’s “nothing to do.” He said students exchange URLs of websites that MCPS hasn’t blocked and update Google Sheets daily with new links. He said lightspeed doesn’t work very well and that there was a better software to detect what kids were doing before. I have asked my child’s guidance counselor how to block these sites and was given the email of an IT person who covers his MS. I wrote that person asking for help to ensure my child is not using forbidden links and providing specific URLs that my child was using and never received a response.”

“The most concerning incident involved my child accessing some dodgy pirate version of Grand Theft Auto on a Chromebook during school hours. I got a call home about that one. YouTube and other video sites are also available in its entirety, which is also incredibly unsafe. The fact that these kinds of games and videos are available on school computers is utterly unacceptable. MCPS has prioritized the ease of teaching programs over actual teaching and supervision. I didn't believe that this is a disciplinary issue for the students so much as for the teachers and administration who are openly allowing it to happen.”

“I have heard that in several classes, many students are openly playing games but that the teachers allow it because it keeps them quiet.”

“I would love to get my hands on MCPS data about school use of chromebooks, and grades or any other parameters. I bet, there will be negative correlation. My generation did not grow up as digital natives, and yet, a ton of people (Gen X and Millennial) are founders of

high-tech start-ups. If I had more time and resources, I would research and show if there is even any benefit in having 2-5K having access to laptops with lax rules. Kids would break all of MCPS controls, since these controls are Chromebook/Admin based. Don't you see a huge conflict, where Chromebook/Android Operating system, owned by Google does not really have good parental controls since they want our kids hooked on YourTube and Mr. Beast and all the other brain rot on YouTube? Having full control over my kids screen viewing and use at home, and being EXTREMELY well read into what is happening with young people and screens, I find it immensely difficult to regulate and control. YouTube may have some educational content, but 90% of it is short, bad, made to hook you up. Google does not have the well-being of our kids as their interest/goal. They want more users of their services, more viewing, more scrolling shorts - all things that are against the well-being of our kids, our society and what is left of the thing we call democracy. Be more progressive and walk the walk. Screens out of schools, or if you have screens, create a parent-joint committees to decide on use. Gen AI is important for kids to understand, but at this point MCPS is likely not ready to even introduce the topic. The mental and other issues that GenAI will cause pale in comparison to the brain rot from YouTube or video games. This is one of the most important things for us as a society and we are all failing at this collectively."

V. Desire for Transparency on School Screen Use by Caregivers

"Can parents receive reports about how many minutes their child is logged onto a school chromebook?"

"I think they should have screen time logs attached to their account that can email parents (and/or teachers) so we know where their time is being used. Most phones and home devices have this tracking system."

"They are able to access video games and introduced to programs and platforms without sufficient feedback to parents. I am continually surprised by what my child is learning to do on a computer and what they have access to that I didn't know they had access to."

"As a parent I would like to see a weekly report for daily screen time for class/ grade in elementary school Chromebook use."

"I am supportive of limited use of Chromebooks for specific educational platforms such as Zearn or Kahn Academy. However, at the younger grades, there is inadequate communication and transparency with families about what programs are being used in class, and for how long each day/week. Additionally, my child has described playing games on chromebooks at school. As a parent, I have no way of knowing what apps or websites the children are accessing."

“I am concerned about the lack of information shared about how much screen time students are getting.”

“I don't feel like I know enough about the amount of and purposes for Chromebook use.”

“[P]arents should be told more explicitly and at the beginning of the year just how much time and in what ways their students are using the chromebooks. I have had to ask my kids’ teachers this every year. I think there needs to be a way for parents to give consent for the amount of time and for what purpose their kid uses the chromebook.”

“I worry that overall the younger kids at least are having more screen time at school than we realize. I would like more information about how many hours/minutes of screen time the kids are having, especially in elementary school.”

“My impression is that parents may be under the belief that because the Chromebook is school-issued, that all of the content is educational, and that if they allow their child on the laptop or in one of its applications, it is a good thing for their child, when in reality much of the content is totally mindless, potentially harmful, and requires close supervision. It is our job to protect kids from this content by keeping their devices on EXTREME lock down so they cannot access inappropriate material. It may be beneficial to provide training and orientation to families on what content is on the laptops and how it is used and how to manage it to best protect the child.”

VI. Problems With Chromebook Access at Home

“My child is nearly screen free at home and is starting to show signs of ‘addiction’ to the Chromebook, getting upset if we tell them no for using it or just needing ‘a little more time’ to get to the next level of whatever educational game they're playing. Its very frustrating bc we've worked her to not allow video gam[e]s or excuses screens and now we still have a kids who is borderline obsessed with the games on the Chromebook.”

“I wish the Chromebooks had better ‘parental controls’, so that they cannot games and videos at home. My home computer has better ‘parental controls’.”

“Chromebooks are overruling all of the hard work I have done as a parent to limit access to certain websites, paid handsomely to teach my special needs kid to write, and now I see signs of screen use addiction that I cannot control. . . . Now I need to police my child’s room at night because they use their school issued Chromebook - which I do not have the ability to set parent controls on- to watch more YouTube.”

“My kids got limited screen time at home. But ‘permitted’ Chromebook use during breaks in school got them used to browsing the internet and playing games, so that now they want to do that even at home.”

“We restrict screens at home but our kids come home having learned computer games at school and wanting to play them. There's no way to keep the kids from secretly playing games w/o constantly supervising them.”

“If chromebooks are to be sent home with kids for homework, you MUST allow parents access to monitoring/blocking software so that we can create a more defined structure to control the access and usage”

“Not being able to control what your child do online is really harmful. My daughter has a personal laptop which I monitor through parental controls. But she is able to evade these controls by using the school laptop.”

“Worst of all, parents have no control over them. We have locked down every device in our house significantly more tightly than the school Chromebooks, which we can't even set with basic screen time limits. It's hard enough for parents to monitor their kids' screen time and Internet access without schools giving every child a device that we can't control.”

“My kids are often watching videos or playing games when they should be doing homework. The ready availability of distractions on the computer make it very difficult for kids to focus and stay on task- its really too much to expect a tween to fight the constant temptation. As a parent, it is nearly impossible to police this situation. The kids are able to do most of their homework without help, but we are constantly nagging them to stay on task. Its frustrating for everyone and creates a LOT of tension in the home.”

“My child has been found watching YouTube in his bed with his Chromebook. All family devices have parental controls at our house, but I cannot control the Chromebook. So my child, if they find a way to sneak it into their room, can get access to websites and information that are not approved in our house. MCPS is enabling addictive and destructive behavior in children. These kids have developing pre-frontal cortexes and have huge struggles with impulse control. This is a moral hazard to give kids so much free rein and more or less tell them “just don’t go where you shouldn’t”. Even during tests administered in Chromebooks (which I also think is wrong) they have access to the entire internet and can easily toggle away from the test. My child said that their teacher doesn’t care and basically looks the other way, there is willful ignorance on behalf of adults.”

“My kids weren't familiar with any computer games until they were introduced to them at school. Now all they want to do at home is play internet games. And they can do this easily

because they have a school issued device which they are req[u]ired to use for their homework, so I cannot even take it away. I'm pretty annoyed about this."

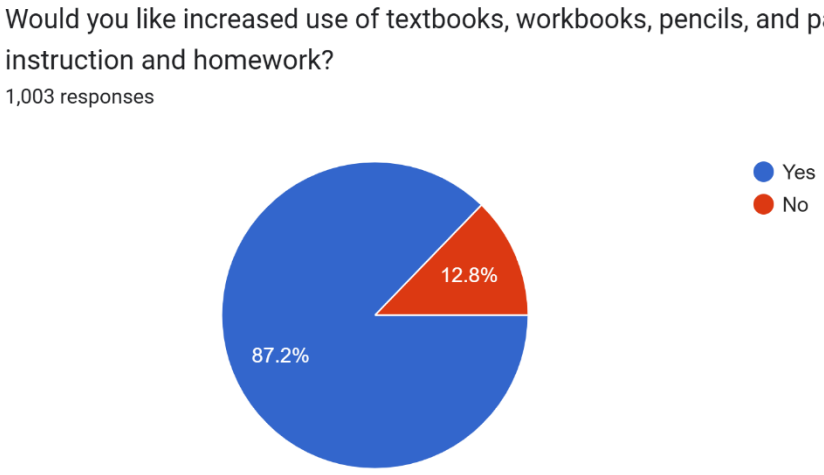
"I am VERY UNHAPPY that MCPS forced us to bring computers into our home that I cannot control and that give my children access to sites that I do not want them accessing. I regularly take their Chromebooks away from them and have to monitor them closely when they do homework. This has created a new problem for our family and additional burden for us as parents to police their activities on the Chromebooks. With our own personal computers I can control what they have access to and lock their accounts if they don't use them responsibly. I have no such control over the Chromebooks. My daughter is in high school and she has even told us she doesn't want to be distracted by YouTube videos, but cannot resist the temptation when doing her homework."

"Other schools in Rockville, not Title 1, are not allowing chromebooks to be taken home over the weekend. Our School is sending them, which makes it very hard for parents to say no computer use. Kids would be asking, why, if I have it right here."

"I don't like Chromebook usage at school especially since we have a no screens policy at home."

VII. Overwhelming Majority Favor Increasing Use of Textbooks, Results Are Mixed on Opting Out

The overwhelming majority of respondents (87.2%) would like increased use of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, and paper in place of screen-based instruction and homework.



A. Many responses suggest limiting the use of screens for learning and increasing book-based, face-to-face learning.

“I would strongly support a move to ONLY use the Chromebooks for computer-necessary lessons, e.g., typing (as a skill, not as the sole method of writing) and online research (as a complement to physical library research). These tasks could be achieved through a media center/computer lab, not with a 1-to-1 issuance of Chromebooks. The children would be better focused if we returned to written work and paper lessons.”

“I've also noticed that my children do not learn as well from their computers - they retain the lessons much better when they use a textbook and pencil and paper. I’ve purchased textbooks for their classes so they have an organized and reliable reference they can read in a non-distracting environment. I am convinced that Chromebooks are doing our children a disservice and that more traditional teaching methods would be better. I also hear from my children that other students regularly use AI and other tools to complete assignments fraudulently. Requiring pencil and paper would mitigate that problem.”

“Children should be using more pencil and paper for brain development.”

“Studies have show[n] that humans, especially children, learn best and better remember material they read from a physical book . . . Also, studies show that humans learn much better when writing notes and writing essay/problem sets versus typing. The tactile nature of writing helps us learn, understand more deeply, and remember.”

“Chromebooks weaken instruction, lower retention, reduce accountability, and strip classrooms of structure. They do not serve students. The district should remove them from daily instruction and return to books, paper, and direct teaching. Students need learning tools, not digital distractions.”

“I would love to see the kids, be doing more actual reading of books, less reading on their Chromebook, more writing.”

“Anything that can be done on paper, should be done on paper. And more effort needs to be placed in having curriculums that are accessible on paper.”

“Going back to pens, paper and textbooks would be the biggest service we could do so for this generation.”

“I wish more assignments involved physical books and writing with paper.”

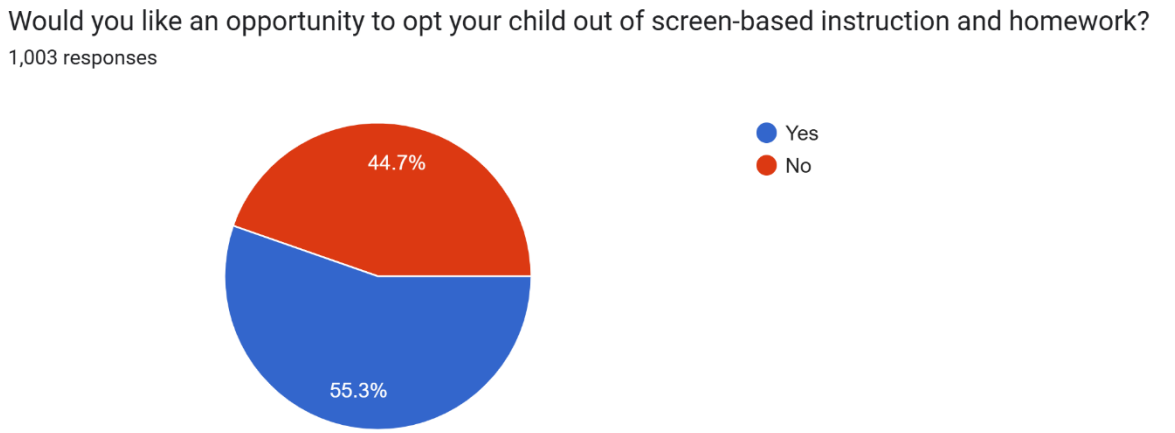
“Students should use books instead of computers. Better and long term learning and chance to review materials.”

“Please remove or severely cut back on the usage of chromebooks in the classroom. There are non technology based ways to teach children that can actually improve learning outcomes and prepare them better in the future. With artificial intelligence increasing in usage our children need to learn how to develop their critical thinking skills and have original thoughts and ideas that are not influenced by AI. Developing handwriting skills and writing down ideas on paper is much studied for overall benefits to growing minds. These all stand the test of time and are foundational skills our children need in a future destined to be influenced by artificial intelligence. While they will need to be taught how to navigate AI and use it to their benefit, they first need to know how to think on their own.”

“Chromebook are nuisance and as a parent i want no screen time in school and traditional way of learning. I have not heard from teachers but know first hand from kids that they play games in school on chromebooks.”

“Writing BY HAND has proven benefits to learning. I hope/want my kids to be writing every day in school and not just via their laptops.”

B. Just over half of respondents favored an opportunity to opt out of screen-based instruction and homework.



“Giving parents the option to opt out sounds reasonable, but is wrong. It puts parents in an impossible situation. Basically everyone would need to choose it...or no one will. Same reason why schools should ban phones outright or stick them in bags/pouches (and their use should result in formal discipline)”

“I also have mixed feelings about an option to 'opt out' of screen based instruction and homework. I suppose it would be a better option than overuse and exposure to digital distractions. But it could also provide an excuse for schools to not address the problem

and rely instead on parents opting out. I do want to make sure my children are comfortable using technology, and I am sure many parents feel this way, so opting out entirely, especially when it comes to computer science, would seem like a potential handicap."

"Rather than my children having to opt out and do something differently than the rest of the class, I think it's much more appropriate for the class as a whole to be less dependent on screens. I believe all students should have more non-screen time, not just my children. I am greatly concerned about the long-term ramifications of excess screen time, and I believe that MCPS's overreliance on screens is amplifying this problem for MCPS students."

"I do not want to opt my child out of screen-based instruction. I want MCPS to use computer-based instruction sparingly and strategically, so that children graduate with necessary computer skills but are not reliant on the computer for their ability to think. To use the opt out method is to complicate the issue - isolating children into groups beyond their choosing and putting an undue burden on teachers who would undoubtedly have to increase their workload to support the learning of all their students."

"The changes (opt out of screens, increased use of paper) need to be implemented ASAP. It is not right that my kids (6th & 7th grade) are suffering through all of this now, while it is clear that the trend is in the opposite direction. These kids started kindergarten on screens during COVID and they are being treated as a "lost" cohort. We are going to look back on all the screen use for these kids as a mistake. It is important that action be taken now to mitigate the damage that has been done. Thank you for considering these comments."

"Chromebooks are misused all day long. Please get rid of them. They are not conducive for any kind of serious or effective class instruction. Parents should be able to opt out."

"The responsibility lies with the school district, schools, and teachers to reduce use of Chromebooks and go back to teaching without them. Kids should not be disciplined for being unable to control their impulses when they are handed this tool. They shouldn't have access to this at all, for the sake of their education and that of the children around them. And if we must keep Chromebooks for whatever reason, there should be a way for families to opt-out of this. Not all parents use screentime mindlessly outside of school, many of us are mindful and limit what our kids have access to. We should expect that taxpayer funded schools are properly taking care of our children, which includes making sure they are not viewng inappropriate content and actually receiving an education."

"Limiting chromebooks usage should be done evenly for all students. If limits to chromebooks are just an opt out situation, positive changes will not occur throughout the

schools. The dichotomy of screens versus no screens will create an even larger distraction with greater attention on screens."

"While I would like the option to 'opt out' of screen-based instruction, my experience with my HS student has taught me that they will be at a disadvantage if I do that since there will be class assignments that they won't have access to but still be expected to complete. I think that we cannot prevent use of computers among our students. However, in MCPS, we have not taken the time to consider the research, pros and cons, or various proposals for how to embark on using chrome books (age/grade appropriateness; value in specific subjects or topics in a year vs. available all the time; teaching students and teachers about safe and learning-focused use vs. for ease or keeping students busy when you aren't able to accommodate different learning paces and styles, etc.). The lack of this due diligence and thoughtful, research-informed approach to chrome book use in the classroom has only served to perpetuate and even widen pandemic learning loss; contributed to greater inequities among students from different race, socio-economic, and multi-language learners, and is undermining our next generations in ways that we are yet to uncover."

"Don't let parents opt out of stuff, parents don't know best."

"Everyone needs to have the same rules, so even though I'm very opposed to the overuse and misuse of chromebooks in class, I don't think parents should be able to opt out, I think the system as a whole needs to be fixed. I love technology, I embrace it, but MCPS is not doing it right. You need to ban phones in schools (have kids check them at the door) and use Chromebooks judiciously. If a kid is on a Chromebook, the teachers have no idea what is on the screens. Force the kids to pay attention and figure out how to block non-school applications - or get rid of the Chromebooks."

"Providing the option to opt out is just going to create more stress. Adjust the policy across the board."

"It should not be an opt out—all students should have more written work and less homework or in class work on the Chromebook."

"I don't think having an opt out is a valid option; the approach should be universally applied to the class."

"I think making Chromebook a teacher based management system is not right. I think they should be removed so they are a nonissue in class. I do not like the "opt out" idea bc that is the same as some parents giving their kids iPads and phones vs not. It becomes a social issue."

“Making an opt out is not a sustainable idea as it just creates more work for the teacher handling two sets of kids. Writing papers is a good use of chromebooks in elementary school but they have been overused to outsource other things like reading, match, and social studies.”

“In regards to the option above, I would never want to completely opt out of using a Chromebook —that doesn’t make any sense, but there should be a balance.”

“I would never opt my child out if you have an opt in/opt out option you’re going to have a significant equity issue in a classroom and that’s not fair to any of the students or the teacher who would have to teach very differently.”

Conclusions

The results of this survey make clear that a significant number of MCPS parents and caregivers believe Chromebooks are excessively used, are a pervasive source of distraction in class, and current controls on Chromebook use are inadequate and place too much burden on teachers. An even more significant number of parents and caregivers would like more textbooks, workbooks, pencil and paper-based learning, as well as more face-to-face interaction in schools, in place of screens.

Many respondents who believe Chromebook use is harmful to learning correctly cite to research showing that there is a strong negative correlation between the amount of time spent on digital tools and student performance. On the contrary, those who believe educational technology prepares students for a screen-based work life beyond school confuse curriculum with pedagogy. A tech-based curriculum (teaching students to type, to effectively use a Word processor, to code, etc.) can boost students’ digital literacy. Chromebook use, and use of software programs to learn, is a pedagogical tool. In most cases, use of digital tools as a pedagogical tool has not been shown to be more effective than the alternative. Ironically, based on international testing, digital literacy among teens has actually declined over time.

The most valuable results from this survey are the hundreds of testimonials in the responses. We urge MCPS leaders to read every single one of them. The wide perception that Chromebooks are overused in schools, that students can access all kinds of inappropriate and distracting content in class and at home, and that parents and caregivers struggle to advocate on behalf their children, directly undermines families’ trust in the school system, especially when coupled with the declining levels of proficiency in core subjects over time, and the low level of students who demonstrate they are College and Career Ready. Many families are also aware of the crisis in colleges and workplaces, where

young people arrive unable to adequately read, write, or demonstrate threshold level cognitive and non-cognitive skills.

We urge MCPS to:

- Closely review the testimonials provided in this survey,
- Conduct its own survey to seek additional feedback from families and especially teachers,
- Review evidence of whether digital tools, such as one-to-one Chromebook use, has yielded results that are superior to alternative, non-digital methods,
- Consider reassessing the way Chromebooks are used in schools so that use is intentional rather than by default, so that it boosts learning, rather than detracts from it.

In addition, the Technology Committee asks that these survey results be considered as part of the public comment on the proposed amendments to Board Policy IGS, Emerging Technologies in Education, to update guiding principles for integrating emerging technologies into MCPS operations and instruction. It is clear that the current technology policy has not adequately curtailed these trends, and the revised policy must set better guardrails.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Survey Title: MCPS Chromebook Use - Share Your Experiences

Survey Description: The MCCPTA Technology Committee would like to hear from the MCPS community on what you have observed regarding use of MCPS Chromebooks either in school or at home. Please share your observations as well as your perspectives and concerns. This information will be incredibly important in our advocacy work on behalf of MCPS families, and will be anonymized and shared with MCPS decision-makers.

You have the option to share your feedback anonymously, but we invite you to share your name and email if you are willing, so we can contact you with updates on our work on this issue.

- Full Name (Optional)
- Email (Optional, if you are willing to be contacted with updates)
- What is your role?
    - MCPS Parent or Caregiver
    - MCPS Administrator
    - MCPS Staff / Teacher
    - MCPS Student
- Which school does your child attend?
- If you have more than one child in an MCPS school, please select a second school option, or leave blank if not applicable.
- If you are affiliated with any additional school(s), please write the name(s) of the school(s) here.
- Please indicate the grade level(s) you are affiliated with (either as parent, student, teacher, or administrator).
    - Elementary (K-5)
    - Middle (6-8)
    - High (9-12)
- What is your opinion on the overall amount of Chromebook use in class? (select one)
    - Too Much
    - Just Enough
    - Not Enough
    - No Opinion

- Do you have concerns about the way Chromebooks are permitted to be used in class?
    - Yes
    - No
- If you answered yes above, please select the reasons that apply.
    - Chromebooks are used excessively in terms of overall screen time.
    - Chromebooks are being used as "brain breaks" or rewards.
    - Chromebooks are distracting and/or unsafe even when used for educational applications.
    - Some Other Reason (explain below)
    - Not Applicable (not concerned about in-class permitted Chromebook use)
- Please share any specific opinions you have about permitted Chromebook use in class.
- Have you ever heard from your child's teacher that your child has used the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?
    - Yes
    - No
- Have you ever found your child to be using the school-issued Chromebook or personal home laptop for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they are supposed to be completing homework at home?
    - Yes
    - No
- Have you ever personally observed children (not only yours) using the school Chromebook for non-academic purposes (playing games, browsing the general internet, watching videos) when they should be doing school work or listening to the teacher in class?
    - Yes
    - No
- Please select the types of non-academic use of school Chromebooks that you have personally encountered or heard about.
    - Gaming (e.g. games that are not permitted but have not been blocked yet)
    - Gaming (e.g. games that are permitted)
    - Videos (e.g. watching YouTube embedded in a Google slide)
    - Browsing Internet

    - Communicating with friends (e.g. through email or by using a Google Doc)
    - Other
- Please share non-academic uses that you've personally encountered or heard about, including any that especially concern you.
- Should misuse of school-issued Chromebooks be handled as a disciplinary issue?
    - Yes
    - No
- If yes, what consequences would be appropriate for a child found to be misusing a school-issued Chromebook in class?
    - Classroom-based responses (e.g., verbal correction, written reflection/apology, reminders/redirection)
    - Parent/guardian outreach
    - Detention
    - Temporary removal from class
    - I don't think misuse of Chromebooks should be a disciplinary issue.
- Would you like increased use of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, and paper in place of screen-based instruction and homework?
    - Yes
    - No
- Would you like an opportunity to opt your child out of screen-based instruction and homework?
    - Yes
    - No
- Please share any other views (positive or negative) you or your child may have about the school-issued Chromebooks.

Appendix B: Full Survey Results

All survey data, minus personally identifiable information, are available here.

- The first sheet contains all survey data except for personally identifiable information.
- The second sheet contains all narrative responses to the question: “Please share any specific opinions you have about permitted Chromebook use in class.” The responses are sorted by responses to the question “Do you have concerns about the way Chromebooks are permitted to be used in class?”
- The third sheet contains all narrative responses to the question: “Please share non-academic uses that you've personally encountered or heard about, including any that especially concern you.”
- The fourth sheet contains all narrative responses to the question: “Please share any other views (positive or negative) you or your child may have about the school-issued Chromebooks.” The responses are sorted by responses to the question “What is your opinion on the overall amount of Chromebook use in class? (select one).”

Horvath Written Testimony - Senate Commerce Commit
Uploaded by: Betsy Tao
Position: FAV

Written Testimony

Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath, PhD, MEd
Neuroscientist and Educator
Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Executive Summary

Over the past two decades, the cognitive development of children across much of the developed world has stalled and, in many domains, reversed. Literacy, numeracy, attention, and higher-order reasoning have declined despite increased school attendance and expanded public investment.

One major structural change distinguishes today's classrooms from those of prior generations: the rapid and largely unregulated expansion of educational technology (EdTech). Digital devices now occupy a significant share of instructional time, assessment, homework, and student attention.

The available evidence (from international assessments, large-scale academic studies, and meta-analyses) shows that increased classroom screen exposure is generally associated with weaker learning outcomes, not stronger ones. In narrow circumstances (e.g., tightly constrained adaptive practice and remediation), digital tools can support surface-level skill acquisition, but in most core academic contexts screens slow learning, reduce depth of understanding, and weaken retention.

This is not primarily a question of teacher quality, student motivation, or access to devices. It reflects a structural mismatch between how human cognition develops and how digital platforms are engineered to capture attention, fragment focus, and accelerate task switching.

If federal policy continues to incentivize large-scale digital adoption without demanding independent efficacy evidence, privacy protections, and developmental safeguards, it risks compounding long-term educational and workforce harm.

1. What Has Changed

For most of the twentieth century, cognitive performance steadily improved across generations, driven largely by expanding access to formal education and improved instructional quality[1]. Beginning in the mid-2000s, this trend plateaued then reversed in many Western nations. Multiple indicators now show stagnation or decline in literacy, numeracy, problem solving, creativity, and general cognitive performance among adolescents[2-6].

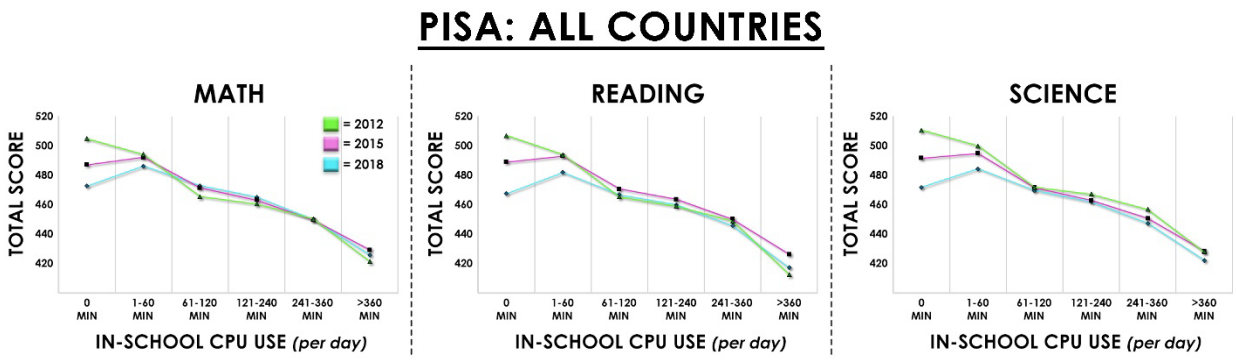
At the same time, classroom environments underwent a rapid digital transformation. One-to-one device programs, cloud platforms, online assessments, adaptive software, and constant connectivity became standard practice in many districts - often without independent longitudinal validation.

Over half of our children now use a computer at school for one to four hours each day, and a full quarter spend *more than* four hours on screens during a typical seven-hour school day[7]. Unfortunately, studies suggest that less than half of this time is spent actually learning, with students off-task for up to 38 minutes of every hour when on classroom devices[8].

2. Evidence from International Assessments

PISA

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tracks the academic performance of 15-year-olds across dozens of countries. When students self-report classroom computer use, higher daily screen exposure consistently corresponds to lower scores in reading, mathematics, and science. The relationship is monotonic: more screen time, lower performance.

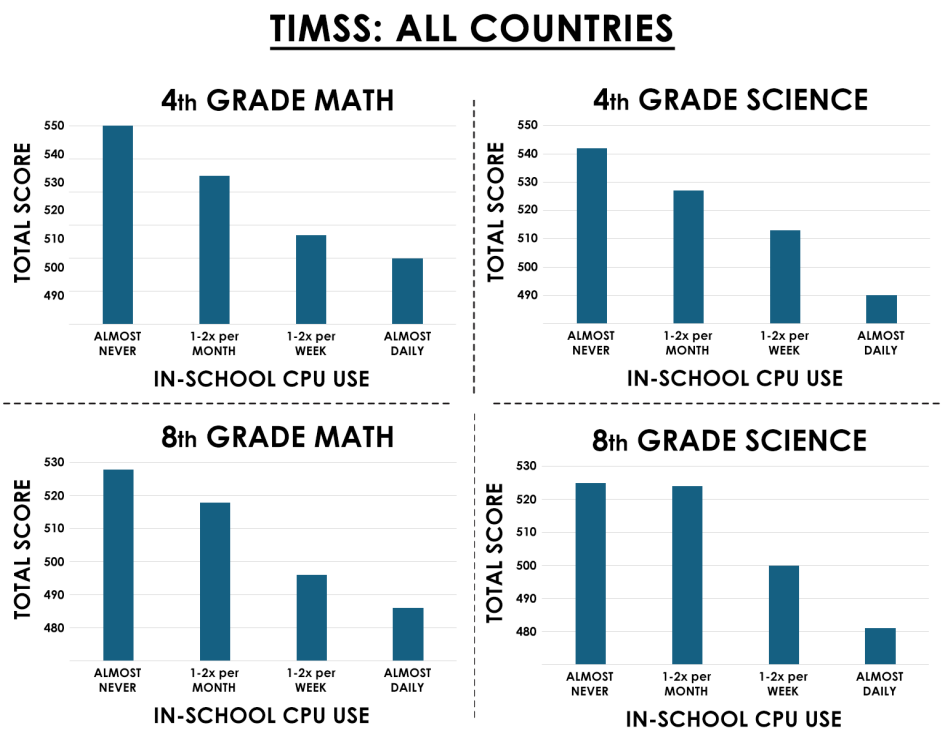


Apparent small advantages sometimes reported for minimal computer exposure disappear once test mode effects are accounted for. When assessments shifted from paper to digital delivery, students with limited device familiarity experienced artificial score penalties, creating the illusion of benefit for moderate screen users rather than genuine learning gains[9].

TIMSS

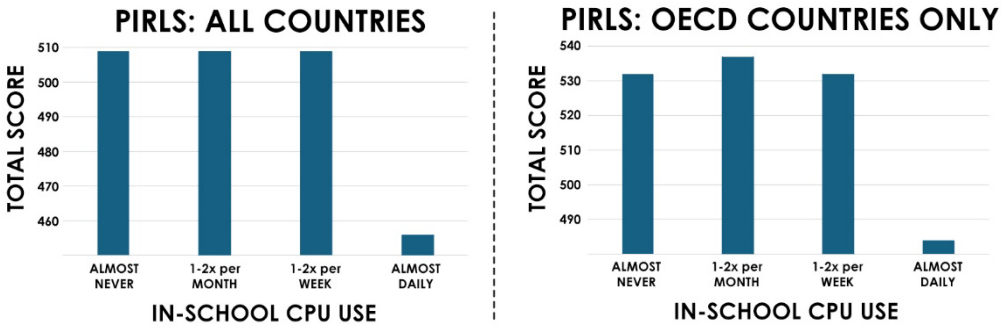
The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) shows a similar pattern among younger students. Frequent in-class computer use correlates with

significantly lower math and science performance across both high-income and middle-income countries.



PIRLS

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) historically shows weaker reading performance among students with high classroom computer use. More recent U.S. data confirm that even modest daily digital exposure is associated with lower reading comprehension[10].



Collectively, these assessments involve millions of students over decades and converge on the same conclusion: heavy classroom screen exposure is not improving learning outcomes at scale.

3. Evidence from Meta-Analysis

Meta-analyses aggregate hundreds of individual studies to estimate overall impact. Most EdTech meta-analyses report small positive effect sizes. However, education research systematically inflates positive effects because comparison conditions vary widely and often lack rigorous baselines.

When educational interventions are benchmarked against established instructional methods, meaningful impact typically begins around moderate effect thresholds (approximately 0.40 – 0.50)[11]. Most digital interventions fall below this range, particularly in:

- One-to-one device programs
- Fully online instruction
- General classroom technology integration
- Programs targeting disadvantaged populations

Only narrowly constrained tools (such as adaptive drills for foundational skills and targeted remediation) consistently approach meaningful gains. These tools succeed because they automate repetition in well-defined domains, not because they enhance deep learning.

To assess practical significance, effect sizes must be interpreted relative to a meaningful benchmark rather than an arbitrary zero. Large-scale syntheses of education research indicate that the average impact of ordinary classroom instruction is approximately +0.42[11]. An intervention that falls below this threshold does not meaningfully outperform standard practice, even if its effect size is technically positive. In practical terms, schools should not invest in tools that perform worse than the average classroom already does without them.

For clarity, the table below presents effect sizes re-centered against this instructional benchmark to show whether each category of educational technology exceeds or underperforms typical instructional impact[11, 12].

	# Of Meta-Analyses	*# of Research Studies*	*Effect Size (Cohen's D)*
General Learning	398	21,155	-0.13 *(SE=0.09)*
SPECIFIC MODERATORS			
Online/Distance Learning	42	1,767	-0.22 *(SE=0.06)*
Primary Years	27	781	*-0.03 (SE=0.04)*
Secondary Years	10	745	-0.11 *(SE=0.05)*
Intelligent Tutoring Systems	5	283	+0.10 *(SE=0.03)*
1-to-1 Laptops	3	162	*-0.30 (SE=0.07)*
Disadvantaged Students	4	195	-0.26 *(SE=0.02)*

Literacy	31	1,109	-0.09 *(SE=0.15)*
Mathematics	41	3,479	-0.09 *(SE=0.13)*
Science	10	547	-0.18 *(SE=0.19)*
Learning Disorders	9	245	+0.05 *(SE=0.08)*
NOTE: Reported effect sizes from published meta-analyses have been re-centered relative to the estimated average impact of typical classroom instruction (+0.42). Values shown represent the difference between each intervention's effect and this instructional benchmark (Adjusted Effect = Reported d – 0.42). This does not alter the underlying study results; it clarifies whether an intervention meaningfully exceeds, matches, or underperforms ordinary instructional impact.			

Interpreted this way, most general-use educational technologies perform below the effectiveness of ordinary classroom instruction, while only narrowly constrained adaptive tools modestly exceed baseline impact.

4. Mode Effects: Reading and Writing

Independent research consistently shows that reading comprehension and retention are stronger on paper than on screens, particularly for complex or extended texts. Spatial stability, reduced scrolling, and embodied interaction support memory formation and comprehension[12].

	# Of Meta-Analyses	*# of Research Studies*	*Effect Size (Cohen's D)*
Reading Comprehension	10	377	-0.16 *(SE=0.05)*
SPECIFIC MODERATORS			
Adult Supports	1	7	-0.22 *(SE=0.22)*
Adult vs Digital Supports	1	10	-0.22 *(SE=0.07)*
NOTE: All studies compare screens to hard-copy texts, meaning the baseline of 'reading from paper' is 0.00.			

Similarly, handwritten note-taking reliably outperforms laptop note-taking for long-term learning. Typing encourages verbatim transcription and shallow processing; handwriting forces summarization, organization, and conceptual encoding[12].

	# Of Meta-Analyses	*# of Research Studies*	*Effect Size (Cohen's D)*
General Learning	4	238	-0.21 *(SE=0.04)*
SPECIFIC MODERATORS			
Allowed to Review Notes	1	9	-0.42 *(SE=0.07)*
Class Length: >30min	1	5	-0.58 *(SE=0.01)*
NOTE: All studies compare typing to handwriting, meaning the baseline of 'handwritten notes" is 0.00.			

These effects are not marginal curiosities. They directly affect how students process information across subjects and grade levels.

5. Why Screens Undermine Learning: A Core Mechanism

Human attention systems evolved to sustain focus on a single task at a time. The prefrontal control system cannot reliably manage competing goal states without significant performance costs[13]. When attention is repeatedly interrupted, three predictable costs emerge:

1. Time loss from task switching overhead[14].
2. Higher error rates from cognitive interference[15].
3. Weaker memory formation as learning shifts from deep encoding toward habit-based processing[16].

Digital platforms are optimized for rapid switching, novelty, and continuous engagement capture. Even when used for academic tasks, they cue the same behavioral patterns students practice during recreational screen use: frequent checking, rapid scrolling, and multitasking.

As a result, screens structurally train attentional habits that conflict with sustained learning. This is not a matter of discipline or willpower; it is a function of repeated conditioning.

6. National Implications

Sustained declines in cognitive skill development have downstream consequences for:

- Workforce adaptability and productivity
- Scientific and technological innovation
- Civic reasoning and institutional trust
- Economic competitiveness[17]
- Public health and wellbeing[18]

Education policy shapes long-term human capital. Decisions made today will influence national capacity for decades.

7. Policy Recommendations

Congress has several practical levers to improve accountability and protect students:

1. Independent Efficacy Standards: Require federally funded EdTech to demonstrate learning benefits through independent, replicated trials before large-scale deployment or renewal.
2. Mode-Equivalence Validation: Mandate validation studies before transitioning high-stakes assessments from paper to digital formats.
3. Student Data Protections: Strengthen limits on behavioral tracking, profiling, and secondary data use involving minors.
4. Procurement Transparency: Require public disclosure of evidence standards, conflicts of interest, and performance claims in district purchasing.
5. Developmental Screen Exposure Guidelines: Establish age-appropriate limits for screen exposure in federally supported early education programs.
6. Federal Evidence Clearinghouse: Create a centralized repository of independently replicated EdTech research to guide districts.
7. Research Funding for Longitudinal Outcomes: Prioritize long-term cognitive and academic impact studies rather than short-term engagement metrics.

Conclusion

This is not a debate about rejecting technology. It is a question of aligning educational tools with how human learning actually works. Evidence indicates that indiscriminate digital expansion has weakened learning environments rather than strengthened them[12].

Federal policy can restore balance by demanding evidence, protecting children's developmental needs, and ensuring that innovation serves learning rather than attention capture.

Our responsibility is not to maximize screen exposure, but to maximize the cognitive capacity and long-term flourishing of the next generation.

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MCCPTA Resolution on Intentional, Effective, and S

Uploaded by: Betsy Tao

Position: FAV

MCCPTA Resolution on Intentional, Effective, and Safe Use of Technology, including Artificial Intelligence, in MCPS Schools

(Approved by the MCCPTA Delegates Assembly, January 27, 2026)

Whereas K-12 children are at a critical stage of cognitive development, building foundational skills in reading, writing, critical thinking, cognitive reasoning and interpersonal and emotional skills that will serve them throughout their lives, and the activities they participate in during those brief, formative years permanently impacts the formation of neural pathways in their brains;

Whereas multiple studies indicate that the use of modern artificial intelligence (AI)[i] such as generative AI and agentic AI impairs cognitive development and critical thinking skills in both students and adults, because they promote significant "cognitive offloading" (using external devices to perform mental tasks), while true learning requires active cognitive engagement through the exertion of mental effort;[ii] [iii]

Whereas generative AI and agentic AI are tools that have different design incentives and carry different risks than calculators or chalk. For example, calculators and chalk don't provide factually wrong answers, dangerous or deadly feedback, or otherwise mislead users (known risks associated with the use of generative AI);

Whereas generative AI and agentic AI features are already on school Chromebooks, and are already being rolled out in many programs and apps accessible to students in advance of any clear MCPS AI guidelines, AI literacy curriculum, or notice to and consent by parents and caregivers;

Whereas adopting "emerging technologies" such as generative AI and agentic AI before we've fully assessed the risks and established clear guardrails could further erode learning in an ecosystem in which children are already exposed to excessive screen time both inside and outside of school.[iv] This is especially true for middle and high school students who are required to do a significant amount of in-class work and homework on Chromebooks, home computers and laptops, and sometimes even their phones. This trend has persisted despite MCCPTA's landmark Digital Balance Resolution dated January of 2023,[v] calling for MCPS to "[m]ake a system-wide effort to significantly limit screen time in classrooms, unless it provides an educational benefit or helps support the learning needs of students receiving services and/or accommodations;"

Whereas, existing MCPS oversight of its EdTech providers often fails to protect the privacy and security of student data – such as when student data is shared for advertising, or shared/sold to data brokers.[vi] And whereas AI exacerbates those privacy and security concerns, such as when

student data is permanently embedded into AI language models when used for training, and information shared with AI has the potential to follow students throughout their lives and be used without their knowledge or consent;[vii]

Whereas the pervasive and default use of digital tools and screens, including one-to-one Chromebook use in the classroom, has not yielded the educational outcomes promised by technology companies, and instead, has shown a demonstrably negative correlation with student performance;[viii ix x xi]

Whereas comprehension and retention of material tend to be significantly higher with print than with screens,[xii] as screens tend to isolate students from each other and the teacher, depriving them of social skills and collaborative problem-solving; and screens force teachers to compete with distractions such as games and pornography[xiii] on school devices; and

Whereas the MCCPTA Technology Committee conducted a survey[xiv] on perceptions of school Chromebook use, and preliminary findings indicate that over 70% of respondents feel that Chromebooks are used too much and have concerns about the way Chromebooks are permitted to be used in class, and almost 90% would like to see increased use of textbooks, workbooks, pencils, and paper in place of screen-based instruction and homework; **so, therefore be it**

Resolved, that with respect to **technology generally**, the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA) urges Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to

- **Conduct a "tech audit"** whereby a representative sample of teachers and students track their tech use for a set period (e.g. one week) to get an honest picture of current tech use;
- **Conduct a cost-benefit analysis** that charts annual expenditures on digital technologies as compared to academic performance over a period of time, both generally and more specifically (for example, investments in IXL compared to math performance based on specific metrics), to ensure that adoption of digital tools actually supports learning over non-digital methods;
- **Create a Tech-Use Taskforce** that includes multiple stakeholders (administrators, teachers, parents, students) from every school level (elementary, middle, high) to develop a clear EdTech philosophy that guides decision-making on all digital tools used by students, and ensures that those digital tools are effective and safe based on independent scientific research;
- **Establish an accountability framework for use of digital tools** (including use of AI tools) that is applied in advance of adoption of a tool, that includes 1) identifying what the specific goals are for the tool, 2) establish clear metrics where success is not defined just by whether the tool is used, but by measuring growth in targeted areas among students using the tool versus control groups, 3) use the data gathered during one period

to redesign guidelines to measure the next to mitigate improper use; and 4) set intervals to assess whether the digital tool should be maintained or abandoned due to failure to maintain a meaningful impact on student learning;

- **Reintroduce friction so that use of digital tools is intentional** rather than by default, such as isolating Chromebooks to a cart that needs to be checked out by the teacher for specific purposes, or limiting computer use to a lab setting, promoting "tech-free days" and setting specific time-limits of tech usage;[xv]
- **Ban data harvesting by default** by insisting on and enforcing strong contractual language with tech vendors to include a prohibition on use of student data for advertising, product development, profiling, training AI, as well as consolidating student data across EdTech tools; and
- **Formalize process for families to request non-screen alternatives**, one which ensures that their children receive equivalent curricula, instruction, learning outcomes, and educational experiences, because many families have made the conscious effort to limit their children's exposure to screens, and have identified over-use of screens at school as a chronic problem they have been unable to address through self-advocacy.

Resolved, that with respect to **student-facing AI**, the MCCPTA urges MCPS to:

- **Pause student-facing generative AI and agentic AI features,** including turning off all generative AI and agentic AI tools (such as AI assistants and chatbots) on all programs, apps and platforms used by students, by default, until MCPS creates an accountability framework for all digital tools – as described below - that ensures that such tools will boost, not undermine, student learning;
- **Create age-appropriate AI education** that focuses on educating students *about* AI as a fast-evolving technology, to include the various risks, and potential options for mitigation, rather than a "how to" or "best practices" for using tools that will quickly become outdated or obsolete and whose use likely undermine learning goals;
- **Ensure that digital literacy includes situating the use of AI within an ethical context**, taking in account the fact that generative AI is founded on the unauthorized use of intellectual property, exploited labor, environmental damage, and enshrinement of existing structural biases;
- **Implement strict usage limits and monitoring for any approved AI tools**, with specific guidelines for when and how they may be used, ensuring they supplement rather than replace fundamental learning processes;
- **Provide transparency to the community about all AI tools being used in classrooms**, including their data collection practices, error rates, and safety measures; and
- **Implement an interim policy on AI and academic integrity** that requires schools to update the school policies on AI tools and academic dishonesty in the classroom, states

how standards can be enforced, that enforcement efforts are aligned with law and current policy, and gives students recourse to challenge accusations of AI use.

Resolved, that with respect to **non-student facing uses of AI**, the MCCPTA urges MCPS to:

- **Develop strict guidelines regarding use of AI to grade, assess, or otherwise classify or characterize a student** that ensures parents and caregivers are thoroughly informed about the use, purpose and functions of any AI tools or systems adopted by MCPS teachers and staff,
- **Develop clear guidelines to ensure that bias and unfairness are minimized**, and such risks are affirmatively identified and addressed by MCPS expeditiously, as well as a transparent appeals process should parents disagree with the determinations or outcome;
- **Ensure that any use of AI to make recommendations that replace human decision-making, will have human review**, that there will be procedures in place for intervening in the AI's operation, or halting it through a "stop" button or similar mechanism, when appropriate, and that for transparency purposes, such uses and purpose for the use will be broadly publicized, such as posting on MCPS's website or reported out to the Board of Education in a public meeting, in advance of any such use; and
- **Implement mandatory professional training for MCPS staff and teachers** that ensures consistent, universal implementation of MCPS's AI policy and guidelines;
- **Establish clear, documented, and transparent policies, guidelines, and processes** by MCPS to monitor and evaluate MCPS staff and teacher use of AI to ensure accountability.

Resolved, that the MCCPTA urges MCPS to conduct public conversations in the form of town halls, engagement sessions, etc. with all stakeholders about the goals of public education,[xvi] how current use of technology in classrooms is either promoting or inhibiting those goals, and present a stated vision with best practices for handling technology that supports the critical skills our students need.

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[i] Artificial Intelligence" refers to a machine-based system designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy, and given certain objectives (either explicit or implicit) interacts with data to generate predictions, recommendations, decisions, material, information/data (including text, images, videos, computer code, etc.), or effects (to include influencing physical or virtual environments) – collectively "Output(s)" -and includes but is not limited to large and small language, machine learning and deep learning models.

[ii] Mary Burns, Rebecca Winthrop, Natasha Luther, Emma Venetis, and Rida Karim, "A new direction for students in an AI world: Prosper, prepare, protect," Brookings Institution, January 14, 2026, *available at* https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/A-New-Direction-for-Students-in-an-AI-World-FULL-REPORT.pdf (discussing risks from pages 53 onward).

[iii] Nataliya Kosmyna, Eugene Hauptmann, Ye Tong Yuan, Jessica Situ, Xian-Hao Liao, Ashly Vivian Beresnitzky, Iris Braunstein, Pattie Maes, "Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant

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[iv] Today's children spend on average 7 to 7.5 hours a day on entertainment media despite research showing that screen exposure should be limited to as little as 30-60 minutes a day, inclusive of all screens. Audrey Mir, "Screen Time is Stolen Time: A French neurologist shows that screens and kids shouldn't mix," *City-Journal*, Mar. 8, 2023, *available at https://www.city-journal.org/article/screen-time-is-stolen-time.*

[v] Taimarie Carasa, "First Parent-led Digital Balance Resolution in the U.S. Passed in Montgomery County," The Sentinel, Feb. 10, 2023, available at https://www.thesentinel.com/communities/first-parent-led-digital-balance-resolution-in-the-u-s-passed-in-montgomery-county/article_6a1ba696-a9a4-11ed-b5ae-bf5c1ff75c5f.html. The MCCPTA Digital Balance Resolution is available at https://mccpta.sharepoint.com/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2FShared%20Documents%2FMCCPTA%20Digital%20Balance%20Resolution%20%28APPROVED%2001%2D24%2D23%29%2Epdf&parent=%2FShared%20Documents&p=true&ga=1.

[vi] According to a 2022 report issued by Internet Safety Labs, "Nearly all apps (96%) share children's personal information with third parties, 78% of the time with advertising and monetization entities, typically without the knowledge or consent of the users or the schools, making them unsafe." 2022 K12 Edtech Safety Benchmark: National Findings – Part 1, Internet Safety Labs, Dec. 13, 2022. ISL has an "App Microscope" that assesses the risk level of different apps, and Canvas (which is the platform for MyMCPSClassroom) was assessed as "Critical Risk," and StudentVue (powered by Synergy) was assessed as "Medium Risk."

[vii] Congressional Research Service, "Generative Artificial Intelligence and Data Privacy: A Primer," May 23, 2023, available at https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/R/PDF/R47569/R47569.5.pdf.

[viii] "[L]arge scale international assessment data, such as that provided by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), suggest a negative link between excessive ICT (information and communications technology) use and student performance." UNESCO, 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, "Technology in Education: A Tool on Whose Terms?", p. 83, *available at* https://gem-report-2023.unesco.org/. The same report indicates that "[t]here is little robust evidence on digital technology's added value in education." As early as 2015, a report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) discussing the PISA stated that "[t]he results also show no appreciable improvements in student achievement in reading, mathematics or science in the countries that had invested heavily in ICT for education. And perhaps the most disappointing finding of the report is that technology is of little help in bridging the skills divide between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Put simply, ensuring that every child attains a baseline level of proficiency in reading and mathematics seems to do more to create equal opportunities in a digital world than can be achieved by expanding or subsidising access to high-tech devices and services." OECD, "Students, Computers, and Learning: Making the Connection," Sept. 15, 2015, *available at* https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/students-computers-and-learning_9789264239555-en.html.

[ix] Salmerón L, Vargas C, Delgado P, Baron N. Relation between digital tool practices in the language arts classroom and reading comprehension scores. Read Writ. 2023;36(1):175-194. doi: 10.1007/s11145-022-10295-1. Epub 2022 May 7. PMID: 35571994; PMCID: PMC9076497 (showing that amount of daily use of digital devices was negatively related to scores on a reading comprehension test).

[x] Larry D. Rosen, L. Mark Carrier, Nancy A. Cheever, "Facebook and texting made me do it: Media-induced task-switching while studying," Computers in Human Behavior, Volume 29, Issue 3, 2013, Pages 948-958, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.001, *available at*

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0747563212003305 (showing that students studied less than 6 minutes before switching to social media, messaging friends, and engaging with other digital distractions).

[xi] Eric D. Ragan, Samuel R. Jennings, John D. Massey, Peter E. Doolittle, "Unregulated use of laptops over time in large lecture classes," Computers & Education, Volume 78, 2014, Pages 78-86, ISSN 0360-1315, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2014.05.002, *available at* https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0360131514001158 (showing that when using a laptop during class, students typically spend 38 minutes of every hour off-task).

[xii] Maryanne Wolf, "Screen-based online learning will change kids' brains. Are we ready for that?", The Guardian, Aug. 4, 2020, *available at* https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/aug/24/deep-literacy-technology-child-development-reading-skills.

[xiii] Common Sense Media found that nearly a third of teens have viewed pornography during the school day. Of these teens, 44 percent had viewed it on a school-issued device. Common Sense Media, "Teens and Pornography," 2022, *available at* https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2022-teens-and-pornography-final-web.pdf.

[xiv] The MCCPTA Technology Committee launched a survey on November 20, 2025 to gather community feedback on school Chromebook use. Communications were sent to listservs of all PTA presidents, delegates, and the technology listserv, and local PTAs were encouraged to share with their communities through newsletters, etc. Responses received as of January 12, 2026 totaling 1003 were compiled into a report, *Technology Committee Report: Community Feedback on School Chromebook Use* (Jan. 26, 2026), available here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bpUt2jebkLeBUJbe76JizxhOc5OdGqUH/view?usp=drive_link.

[xv] Farah Mokrani, "Madrid bans screens in primary schools: New rules for digital devices from September," Euro Weekly, July 29, 2025, available at https://euroweeklynews.com/2025/07/29/madrid-bans-screens-in-primary-schools-new-rules-for-digital-devices-from-september/ (describing new rules setting strict screen time limits for students in public and private schools).

[xvi] Stan Winborne & Karl Johnson, "The Question You Need to Ask Before Crafting Any New Ed-Tech Policy," Education Week, Nov. 24, 2025, *available at* https://www-edweek-org.ezproxy.baylor.edu/technology/opinion-the-question-you-need-to-answer-before-crafting-any-new-ed-tech-policy/2025/11.

Written Testimony on SB0720 (B. Tao).pdf
Uploaded by: Betsy Tao
Position: FAV

SB0720 - Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

Written Testimony (Favorable)

Submitted by: Betsy Tao, MCCPTA Technology Committee Chair, Distraction Free Schools Maryland

To Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Betsy Tao, and I have two children in Montgomery County Public Schools. I represent the Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA) as its Technology Committee Chair. I also serve as the Maryland state lead for Distraction Free Schools Policy Project. In both roles, I advocate for a learning environment that is free of the harmful distractions of digital media, whether it's on personal mobile devices or school-issued laptops.

I am grateful to Senator Hester for putting forward a bill that seeks to provide guidance on use of artificial intelligence in Maryland schools, as that guidance is desperately needed at the local level. Here in Montgomery County, we have no clear guidelines on use of artificial guidance by educators and students, and yet AI chatbots have popped up like mushrooms after a spring rain all over student Chromebooks, as software updates on previously approved applications. When we raised this issue with MCPS's Central Office, there did not seem to be an easy way to turn these features off. I accidentally learned of these chatbots only because my 7th grade daughter told me that she was playing with Flexi, one of the chatbots on her Chromebook, in class.

What I'd like the committee to understand is that artificial intelligence tools are quietly entering an ecosystem where students are already overusing devices at the detriment of learning. The one-to-one laptop policy has been a failure and led to a significant decline in student performance based on international, national and state testing. It's no wonder students struggle with reading and writing, when they carry around a Chromebook all day instead of books, and spend a significant amount of time playing games, watching videos, and engaging in other distractions during class. The MCCPTA Technology conducted a survey of MCPS families from November to January and collected over a thousand responses. Over 70% of respondents are concerned about Chromebook use in schools. Almost 90% wanted more textbooks and paper over screens. A copy of the report and the many testimonials provided by parents and educators and included with my testimony.

AI, especially generative AI (and soon, agentic AI) features, supercharge the negative effects that screens already have on learning. It is a pernicious myth that "AI is inevitable, and students need to learn to use it." To say any technology is inevitable is to deprive all of us of agency. Moreover, modern technology products do not require expertise to use. They are literally designed to be usable by anyone. Ironically, Gen Z demonstrates less computer literacy on international testing than generations before it, despite spending the most time on computers, thus exposing this myth.

Instead, what students need is to gain the breadth of knowledge, reading comprehension and reading stamina, critical thinking skills, writing skills, socio-emotional skills, and mental acuity to even hope to be able to use AI as a tool. The science of learning shows that those skills are best gained through what has always been proven to be most effective – the teacher-to-student mentor relationship, early

literacy and daily reading (of print materials!), regular writing and mental struggle with ideas and self-expression, facility with logical problem-solving, time for creativity and exploration, and interpersonal interactions. Because of that, students should never be encouraged to shortcut and undermine that process by using generative AI to do their work. Instead, they should be learning *about* AI – what Large Language Models are, how they work, what they're built on, what information comes out of those models and why they often are biased or inaccurate, and what the inherent risks are of relying on AI, especially for students. Unfortunately, people who provide AI literacy often skip past the "should you use it?" to "how to use it," counseling students to "be aware that AI can hallucinate" without considering whether students even have the breadth of knowledge to tell the difference.

Due to these concerns, the MCCPTA unanimously passed a "Resolution on Intentional, Effective, and Safe Use of Technology, including Artificial Intelligence, in MCPS Schools." The resolution details the risks with generative AI in education and makes a number of recommendations to MCPS, including taking a hard look at how technology is used in schools now, and taking a cautionary approach with respect to AI. Digital tools should be used until it has been shown, through independent assessments, that it will yield better learning outcomes than alternative means. I applaud Senator Hester for including provisions to establish a collaborative working group of stakeholders that will provide oversight and consult on AI use in K-12 education. No members of the working group should have financial ties to the multi-billionaire-dollar tech industry so desperate to force AI tools into our schools.

I submit this testimony to educate the committee on what parents and caregivers in MCPS, the largest school district in Maryland, care about when it comes to technology and AI. We continue to advocate at the local level, but we welcome any efforts at the state level to provide more guidance and direction to county boards on these issues. More than guidance, school districts need guardrails because "best practices" are easily ignored. My hope is that this bill is the first step to providing those guardrails on AI use in our schools.

Betsy Tao, Rockville, MD
MCCPTA Technology Committee
Distraction Free Schools Maryland

Enclosures:

- MCCPTA Technology Committee Report: Community Feedback on School Chromebook Use (Jan. 26, 2026)
- MCCPTA Resolution on Intentional, Effective, and Safe Use of Technology, including Artificial Intelligence, in MCPS Schools (Jan. 27, 2026)
- Written Testimony, Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath, PhD, MEd Neuroscientist and Educator Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation (Jan. 15, 2026)

SB 720
Uploaded by: Brad Searle
Position: FAV

Written Testimony in Support of SB720

Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 26, 2026

Submitted by: Brad Searle, Founder & CEO, LaMancha AI

Position: FAVORABLE

Contact: brad@lamancha.ai

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 720, the Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act.

About the Author

I come to this issue from three converging perspectives:

As a federal AI executive: I serve as the Deputy Chief Data and AI Officer at Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), where I led the deployment of the Navy's first enterprise generative AI platform on Azure Government. This included achieving a full Authority to Operate (ATO) in a record eight months, training over 2,000 personnel, and briefing Navy leadership up to the Vice Admiral level. I was nominated for the GITEC 2026 Excellence in Cybersecurity Award for this work. I understand enterprise AI governance — the procurement frameworks, the security accreditation, the risk management — at the most demanding level in the federal government.

As a parent: My oldest son, Jacob, has cerebral palsy. He was an early adopter of generative AI, using ChatGPT to build his own Etsy store and a campaign website for a friend. I successfully advocated to include ChatGPT as an assistive technology in his IEP — one of the first such accommodations in our district. Jacob has since transitioned to a

504 plan, where that accommodation remains in place. I serve on the Cerebral Palsy Foundation's Parent Advisory Circle and previously sat on the Executive Board of Reach for the Stars, a foundation for children with CP.

As a school district volunteer: Based on my professional and personal AI experience, I was invited to join the Calvert County Public Schools AI Committee, where I helped draft the district's first AI guidance for staff. The school board continues to consult me on AI matters. This hands-on experience showed me both how much districts need AI policy guidance and how few resources exist to help them create it.

These three perspectives — enterprise AI governance, parent advocacy, and district-level policy development — led me to found **LaMancha AI** and build the Blueprint Platform.

Why This Bill Matters — And Why It Can't Wait

Artificial intelligence is already in Maryland classrooms. Students are using ChatGPT for homework. Teachers are experimenting with AI lesson planning. Administrators are evaluating AI-powered tools for everything from grading to scheduling. But in most districts, there is no policy governing any of it.

Nationwide, only **40 out of approximately 13,500 school districts** — 0.3% — have published formal AI guidance (The 74Million, 2026). Meanwhile, **92% of students** now use AI as their primary research and brainstorming tool, up from 66% just one year ago (DemandSage, 2026). **54% of students** and **53% of teachers** used AI for school during the 2024-25 year (RAND Corporation, 2025). The gap between adoption and governance is not just concerning — it is a liability.

The Workforce Our Children Are Entering

This is not only a school governance issue. It is a workforce preparation issue.

AI is fundamentally reshaping the labor market our students will enter. In February 2026 alone, AI models demonstrated the ability to complete complex, multi-hour professional tasks autonomously — writing functional code, conducting legal analysis, producing financial models. Industry analysts project that **up to 50% of entry-level white-collar positions** could be displaced or fundamentally restructured within the next one to five years.

I think about this as a father of three children in Calvert County Public Schools. My oldest son, Jacob, has cerebral palsy. ChatGPT is part of his 504 plan — it serves as an equalizer that opens doors his disability would otherwise close. He's used it to build his own Etsy store and create a campaign website for a friend. For Jacob, AI isn't a threat — it's a tool that expands what's possible.

But all three of my children are growing up in a world where the ability to work effectively alongside AI will not be optional — it will be a baseline expectation. The districts that teach students to use AI responsibly, ethically, and skillfully will prepare them for this future. The districts that delay — waiting for perfect policy while students navigate AI without guidance — will leave them behind.

This is why SB720 matters. It is not just about compliance. It is about ensuring Maryland's students are prepared for the world they are actually entering.

SB720 addresses this gap by establishing a structured, statewide approach to AI in education — one that puts students and teachers at the center while ensuring responsible, equitable adoption.

The Compliance Challenge Districts Will Face

SB720 creates six concrete obligations for every county school system:

1. **Adopt an AI policy** within 120 days of MSDE guidance
2. **Designate an AI Coordinator** as liaison to the State
3. **Procure AI tools** through the state procurement framework
4. **Participate in professional development** programs
5. **Report data** on AI usage to the Maryland AI Education Collaborative
6. **Align all AI use** with MSDE guidelines and best practices

These are the right requirements. But 24 county school systems — many with limited technology staff and competing budget priorities — will need practical, affordable tools to meet them.

The Solution Already Exists

At LaMancha AI, we anticipated exactly this need. We have built the **Blueprint Platform** (blueprint.lamancha.ai), an AI-powered, self-service platform that guides districts through creating comprehensive AI policy — much like TurboTax guides individuals through tax preparation.

The platform generates **18 board-ready policy deliverables** across four phases:

Phase 1: Core Policies

- Acceptable Use Policy
- Academic Integrity Guidelines
- Data Privacy & Security Policy
- Governance & Committee Structure
- Vendor Evaluation & Procurement Framework
- Risk Assessment Protocol

Phase 2: Implementation

- Implementation Roadmap
- Professional Development Plan
- Levels of AI Use Framework
- AI Literacy Standards

Phase 3: Communications

- Board Presentation Materials
- Parent & Community Communications Plan
- Staff Rollout Communications
- Student Guidance Documents

Phase 4: Compliance & Sustainability

- **SB720 Compliance Crosswalk** — maps policies directly to SB720 requirements
- **AI Coordinator Kit** — onboarding materials for the coordinator role SB720 mandates
- Annual Review Cycle
- Equity Audit Framework

Every deliverable is generated using AI, customized to the district's specific context (size, existing policies, community values, implementation timeline), and exportable as professional PDF or Word documents ready for board review.

How Blueprint Maps to SB720

SB720 Requirement	Blueprint Deliverable
Adopt AI policy within 120 days	Full policy suite (Phases 1–3)
Designate AI Coordinator	AI Coordinator Kit (Section 4.2)
Procure AI tools via state framework	Vendor Evaluation & Procurement (Section 1.5)
Professional development	PD Plan (Section 2.2)
Report to the Collaborative	Annual Review Cycle (Section 4.3)
Align with MSDE guidelines	SB720 Compliance Crosswalk (Section 4.1)

Accessibility and Affordability

We believe every district — regardless of size or budget — should be able to comply with SB720. To accelerate adoption during this critical window, we are offering **introductory early access pricing**:

- The **Explorer tier** provides a free starting point for districts to assess the platform and begin their AI policy journey
- The **Builder tier (introductory: $99/month)** provides full document generation and AI-assisted policy development
- The **Partner tier (introductory: $299/month)** adds team collaboration, unlimited revisions, and dedicated support
- Even at regular pricing, this represents a **fraction of the cost** of traditional education consulting engagements, which typically run $10,000–$50,000+

The platform supports team-based collaboration with role-based access (Editor, Reviewer, Approver), mirroring the governance structure SB720 envisions.

A Note on Timing

The bill's June 1, 2026 effective date — followed by MSDE's guidance development period, followed by the 120-day district compliance window — creates an aggressive but achievable timeline. Districts that begin planning now will be best positioned.

The Blueprint Platform is live today at **blueprint.lamancha.ai**. Maryland districts can start building their AI policy framework immediately, aligning their work with SB720's requirements before the bill even takes effect.

The Cost of Inaction

I respectfully submit that the greater risk is not in passing this bill — it is in not passing it. The absence of policy is not a neutral position. It is an active exposure. Across the country, the consequences of inaction are already playing out:

Legal liability. In 2024, a student at Hingham High School in Massachusetts was disciplined for using AI on an assignment. The school had no AI policy. The parents sued, arguing the discipline was illegitimate without written rules. Even though the school ultimately prevailed, the case consumed significant administrative time and legal resources that could have been spent on students (AALRR, 2024). A clear policy would have prevented the entire situation.

Student safety. During the 2024-25 school year, **36% of students** reported a deepfake-related issue at their school. In Beverly Hills, five eighth-graders were expelled for using AI to create fake nude images of 16 female classmates (NBC News, 2024). In Westfield, New Jersey, a similar incident led a 14-year-old victim to testify before the U.S. Senate (Fox 5 NY, 2024). Districts without AI policies have no framework for prevention, response, or accountability when these incidents occur.

Data privacy exposure. When students use free AI tools without district guidance, they enter data into commercial systems with no educational data protections. ChatGPT's own terms state it is not intended for anyone under 13 — meaning unguided

student use could expose districts to COPPA penalties of up to **$51,744 per affected child** (FTC, 2025). If a teacher enters student names, grades, or behavioral notes into a public AI tool, that data may enter a commercial training pipeline with no FERPA protections.

Erosion of trust. Without clear policies, schools often default to detection — trying to catch students using AI after the fact. AI detection tools are unreliable and disproportionately flag non-native English speakers, creating equity and discrimination liability (NPR, 2025). **Half of all students** now say they are worried about being falsely accused of using AI to cheat (RAND, 2025). That is not a policy environment. That is a trust crisis.

Inconsistent governance. Without statewide guidance, each teacher makes individual judgment calls about AI — creating wildly inconsistent experiences for students across classrooms, schools, and districts. This inequity compounds existing gaps.

Every month without policy is a month where these risks accumulate. The question is not whether Maryland's school districts will eventually need AI governance — it is whether they build it proactively, with community input and legislative support, or reactively, after an incident forces their hand.

Conclusion

SB720 is thoughtful, comprehensive legislation that will position Maryland as a national leader in responsible AI adoption in K-12 education. The requirements it establishes are achievable, the tools to support compliance already exist, and the cost of inaction is both real and growing.

I strongly urge a **favorable report** on SB720.

Respectfully submitted,

Brad Searle
Founder & CEO, LaMancha AI

Deputy Chief Data and AI Officer, NAVAIR
U.S. Navy Veteran (1998–2005)
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SEIU Local 500 Testimony in Support of SB 720 2026

Uploaded by: Christopher Cano

Position: FAV

Testimony - SB 720,
Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)
Favorable
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 26, 2026
Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Feldman & Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents more than 20,000 education workers and public employees across Maryland, including early childhood educators, school support professionals, and higher education workers. Our members are on the front lines of implementing new technologies in our schools, and they understand both the promise and the risks of artificial intelligence in education.

Senate Bill 720 establishes a thoughtful, worker-informed framework for the responsible integration of artificial intelligence in K–12 schools. The bill rightly centers students and educators, prioritizes equity and ethical use, and ensures that artificial intelligence is implemented as a tool to support—rather than replace—human judgment, professional expertise, and educational relationships.

SEIU Local 500 strongly supports the bill's emphasis on clear statewide guidance developed by the State Department of Education in consultation with stakeholders. Consistent guidance will help prevent a patchwork of policies across districts and protect students, educators, and school staff from misuse of emerging technologies.

We also applaud the bill's commitment to professional development that is accessible, statewide, and compensated. Requiring that educators be paid with time, money, or

recertification credit—and prohibiting fees for participation—recognizes that successful implementation of artificial intelligence depends on respecting educators' labor and professional expertise. These protections are essential and should serve as a model for future education policy.

Equally important is the creation of the Maryland AI Education Collaborative, which explicitly includes labor unions representing teachers, administrators, and school support staff. This ensures that workers who will be directly impacted by artificial intelligence systems have a meaningful seat at the table in shaping policy, procurement, and implementation decisions. Including school support staff—who are often excluded from governance conversations—is especially critical, as these workers are frequently tasked with administrative and operational responsibilities affected by AI systems.

Finally, the bill's safeguards around procurement, evaluation, and certification of AI tools—supported by institutions such as Morgan State University—help ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with public values rather than private vendor interests.

Artificial intelligence will shape the future of education. Senate Bill 720 ensures that this future is ethical, equitable, worker-centered, and student-focused.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 720. Thank you to Senator Katie Fry Hester for her leadership on this important issue.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs
SEIU Local 500

SB 720 - Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act

Uploaded by: Denise Riley

Position: FAV

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Written Testimony to the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 720 - Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)
February 26, 2026

FAVORABLE

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee: AFT Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 720 (The Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act). As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to rapidly transform our economy and society, Maryland's students and educators cannot afford to be left behind or worse, exposed to technology without proper guidance. This bill provides a critical roadmap to ensure that AI is integrated into our schools safely, ethically, and equitably.

Currently, many school districts are operating in a policy vacuum, forced to decide on their own how to handle AI tools without statewide standards. SB 720 addresses this by requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop guidelines and an online platform for students, parents, and educators. By creating a unified framework that prioritizes human-centered learning and evidence-based methods, we can help ensure that a student's zip code does not determine the quality or safety of the digital tools they use in the classroom.

This legislation recognizes that technology is only as effective as the people who use it. By mandating professional development and establishing the Maryland AI Education Collaborative, SB 720 helps to ensure that our teachers are not just passive users of software, but informed leaders who can teach AI literacy as a workforce skill. The bill's focus on ethical procurement and annual certifications also provides necessary guardrails against bias and data privacy risks, protecting our children from the unintended consequences of unregulated technology.

SB 720 is a proactive, common-sense measure that prepares Maryland for a future where AI is a standard part of life. It moves us away from a reactive approach and toward a strategic, "AI-ready" educational system that benefits every resident of our state. Again we urge a favorable report. Thank you.

SB720_FAV.pdf
Uploaded by: Donna Edwards
Position: FAV

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SB 720 - Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 26, 2026

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 720. On behalf of our 700 affiliated unions, I offer the following comments.

Right now, Maryland has no uniform statewide standards for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in K-12 schools. That leaves every district and individual teacher to interpret policy on their own. Without clear guardrails, AI tools can be misused or implemented inconsistently in ways that undermine rather than support teachers.

SB 720 takes a step in the right direction by requiring the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to publish AI guidance for students, educators, and administrators, ensuring that every stakeholder has access to clear expectations and best practices. The legislation explicitly requires that the guidances published must "emphasize students and teachers at the center of educational technology," reinforcing that AI must serve the classroom, not replace the people who make learning possible.

AI should be deployed to enhance instruction, reduce administrative burdens, and support educators and students alike. This only happens when teachers are given the tools and training to use these systems effectively and safely. By mandating professional development and establishing the Maryland AI Education Collaborative, SB 720 further ensures that teachers are given the time, training, and support they need to navigate new AI tools, evaluate their risks, and integrate them into their teaching.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 720.

SB 720
Uploaded by: Jacob Searle
Position: FAV

Written Testimony in Support of SB720

Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 26, 2026

Submitted by: Jacob Searle, Student, Calvert High School

Position: FAVORABLE

Contact: jacob@lamancha.ai

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jacob Searle. I am an 11th grade student at Calvert High School in Calvert County, Maryland. I have cerebral palsy and am approximately 90% non-verbal. I use an iPad to communicate, and artificial intelligence tools, especially ChatGPT are written into my Individualized Education Program (IEP as assistive technology.

I strongly support SB720.

For me, AI is not a trend or a tool to cheat. It is access and accessibility.

AI allows me to keep up with course material. I can organize my thoughts for essays. I can communicate complex ideas that would otherwise be extremely difficult or impossible for me to express.

I also use AI outside the classroom. I built my own Etsy store with help from ChatGPT. I created a campaign website for a friend. I use AI daily for schoolwork, communication, and creative projects. These experiences have shown me that AI is not just about homework — it is about independence, confidence, and opportunity — and other students should have the resources and the means to learn that for themselves.

Most importantly, AI acts as an equalizer for me. It opens doors that my disability would otherwise close.

Yet despite how widely students are already using AI, many schools lack clear policies or guidance. As a student, this creates confusion and anxiety. Different teachers have different expectations. Some view AI only through the lens of academic dishonesty, without recognizing its role as assistive technology. Students are left guessing what is allowed, and students with disabilities risk losing access to tools they rely on.

That uncertainty should not exist.

SB720 provides exactly what schools need right now: structure, consistency, and accountability. By requiring districts to adopt AI policies, designate AI coordinators, provide professional development for teachers, and establish clear guidelines centered on students, this bill ensures that AI is introduced thoughtfully and responsibly.

For students like me, this matters deeply.

I do not want accessibility tools treated as shortcuts. I do not want students disciplined under unclear or unwritten rules. I do not want families left to individually advocate for accommodations that should already be understood and supported system-wide — and I can't just sit by and let the contrary scenario happen.

My spoken testimony to this Committee is being delivered through an AI-generated voice. That is not symbolic. That is reality. **My voice in this room exists because of artificial intelligence.**

SB720 helps ensure that students like me are supported instead of sidelined, empowered instead of restricted, and included in the future that is already arriving.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB720.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jacob A. Searle
11th Grade, Calvert High School
Calvert County, Maryland
jacob@lamancha.ai

AI_Needs_Assessment_Analysis (2).pdf
Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester
Position: FAV

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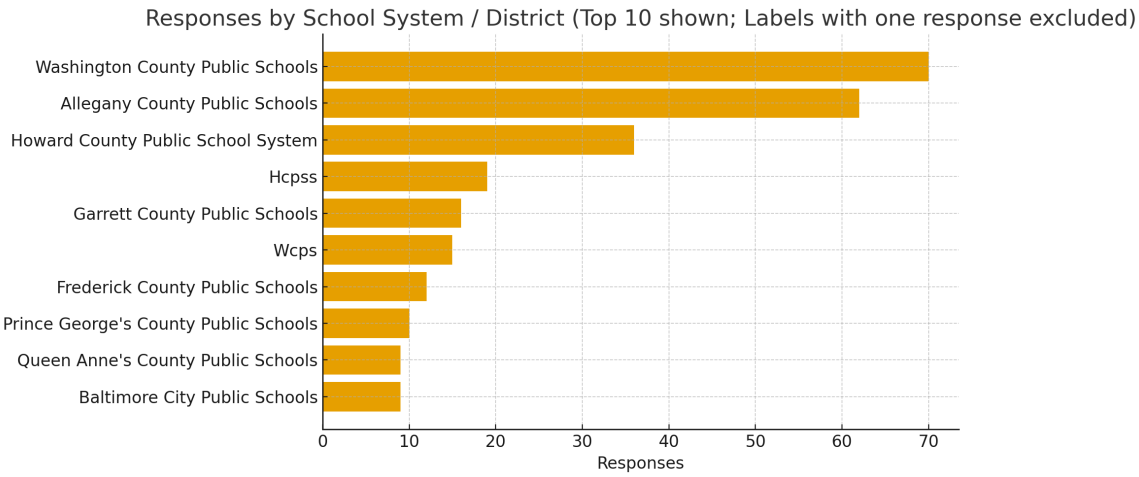
MARYLAND AI NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY ANALYSIS

Maryland is committed to ensuring that all students have access to innovative educational technologies that prepare them for future success. As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly integrated into classrooms across the nation, this needs assessment survey was designed to gather insights from educators, administrators, and school systems across Maryland. The purpose is to understand the current state of AI adoption, perceived barriers, training needs, and infrastructure readiness.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As of **October 10, 2025**, a total of 310 responses were collected across multiple Maryland school systems. The survey covered roles, current AI use, expressed needs, barriers, training interests, and governance considerations. Teachers made up the majority of respondents, followed by media specialists and computer science instructors. AI use is still in early phases, with most educators using AI rarely or occasionally. Top barriers include over-reliance by students, lack of training/support, bias in AI outputs, and data privacy concerns. Interest in professional development is evident, though confidence and readiness levels vary across districts.

CHARTS



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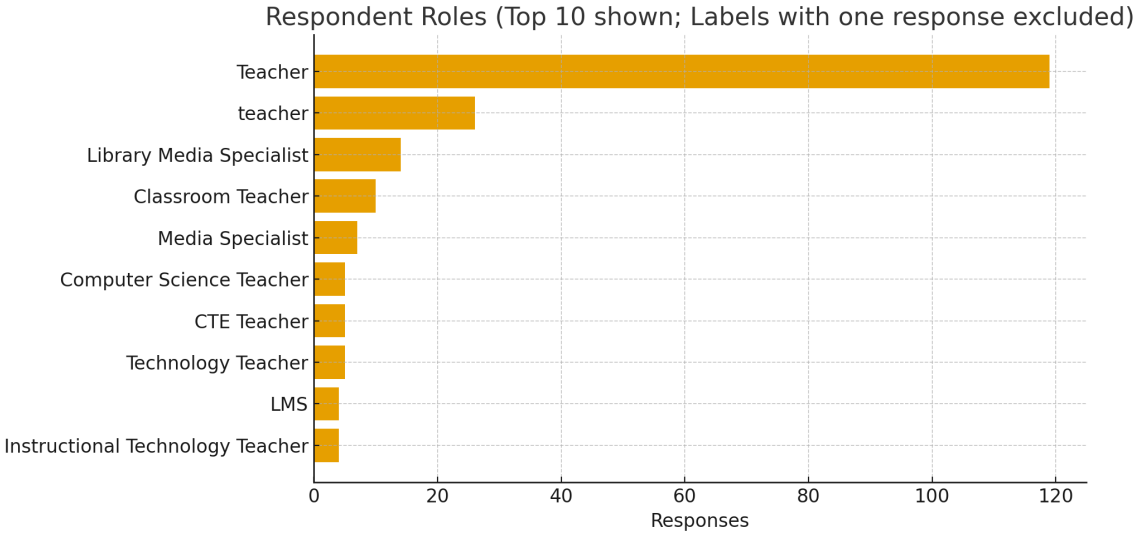

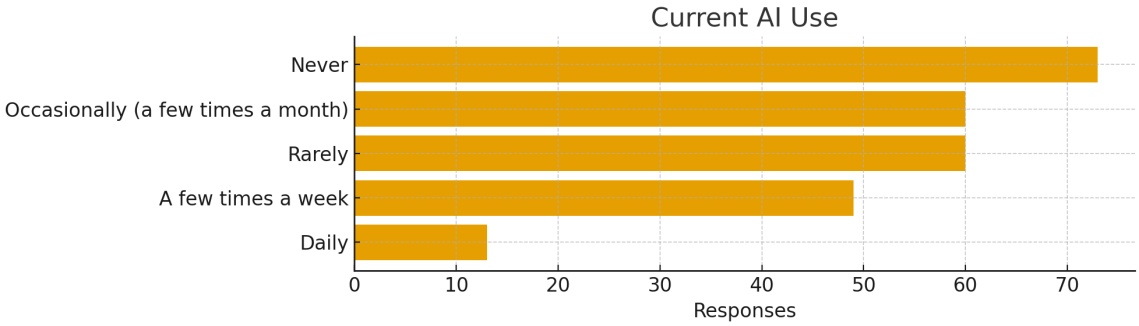

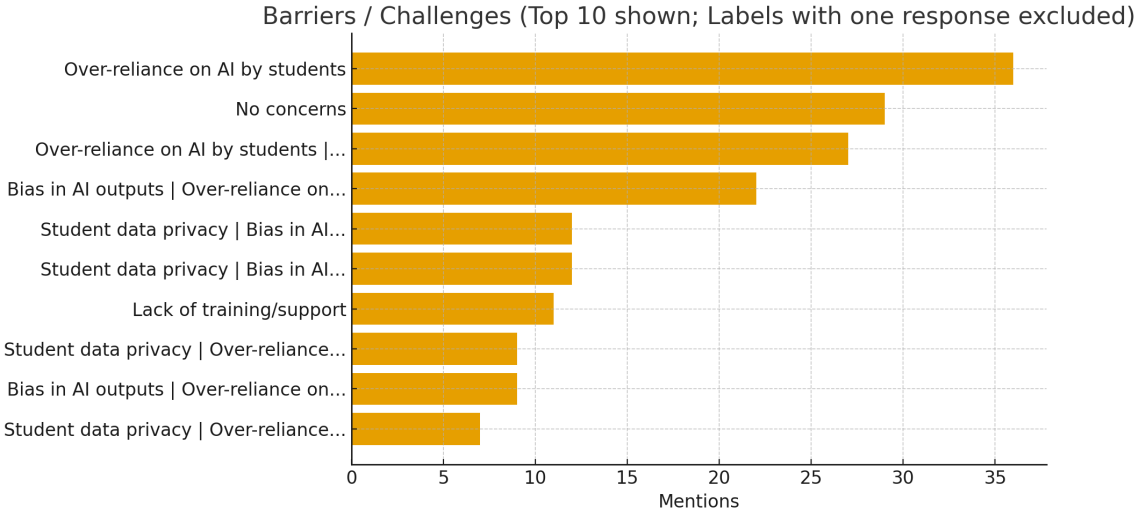

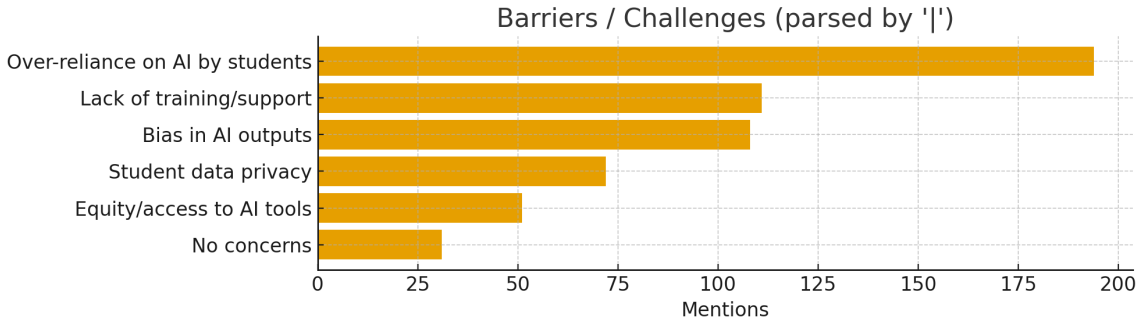

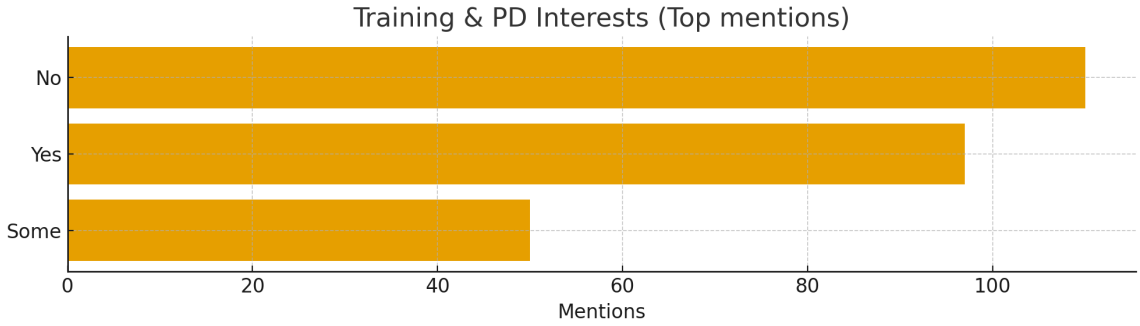

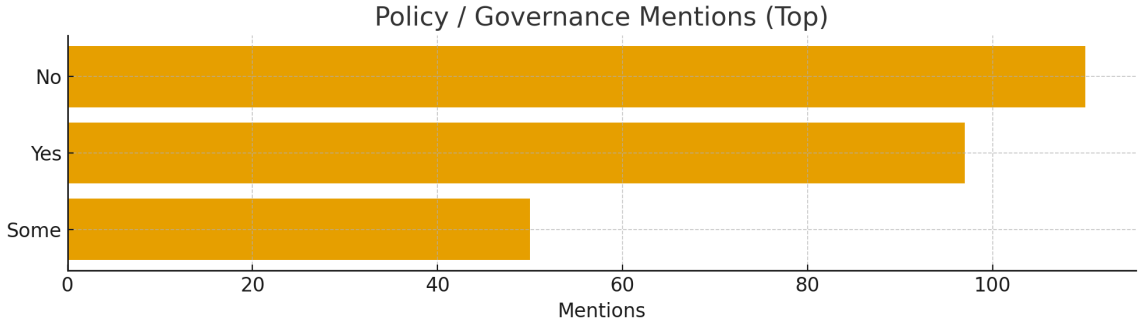

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

The data indicate that AI adoption in Maryland schools is uneven. Some districts, particularly Washington, Allegany, and Howard counties, show higher engagement, suggesting local leadership or initiatives around AI literacy. Teachers express uncertainty about classroom integration, citing both excitement and apprehension about AI's impact on student learning behaviors. Concerns around over-reliance by students dominate, indicating the need for strong academic integrity frameworks. Data privacy and equity of access are also recurring themes, particularly in districts with limited infrastructure or budgetary constraints. While the enthusiasm for AI training is clear, responses suggest that offerings must be tailored by readiness level—from introductory AI awareness to advanced application in content areas.

LEA Survey Questions for AI Use in K-12 (2).pdf
Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester
Position: FAV

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AI NEEDS ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS – MARYLAND LEAS

This report summarizes results from the Maryland Local Education Agency (LEA) survey on Artificial Intelligence (AI) use in K–12 education. It integrates quantitative findings (from multiple-choice responses) with qualitative themes (from open-ended and 'Other' responses).

DATA DISTRIBUTION

As of **October 10, 2025**, a total of 65 responses were collected which represented a broad cross-section of Maryland's Local Education Agencies (LEAs), including **24 of the state's 24 county and city school systems** as well as two statewide institutions (the Maryland School for the Blind and the SEED School of Maryland). Duplicate entries such as "Allegany," "Allegany County," and "Allegany County Public Schools" were consolidated to form single district counts. After consolidation, the highest participation came from **Allegany County (6 responses)**, **Carroll County (6)**, and **Worcester County (6)**, followed by **Baltimore City (3)**, **Baltimore County (2)**, **Charles County (4)**, and **Dorchester County (3)**. Smaller but still represented systems included Anne Arundel, Cecil, Frederick, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Washington, and Wicomico Counties—demonstrating statewide reach across urban, suburban, and rural contexts. Two entries ("Jordan Waybright" and "Lisa Fichthorn-Scumpieru") appear to be individual respondents rather than districts and were retained only for count purposes.

In terms of professional roles, respondents represent both central office and instructional leadership. Roles most often reported were **Central Office Staff (41.5%)** and **Learning Supervisors & Coordinators (26.2%)**, with additional participation by LEA CIOs and digital learning leads. "Other" roles included principals, an assistant principal, an IT supervisor, and an instructional resource teacher—indicating that the survey captured both policy and building-level perspectives..

CHARTS

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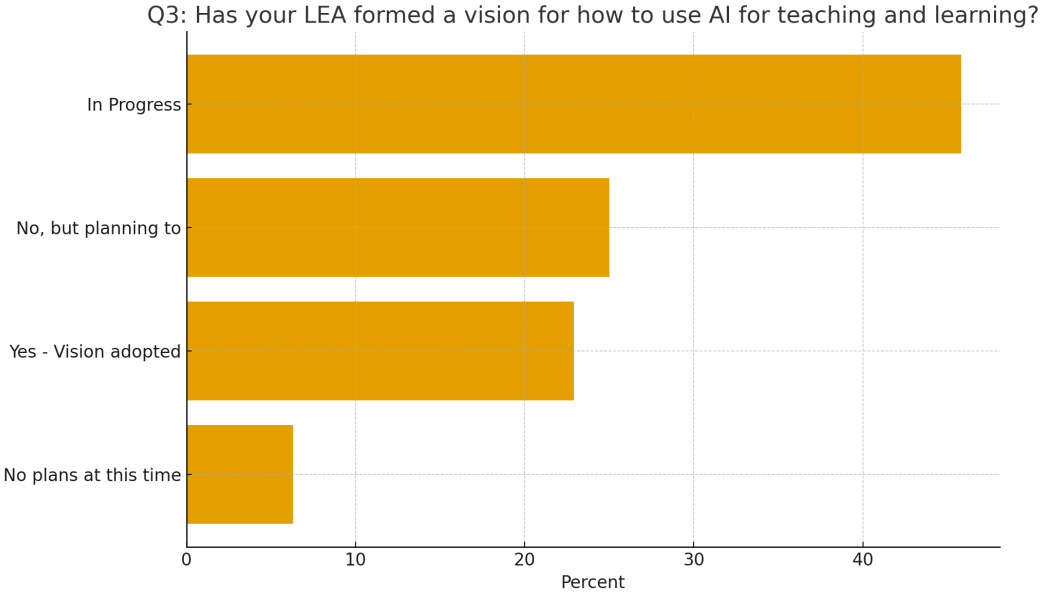

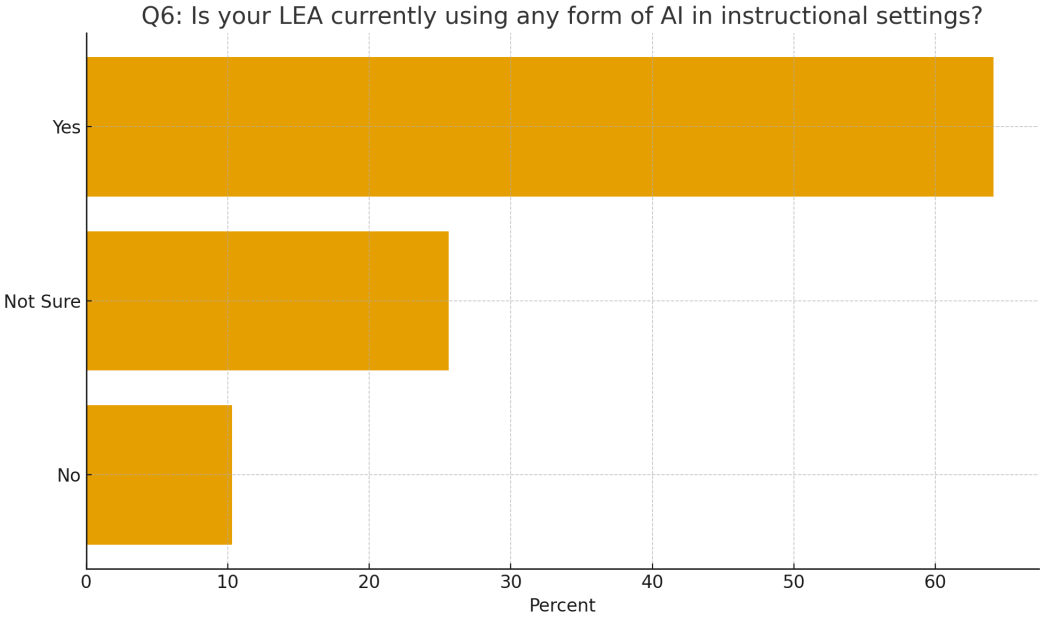

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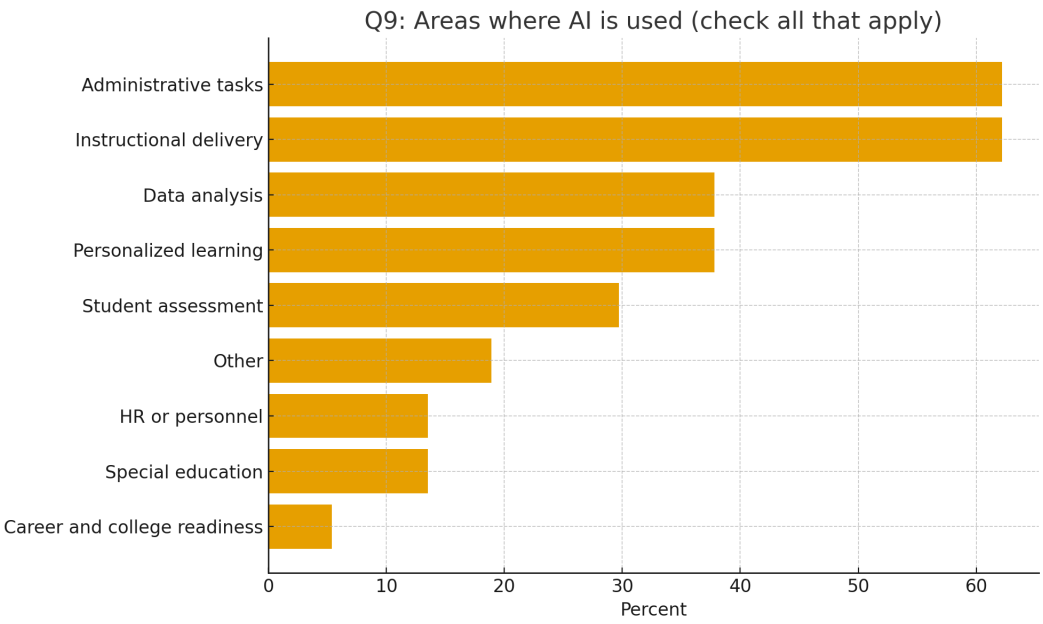

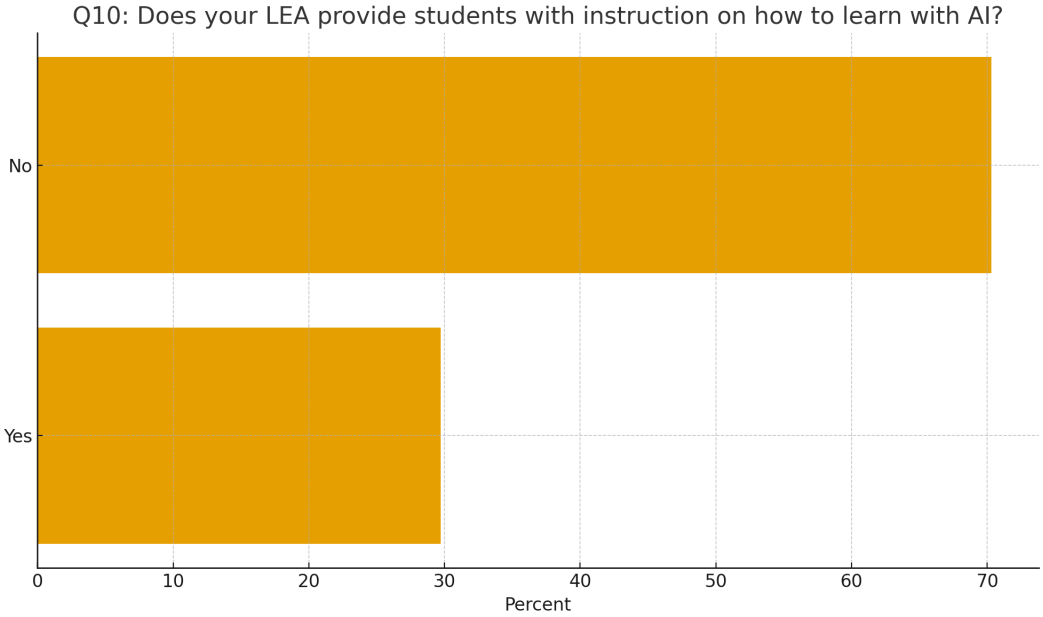

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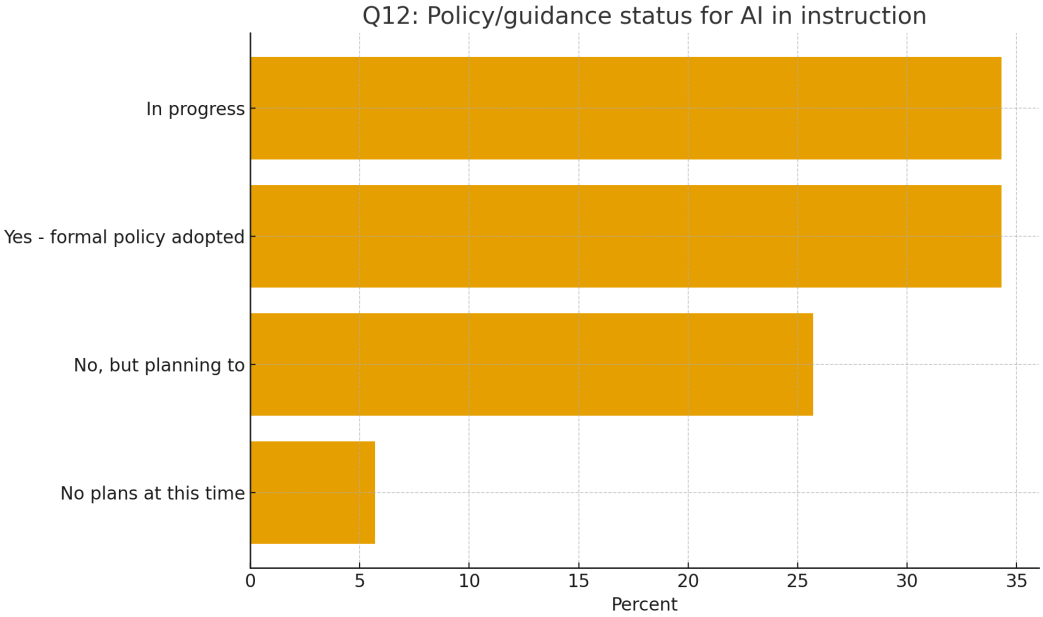

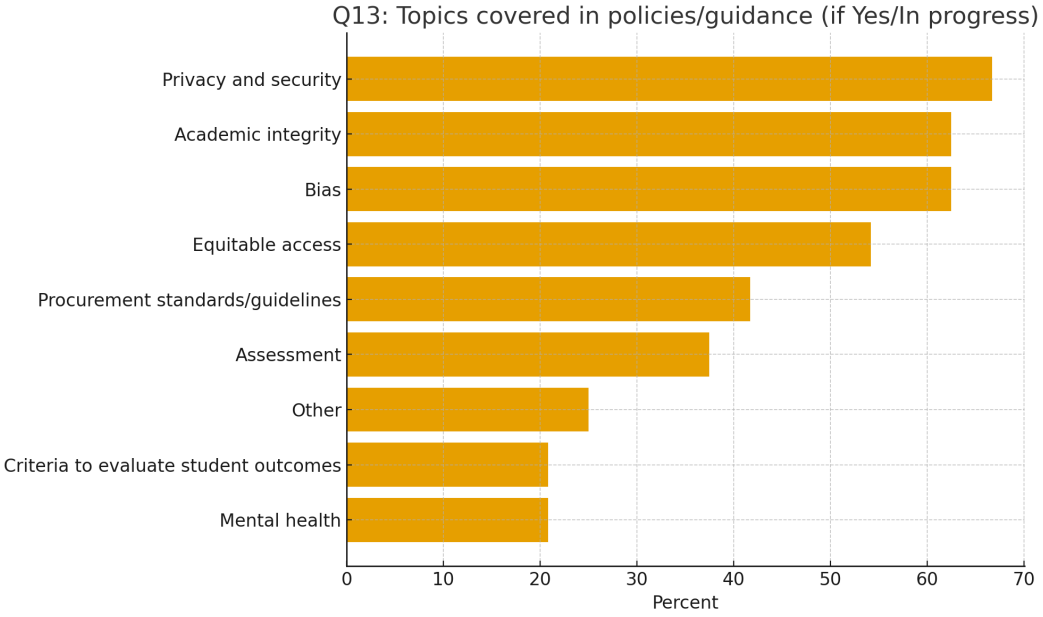

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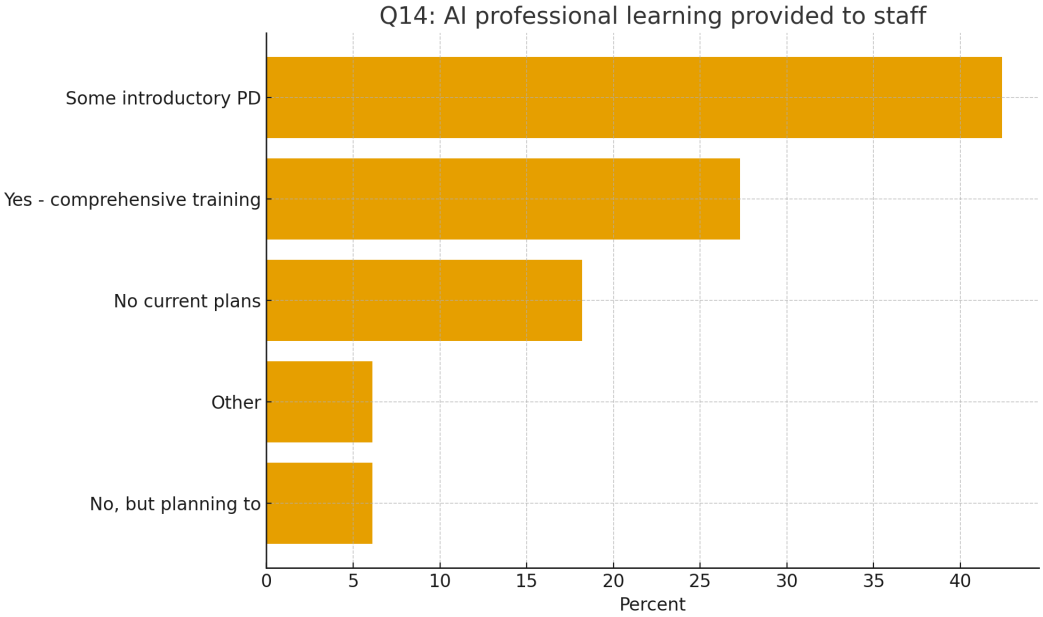
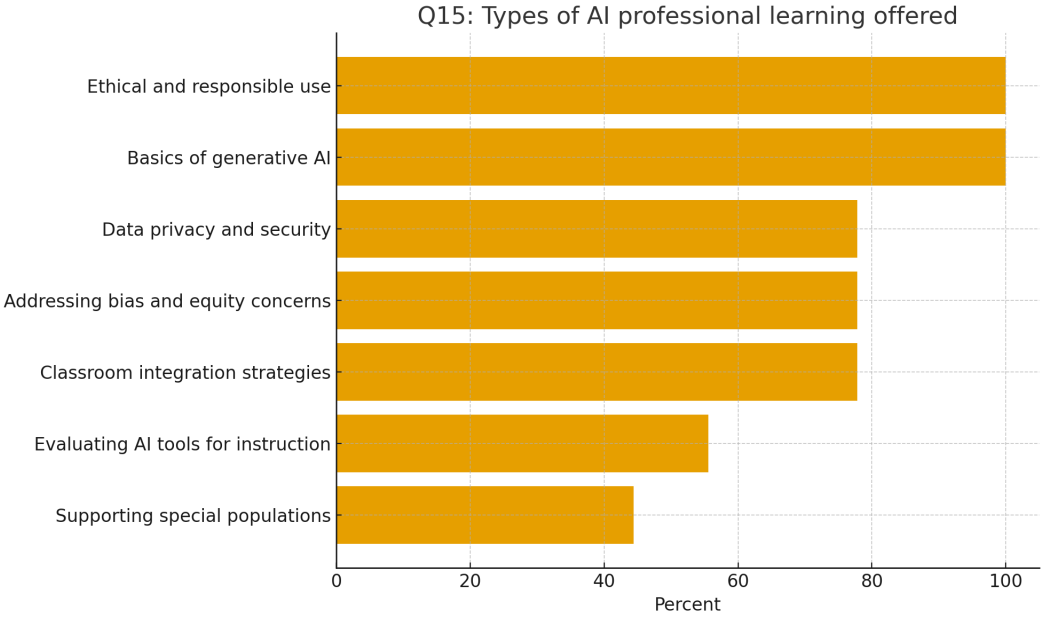
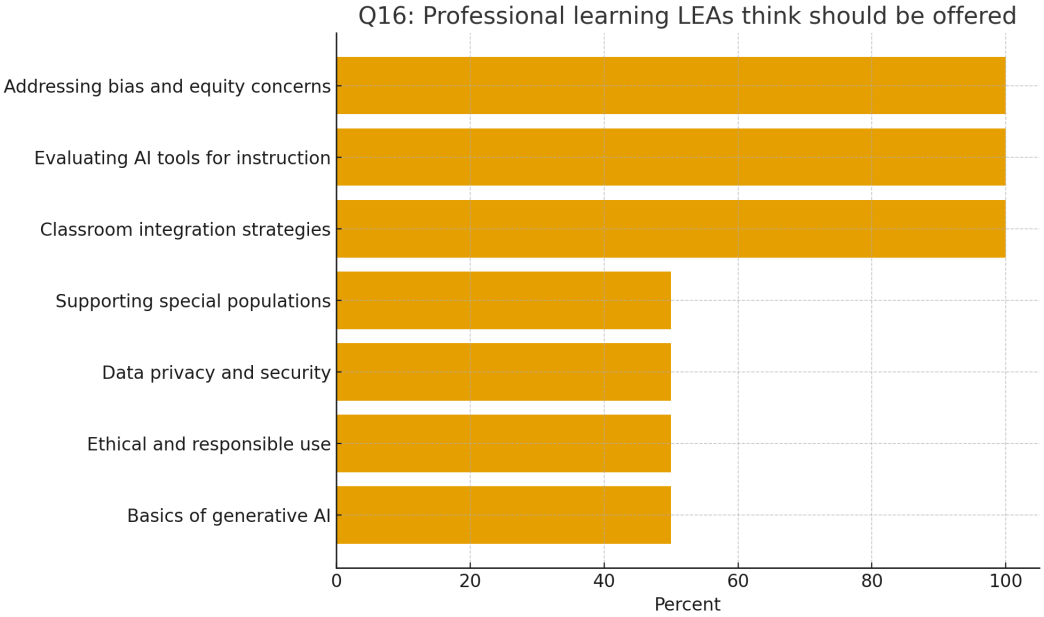
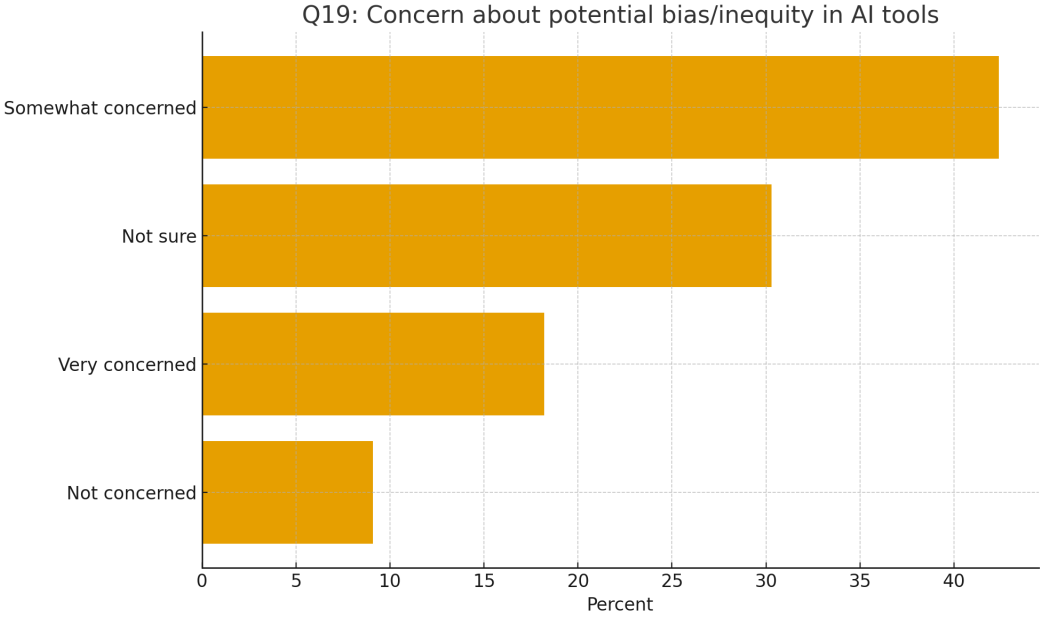
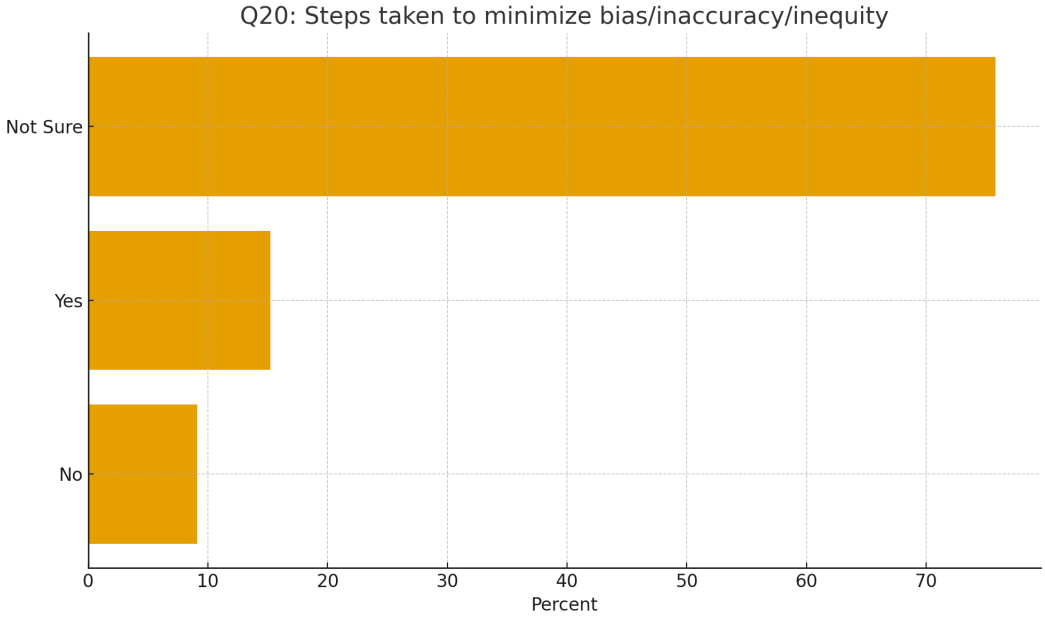


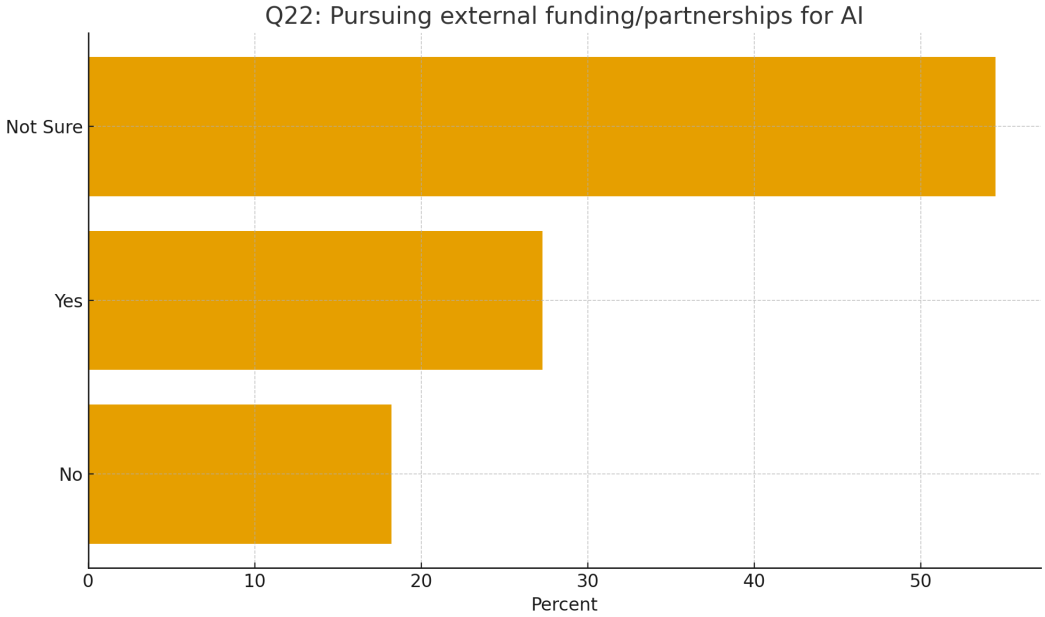


MORGAN
CENTER FOR EQUITABLE AI & MACHINE LEARNING SYSTEMS






Q20: Steps taken to minimize bias/inaccuracy/inequity
Not Sure
Yes
No
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
Percent


Q22: Pursuing external funding/partnerships for AI
Not Sure
Yes
No
0
10
20
30
40
50
Percent

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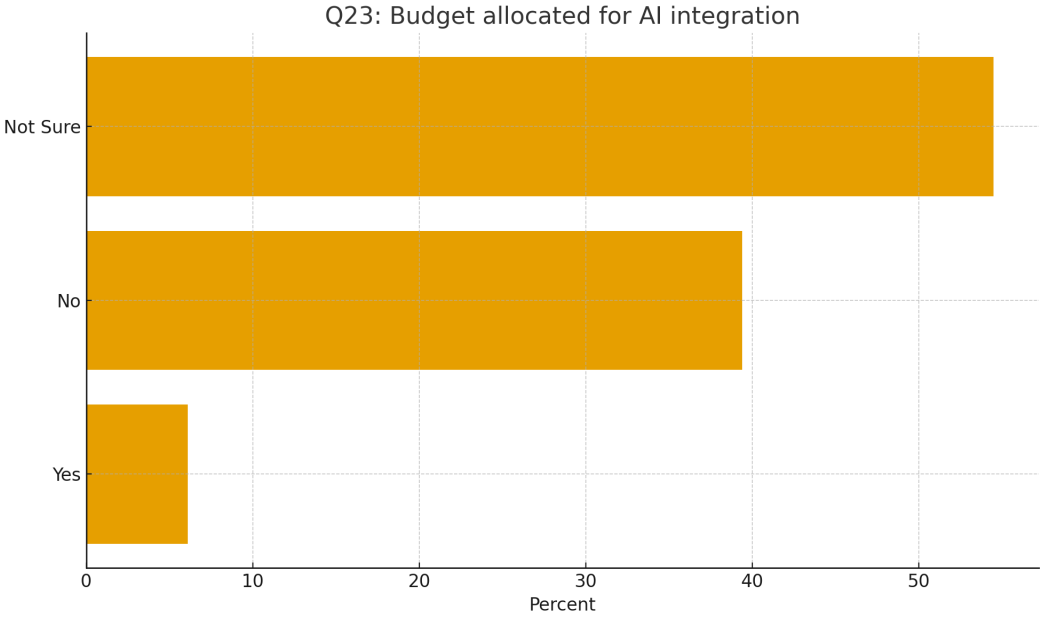

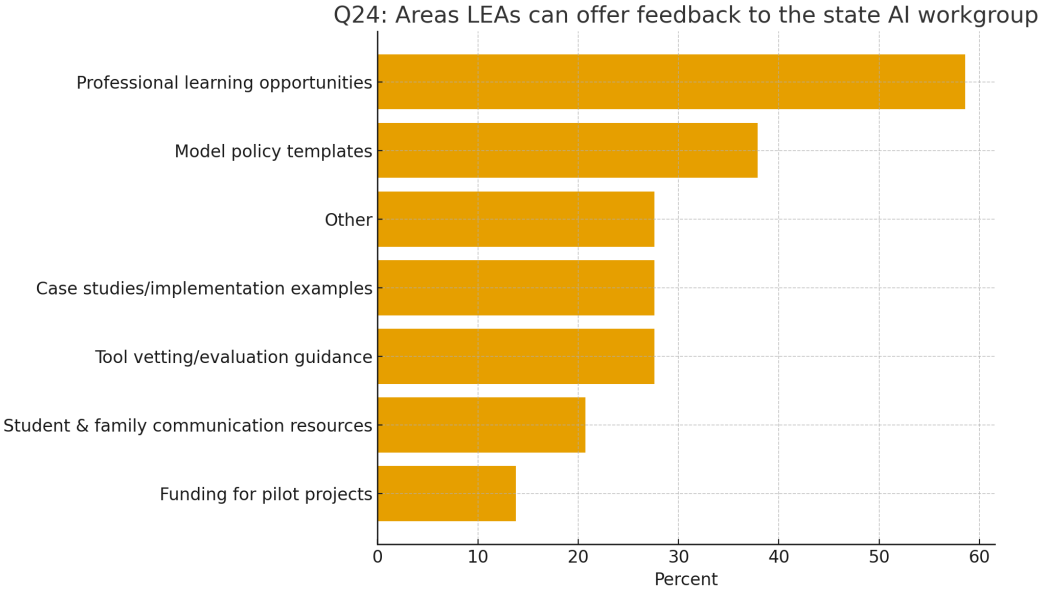

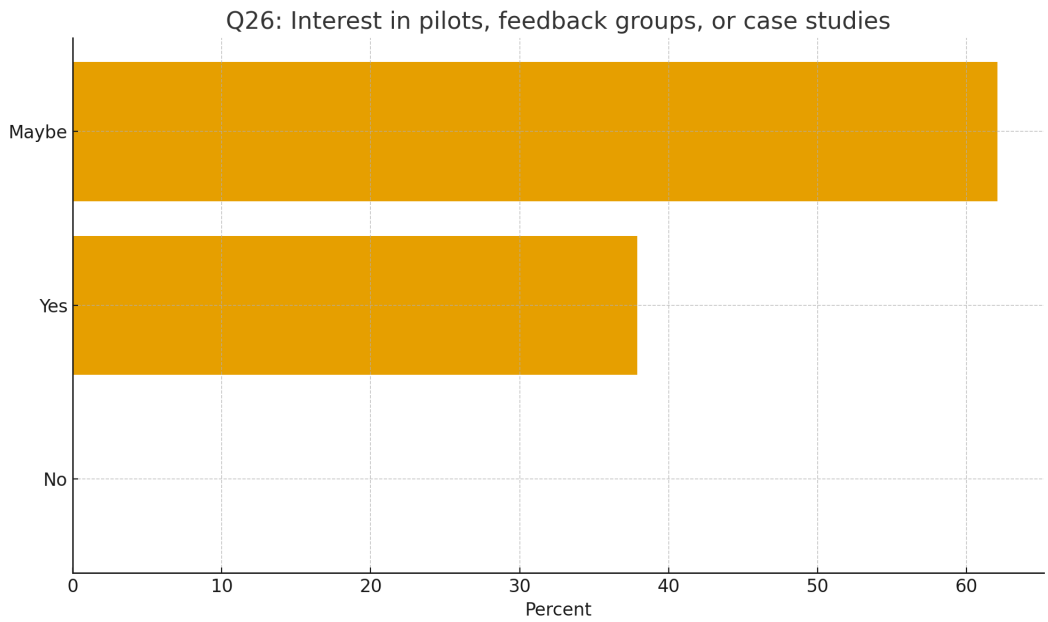

‘OTHER’ RESPONSES SUMMARY

Q2 (Role within LEA): Principals, assistant principal, IT supervisor, instructional resource teacher, federal grants manager, CAO, teacher.

Q9 (Areas of AI use): Essay scoring assistance, image generation, IT functions, staff-only access to Copilot, department-specific use.

Q13 (Policy topics): Accuracy of tools, Responsible Use Policy, or inclusion within broader technology standards.

Q14 (Professional Learning): Comprehensive training for limited audiences, others unaware of existing PD.

Q24 (Feedback to state): Requests ranged from monthly tips for teachers to uncertainty or lack of opinion.

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION SUMMARIES

Q4 VISION AND ALIGNMENT

Responsible and ethical use; student privacy; AI as educator support; personalized learning; governance committees.

Q5 CHALLENGES

Pace of change; unclear policy authority; limited time; accessibility concerns; leadership direction pending.

Q7 TOOLS IN USE

Magic School, Khanmigo, IXL, HMH, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Canva, Diffit, Writable, Adobe Firefly, and Apple Intelligence.

Q11 EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Few LEAs assess effectiveness systematically. Pilots, surveys, rubric comparisons, and literacy curricula noted.

Q17 MSDE'S ROLE

Statewide framework, vetted tool lists, funding, exemplar sharing, and collaboration spaces desired.

Q18 EQUITY AND ACCESS

Device access uneven; some ensure SPED/ML collaboration and accessibility; few measure equity systematically.

Q21 STEPS TO REDUCE BIAS

PD on bias verification, vetting of tools, and teaching source evaluation; not yet standardized.

Q25 BARRIERS

Funding, staffing, PD capacity, accuracy, compliance burdens, leadership alignment, and perception issues.

Q27 HOW MSDE CAN ASSIST

Framework, PD, funding, tool vetting, best-practice repository, asynchronous training, and coordination meetings.

SB720 Testimony.pdf
Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester
Position: FAV

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
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Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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800-492-7122 *Ext.* 3671
KatieFry.Hester@senate.state.md.us

Testimony in Support of SB720- Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

February 18, 2026

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

Thank you for your consideration of SB720, the Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act. This legislation marks a critical step in ensuring that Maryland's public schools proactively and responsibly integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into education, preparing students for the future workforce while equipping educators with the necessary tools and knowledge.

Over the past several years, AI has surged across industries, including education. In the classroom, AI offers unparalleled opportunities:

- **For educators**, AI can streamline administrative tasks such as lesson planning, grading, and assessments, allowing educators to focus on student engagement.
- **For students**, AI-powered tutoring provides personalized, one-on-one learning support, enhancing student's learning outcomes.[1]
- **For schools**, AI-driven tools expand access to language learning, career exploration, and adaptive instruction, ensuring that every student, regardless of background or ability, receives a high-quality education.[2]

However, with such powerful opportunities come equal risks. AI tools like OpenAI's ChatGPT have already demonstrated issues with bias, cybersecurity, and misinformation. Without proper oversight, AI can reinforce inequities, compromise student data privacy, and lead to overreliance on automated systems. Schools may struggle to integrate AI effectively and ethically without clear policies, training, and accountability measures.

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[1] Colordao AI in K-12 Education_December 2024.pdf

[2] https://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Colorado-Roadmap-for-AI-in-K-12-Education_August-2024.pdf

This committee has heard versions of this bill over the last three years. Although last year's bill didn't pass, we were able to secure funding for Morgan State University to conduct a needs assessment and pull together a stakeholder group to ensure that we understood what our schools really need. The stakeholder group was made up of teachers, State Board of Education members, MSDE, AI experts, and computer scientists, and we worked throughout the interim to ensure we got it right in 2026.

As part of this process, Morgan State University conducted a needs assessment to understand how schools are already using AI, and what they need most in terms of technical support and training. This statewide survey found that:

- Over 40% of educators had received no training whatsoever from their school about the use of AI;
- Respondents from rural and underserved communities were less likely to have received AI training;
- Of respondents who had received guidance, many reported that it was "minimal," "brief," or self-sought; and
- The most common needs identified by educators included clear guidelines, instruction for responsible use by students, and training on best practices to support teaching efforts.

Maryland's schools currently face disparities in AI readiness and opportunity. The assessment shows that while districts such as Washington, Allegany, and Howard Counties are actively engaging with AI initiatives, others — including Baltimore City, Garrett County, and Somerset County — have less. Also concerning, higher engagement does not necessarily mean higher-quality implementation. Without clear statewide direction, these differences risk creating a new achievement gap as students enter an AI-driven economy. Establishing consistent statewide standards will ensure that every student, regardless of zip code, has access to meaningful AI education and the skills needed to compete in tomorrow's workforce.

SB 720 will create a stable foundation which ensures that all school systems are on track towards AI literacy in a consistent manner - and can benefit from collaboration, best practice and guardrails. Specifically, SB720:

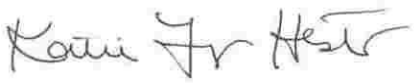
- **Establishes Statewide AI Guidance:** Tasks the Department of Education with providing guidance to school systems, educators, parents, and students on the safe and ethical use of AI, to be reviewed and updated annually;

- **Mandates Compliance:** Require each local school system to adopt policies aligned with the Department's guidance within 120 days of their release, and designate a local coordinator to oversee implementation;
- **Establishes Coordination With Maryland Schools:** Directs Morgan State University or another 4-year higher education institution in Maryland to assist in evaluating AI tools and certifying that they are consistent with State guidelines;
- **Cements AI Workforce Standards and Professional Development:** Requires that AI literacy is implemented into statewide workforce preparation standards and included as a compensated component of teacher professional development training by June 1, 2027; and
- **Creates an AI Collaborative:** Creates a Maryland AI Education Collaborative on AI in K-12 education, composed of relevant stakeholders and State entities, to study and provide recommendations regarding best AI policy in schools.

The demand for AI expertise is ongoing, and will only increase as technologies grow more advanced and accessible. Already, thousands of employers in our State are actively seeking data scientists and workers with AI expertise.[3] Without a clear and strategic plan for AI integration, Maryland risks falling behind, leaving students underprepared for the workforce they will enter, and teachers struggling to adapt to technology-driven classrooms. SB720 ensures that Maryland leads the way in fostering an equitable, modern, and innovative education system.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB720 to position Maryland as a leader in AI-driven education.

Sincerely,



Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard & Montgomery Counties

[3] https://www.umgc.edu/news/archives/2025/07/umgc-responds-to-new-workforce-demands-for-an-ai-driven-future

SB 720 Testimony.pdf
Uploaded by: Kofi Nyarko
Position: FAV

February 24, 2026

Testimony for Senate Bill 720: Education – Artificial Intelligence – Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative

Kofi Nyarko, Director
Center for Equitable AI and Machine Learning Systems
Morgan State University

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit favorable testimony in support of Senate Bill 720, The Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act.

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming how students learn, how educators teach, and how future workers will participate in Maryland's economy. Schools across the State are already encountering AI technologies in classrooms, assignments, administrative workflows, and student learning tools. Yet adoption has largely occurred without consistent statewide guidance, shared standards, or coordinated professional development. SB 720 represents an important and timely step toward ensuring that Maryland approaches artificial intelligence in education thoughtfully, responsibly, and strategically.

Establishing Clear and Practical Guidance

One of the strongest aspects of SB 720 is its requirement that the Maryland State Department of Education develop and maintain publicly accessible guidance for students, educators, administrators, and families. Providing differentiated guidance for each stakeholder group recognizes that AI affects education at multiple levels and that implementation challenges vary widely across roles.

By requiring annual review and updates, the bill acknowledges the fast pace of technological change. Static policies quickly become outdated in the AI domain; therefore, an adaptive framework is essential to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness. This approach positions Maryland to respond proactively rather than reactively as new technologies emerge.

Supporting Local Implementation While Maintaining Statewide Alignment

The requirement that local school systems adopt AI policies aligned with State guidance within a defined timeframe creates necessary consistency while preserving local flexibility. Schools need clear direction, but they also require room to adapt implementation to local instructional needs.

Designating a local AI coordinator within each school system is particularly important. Successful technology adoption depends not only on policy but also on leadership capacity. Coordinators will serve as anticipating points between educators, administrators, and the State, helping translate guidance into practical classroom implementation.

Evidence-Based Evaluation and Tool Certification

SB 720 introduces an especially valuable provision by requiring a Maryland four-year institution of higher education to assist the State in evaluating and certifying AI tools annually for alignment with State guidelines . Independent evaluation helps ensure that tools adopted by schools meet standards for safety, effectiveness, and educational appropriateness.

As AI vendors increasingly market products directly to school systems, educators need trusted evaluation mechanisms. This provision helps districts make informed procurement decisions and reduces the risk of adopting tools that may not support educational outcomes or student protections.

Investing in Educator Capacity Through Professional Development

Technology adoption succeeds only when educators are prepared and supported. The bill's statewide train-the-trainer professional development model ensures scalability while respecting educators' time and expertise. Importantly, SB 720 recognizes that teachers should be compensated or receive professional credit for participation, reinforcing that AI literacy is a professional competency rather than an unfunded expectation.

Equipping educators with both AI literacy and technical understanding will help shift AI from a source of uncertainty into a tool that enhances instruction, creativity, and student engagement.

Aligning Education With Workforce Preparation

Requiring artificial intelligence literacy to become part of workforce preparation standards by 2027 reflects an understanding that AI competency is now foundational across industries. Maryland's future workforce will increasingly interact with AI systems regardless of career pathway. Preparing students early ensures competitiveness for both college and career opportunities while strengthening the State's innovation economy.

Creating a Collaborative Statewide Governance Structure

The establishment of the Maryland AI Education Collaborative creates an ongoing mechanism for coordination among educators, administrators, students, families, and labor representatives. This collaborative model encourages shared learning across districts and ensures that policy development remains informed by classroom realities.

Equally important is the requirement for regular reporting to the General Assembly on professional development, adoption levels, instructional use, and implementation outcomes . Continuous evaluation will allow policymakers to refine strategy based on evidence rather than speculation.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is already present in Maryland classrooms. The question before us is not whether schools will use AI, but whether they will do so with clear guidance, educator support, and student-centered safeguards.

SB 720 provides a balanced framework that:

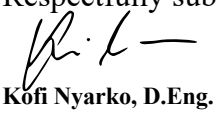
February 24, 2026

- Establishes statewide guidance while supporting local implementation,
- Builds educator capacity through structured professional development,
- Introduces independent evaluation of AI tools,
- Aligns education with workforce needs, and
- Creates a sustainable collaborative governance model.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report** on Senate Bill 720.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership in preparing Maryland students for the future.

Respectfully submitted,



Kofi Nyarko, D.Eng.
Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Director, Center for Equitable Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning Systems (CEAMLS) (pronounced *seamless*)
Director, Data Engineering and Predictive Analytics Research Lab

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Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
Schaefer Engineering Building, Room 223
Baltimore, MD 21251

RJR-(NCF)SB720 (Ai Ready Schools Act) (Support)(20

Uploaded by: Laura Nelson

Position: FAV

NATIONAL CRYPTOLOGIC FOUNDATION

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2W
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **Senate Bill 720/ House Bill 1057: Education - Artificial Intelligence – Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act) - SUPPORT**

February 26, 2026

Dear Chairman Feldman and Committee Members:

As President & Chief Executive Officer of the National Cryptologic Foundation (NCF), I write this letter in support of *Senate Bill 720/ House Bill 1057, entitled Education - Artificial Intelligence – Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act).*

Artificial intelligence dates back to the 1960s, when Joseph Weizenbaum created the first AI chatbot, ELIZA. However, since the introduction of ChatGPT in late 2022, AI has taken the world by storm. AI has given the world access to a powerful tool, and *this* technology will continue to evolve in the years to come.

As new AI tools are released, companies, state governments, and educational institutions must be educated on how to use them properly and stay aware of the positive aspects and potential concerns as they are discovered. Understanding the benefits and risks of AI in Maryland's K-12 school systems will require guidance and education that promote safety, ethical standards, and best practices for our students, teachers, and administrators.

The enactment of the Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act in Maryland would have several significant impacts on the state. SB702/HB1057 would also require the State Department of Education to provide guidance on AI, emphasizing safe, responsible, equitable, and ethical use. This will help ensure that AI is integrated into educational systems in a manner that supports student learning and safety.

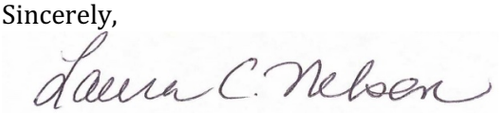
This legislation mandates that each county board designate an AI coordinator and that professional development for teachers on AI be provided by July 1, 2027. This will enhance educators' skills and knowledge in effectively using AI in their classrooms. Promoting teacher training in AI is no longer an option but instead a necessary, mandated reality.

A few years ago, NCF and our partner *Teach Cyber* provided resources and training programs to help Maryland teachers receive professional development in cybersecurity. Similar to those efforts, the time is now for Maryland to equip our teachers and administrators with the confidence and proficiency to use this evolving technology for the betterment of student learning and classroom safety.

Finally, this legislation establishes the Maryland AI Education Collaborative, composed of educators, administrators, parents, and students. The Collaborative will study the uses of AI in local school systems and make recommendations for guidance and policy adoption. These impacts aim to ensure that AI is used in education in ways that benefit students and educators alike, fostering a culture of AI literacy and responsible use in the classroom.

For these reasons, I am in full support of SB702/HB1057. This legislation was introduced last year; I strongly urge this committee to give it a **FAVORABLE** report and to enact it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Laura Nelson
President & Chief Executive Officer
National Cryptologic Foundation

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BTU Testimony SB 720 2026.pdf
Uploaded by: Nathan Ferrell
Position: FAV

The Baltimore Teachers Union

AFT 340 AFL-CIO
Seton Business Park
5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Senate Bill 720 – Education – Artificial Intelligence – Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 24, 2026

FAVORABLE

The Baltimore Teachers Union represents over 9,000 employees of Baltimore City Public Schools, including teachers, paraprofessionals, school secretaries, counselors, librarians, clinicians, transportation aides, and school support staff. As educators, our legacy of collective bargaining has long advocated for the learning conditions that students need in order to thrive, as our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. The Baltimore Teachers Union is writing in strong **support** of SB 720 and **we request that the committees issue a favorable report**.

As educators on the front lines, we see how quickly artificial intelligence is reshaping the world our students are entering—and the classrooms in which we teach. AI is not a distant future; it is a rapidly evolving reality that requires thoughtful, proactive, and strong policy.

SB 720 provides that foundation. By establishing statewide guidelines, creating an online platform that promotes safe and ethical AI use, and requiring clear policies in every district, this bill ensures that Maryland does not fall behind as technology accelerates. Importantly, it centers students and educators—affirming that human judgment, instructional expertise, and student needs remain at the heart of teaching and learning.

We especially applaud the bill's commitment to robust professional development. Teachers cannot be expected to navigate emerging AI tools without training, time, and support. The train-the-trainer model, along with compensation and recertification credits, respects educators' professionalism and workload while preparing us to teach both with AI and about AI.

The Baltimore Teachers Union also supports the creation of the Maryland AI Education Collaborative, which ensures labor has a seat at the table. Educators, school support staff, and administrators must be partners in decisions that affect our classrooms, our professions, and our students.

For these reasons, the Baltimore Teachers Union urges a favorable report on this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

FWA SB0720 Education AI Mosen.pdf
Uploaded by: Jonathan Mosen
Position: FWA

From: Jonathan Mosen, Executive Director, Accessibility Excellence

National Federation of the Blind

200 E. Wells Street

Baltimore, MD 21230 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Re: Favorable with Amendments – SB0720 – Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act

On behalf of the National federation of the Blind of Maryland, of which I am a subject matter expert in accessibility and technology, I urge a favorable report conditional on amendment of SB0720, the Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act . This legislation represents an important and forward-thinking framework to guide the safe, responsible, and ethical use of artificial intelligence in Maryland's K–12 schools, but it does not ensure accessibility of information for students with disabilities.

As someone who has spent decades working at the intersection of blindness, technology, and public policy, I have seen firsthand how transformative technology can be when it is designed with inclusion in mind. I have also seen the harm that results when accessibility is treated as an afterthought.

Artificial intelligence holds extraordinary promise for blind students and students with other disabilities. AI systems today can describe visual images in rich detail, interpret charts and diagrams, summarize inaccessible web content, and provide contextual explanations that support independent learning. AI can also empower blind students to create visually compelling content by translating detailed textual descriptions into formatted documents, images, or presentations. These capabilities are not theoretical. They are already changing lives.

However, those benefits are contingent on one crucial factor: accessibility. When AI platforms fail to comply with established accessibility standards—such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)—students who rely on screen readers, refreshable Braille displays, or other

assistive technologies are locked out. While their classmates experiment, create, and innovate, they struggle simply to access the interface. That is not equitable, and it is not acceptable.

SB0720 rightly requires the Department of Education to publish guidance for students, educators, and administrators . We respectfully urge the Committee to strengthen this provision by clarifying that guidance directed to "students" explicitly includes students with disabilities. This small but powerful clarification would signal that inclusion is not optional. It would also reduce the burden on local educators who might otherwise be left to conduct time-consuming and frustrating trials to determine which tools are accessible.

The bill also calls for the annual evaluation and certification of AI tools by a Maryland institution of higher education . Expertise in artificial intelligence does not automatically confer expertise in accessibility. Therefore, we recommend amending the bill to ensure that evaluations include explicit consideration of compatibility with nonvisual access technology. A tool cannot truly be deemed "consistent with State guidelines" if it excludes a portion of the student population.

Additionally, the creation of the Maryland AI Education Collaborative is a commendable feature of this bill . The Collaborative's work will shape policy, professional development, and procurement practices statewide. For that reason, it is essential that disability representation be included at the table. We respectfully recommend adding the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Disabilities (or their designee) and the Executive Director of the Maryland Initiative for Digital Accessibility (or their designee) as members of the Collaborative. Their expertise will help ensure that accessibility considerations are embedded from the outset rather than retrofitted later.

Finally, when the Collaborative reports annually on the level and quality of AI use , we urge the Committee to require reporting on whether adopted AI tools are compatible with assistive technologies and facilitate the full inclusion of students with disabilities. What gets measured gets managed. If accessibility is included in reporting requirements, it will remain visible and prioritized.

Maryland has an opportunity to lead the nation. By incorporating modest but meaningful amendments, this bill can ensure that artificial intelligence is not merely innovative, but inclusive. When accessibility is required at the procurement stage, it also sends a powerful

market signal to developers: if you want your tools in Maryland schools, they must work for all students. That is how we harness the power of procurement for good.

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland is optimistic about artificial intelligence. We believe in its promise. But promise alone is not enough. Equity must be designed into the system.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report with the amendments described above on SB0720. Thank you for your consideration. Feel free to contact me with questions or for more information at 410-659-9314 or at JMosen@nfb.org.

SB070_Benson_fwa.pdf
Uploaded by: Kathy Benson
Position: FWA

Date: February 24, 2026

To: Senators of the Maryland General Assembly

From: Kathy Benson, Program Director, Tequity4All

Subject: Necessity of Statewide Guidance for Artificial Intelligence Education in Schools and Professional Development for Educators

My name is Kathy Benson, Program Director of the nonprofit Tequity4All, a fiscally sponsored project of the Digital Harbor Foundation. I strongly support SB720, the AI Ready Schools Act, with the Sponsor's Amendments.

I praise the important work the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has done in writing State Artificial Intelligence guidance. I urge local school systems to follow suit and set operationalized AI policies tailored to their needs. Teacher professional development is essential. Forming a collaborative will facilitate this work.

I want to share my perspective, informed by my background as an experienced software engineer, a veteran computer science teacher, a leader of the successful Maryland Elementary School Computer Science Ambassador program, and the chair of the Advocacy and Policy Committee of the Maryland Chapter of the Computer Science Teachers' Association (CSTA).

The Current Landscape:

Maryland is a national leader in Computer Science (CS) instruction, with 100% of high schools offering at least one high-quality CS course. This foundation is critical, as Computer Science is the bedrock of AI literacy. Artificial Intelligence has already moved into education; 86% of college students report using an average of 2.1 AI tools to support their studies (Digital Education Council). Whether educators officially include AI in the curriculum or not, AI is already an integral part of our students' world.

A Personal Perspective on the Power of CS and AI:

In an age of AI, high-quality computer science instruction is foundational. As a former elementary computer science teacher, I have seen firsthand the spark that ignites when a young student realizes they can command a machine to solve a problem. I've watched students who struggled in traditional subjects suddenly thrive when given the logical, creative sandbox of computer science. It doesn't just teach them to code; it transforms their engagement and enhances their problem-solving capacity, carrying over into every other subject.

Now, in my current role as a professional developer and staunch statewide advocate for elementary computer science, I see that same transformation in our educators. I have led countless professional development sessions where teachers—many of whom were initially intimidated by technology—shared testimonials about how this instruction became a "game

changer" for their teaching practice. They aren't just teaching a new subject; they are adopting a new way of helping children think.

In my role as a professional developer, I practice what I preach by using generative AI daily as a thought partner to streamline my workflow and spark new ideas. Whether I am brainstorming creative lesson plans, drafting professional development materials, or crafting communications, AI serves as a collaborative sounding board, helping me iterate more quickly. As a knowledgeable AI practitioner, I need to fact-check AI responses, not supply PPI, and watch out for bias. This hands-on experience allows me to support educators better as they navigate these tools, showing them how AI can be a powerful ally in enhancing their teaching practices when used responsibly.

The true value of computer science (CS) lies beyond merely teaching students to use AI technical tools. It is a transformative discipline that empowers students to become creators, capable of leveraging technology to address complex challenges. This empowerment underscores the critical need for AI literacy today. Such skills are essential for students to navigate a world increasingly impacted by AI effectively. Our focus must be on ensuring students develop a deep understanding of how these tools function and how to think critically about using them to enhance their education, while simultaneously preventing the negative pitfalls of overdependence.

Addressing Risks Through Proactive Guidance:

Educators have legitimate concerns about AI, including student privacy, data security, bias, hallucinations, and the potential for students' over-reliance on it - to name a few. As the guidance explains, “AI systems generate outputs based on patterns in data; they do not possess understanding, context-awareness, or professional judgment. They can produce drafts, explanations, and examples that support instruction but are not verified sources of truth and may contain inaccuracies or bias.” However, leaving teachers to navigate these complexities alone is not a sustainable solution.

I applaud MSDE’s valuable work in writing state guidance. MSDE built the guidance upon existing policy regarding privacy, data handling, and academic integrity. It goes further to interpret them in light of international age-appropriateness AI guidelines and the South Regional Education Board (SREB) Commission on AI in Education recommendations. It provides thoughtful insights on both the opportunities and the challenges of AI use in Education. The State AI guidance provides a consistent roadmap for all of us to address such challenges. MSDE has also published a Local Planning Guide to accompany the state guidance. As Local School Systems operationalize the state guidance, they will benefit from this Local Planning guide.

AI technology is evolving rapidly. Publishing initial state guidance is courageous. I acknowledge that the guidance needs to be a living document that MSDE revises in a process of continuous improvement.

Professional Development:

I agree with the guidance when it says, “AI is not a substitute for teacher expertise.” Furthermore, MSDE’s balanced approach, which keeps the human in the loop, is wise. Now that MSDE has written the guidance, I look forward to the way it prioritizes “ongoing professional development as essential to effective AI use.”

Now, based on this guidance, educators need a structured framework to help them break down AI into developmentally appropriate concepts, such as:

- **Data Literacy:** Understanding how AI learns from data.
- **Algorithmic Training:** How AI identifies patterns to make predictions.
- **Human Oversight:** The essential role of humans in ensuring the quality and ethics of AI results.

For this framework to be applied effectively, educators require professional development. As an example of the potential scope, the Day of AI has spearheaded an initiative to support AI training for 5,000 teachers in Rwanda, with plans to eventually extend the program to train every teacher in the country (press release).

Here in Maryland, PD needs to be co-designed with certified Maryland teachers and customized to their specific instructional context. We must implement professional learning and curriculum redevelopment while acknowledging the heavy demands already placed on our teachers. This journey is a marathon, not a sprint.

Fortunately, we are not starting from scratch in this critical endeavor. Our community is home to the Maryland Center for Computing Education (MCCE), a highly respected organization that has already demonstrated significant foresight and initiative in this area. The MCCE is widely recognized for its professional development programs for educators, which have not only laid the foundational work but also positioned it exceptionally well, in terms of expertise and community trust, to lead the way forward and ensure the successful realization of our shared goals. Their existing momentum and proven track record in training and supporting teachers make them the ideal partner to spearhead professional learning.

Launching the Collaborative:

State and Local Guidance supported by PD is only the beginning. After adopting state and local guidance and providing professional development, we still need:

- **Curriculum Development and Adaptation**: Leveraging existing resources like the Day of AI and the AILit Framework to create and implement K-12 AI literacy resources statewide.

- **Dual-Focus AI Integration**: Establishing a model that combines "Learning with AI" (using tools to enhance learning) and "Learning About AI" (understanding mechanics and ethics), anchored in a robust K-12 computer science pathway.
- **Assessment Redesign**: Moving away from traditional analytical assessments that can be easily automated by AI and toward evaluations that require authentic voice, ethical reflection, and human insight.
- **Systemic Flexibility**: Providing local school systems with the flexibility to pilot, test, and iterate on these new instructional models and technologies.
- **Redefining Literacy**: Prioritizing "uniquely human" dispositions—such as critical thinking, collaboration, and empathy—within the existing curriculum.

The collaborative will serve as an organizational structure to accomplish this work together.

The Opportunity for Maryland:

By issuing state AI guidance, Maryland demonstrates that we are prepared to address the challenges presented by this technological shift. Moving forward, we must guarantee equitable AI education. Equity requires that all students achieve AI Literacy through computer science competency, and that all teachers are ready to support this learning. Only then will students be empowered to shape AI's impact on their lives.

Sincerely,

Kathy Benson, Program Director, Tequity4All

SB720_MSEA_Lamb_FWA.pdf
Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb
Position: FWA

MARYLAND STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Senate Bill 720
Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 26, 2026

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports, with amendments, Senate Bill 720, which would require the State Department of Education (MSDE) to provide artificial intelligence guidance and best practices to local education agencies (LEAs), educators, parents, and students. It would also require LEAs to create policies governing the use of artificial intelligence and establish the Maryland Education Collaborative on Artificial Intelligence in K-12 Education to study, report on, and make recommendations regarding the uses of artificial intelligence in each local school system. As written, it would require each county board to designate a coordinator for the use of artificial intelligence and create requirements for educator professional development on artificial intelligence.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

As educators continue to grapple with the implications of a rapidly changing artificial intelligence (AI) landscape, we appreciate efforts to ensure that any uses of AI in public schools are equitable, research-based, and developed with educator voices at the table. Underscoring the timeliness of this issue are the five principles for the use of AI in education adopted by the National Education Association in 2025:

1. **Students and educators must remain at the center of education**
2. **Evidence-based AI technology must enhance the educational experience**

3. **Ethical development and use of AI technology and strong data protection practices**
4. **Equitable access to and use of AI tools is ensured**
5. **Ongoing education with and about AI: AI literacy and agency**[1]

This legislation aims to ensure that LEAs, educators, students, and families receive clear guidance on the use of AI, that LEAs create policies governing the use of AI, that educators are trained and aware of the risks and opportunities associated with AI, and that stakeholders can provide insight, research, and recommendations regarding AI in schools.

We appreciate the sponsor's willingness to collaborate on amendments that clarify several features of this bill and protect against unintended consequences for privacy, equity, and educator workload. We have recommended the following amendments:

Guidance from MSDE

In the section outlining the topics which AI guidance from MSDE must cover, we ask for greater emphasis on compliance with privacy and accessibility laws by replacing §7-2202(A)(1)(iv) with:

(IV) ADDRESSES HOW STATE AND FEDERAL PRIVACY AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS APPLY TO THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS.

This requirement will help ensure equitable access and strong data protection practices by outlining for LEAs and stakeholders how the use of AI in schools is governed by federal and state laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and more.

LEA Coordinators

We appreciate the effort in §7-2202(D) to ensure that there is oversight within LEAs by designating an employee as a coordinator on the use of AI. However, it is crucial to clarify that the LEA coordinator is not a teacher or other school-based employee, but rather a **non-instructional central office employee who specializes in the use**

[1] Five Principles for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Education. National Education Association (2025). https://www.nea.org/resource-library/artificial-intelligence-education/v-five-principles-use-artificial-intelligence-education

of technology systems. This requirement could otherwise represent an unfunded mandate requiring a new position or an unreasonable increase in workload.

In addition, to further clarify that the coordinator role will not be assigned to an instructional employee, we advise replacing §7-2204(D) with the following language:

(D) IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE EDUCATORS CONSULTED BY THE COLLABORATIVE IN THE COURSE OF GATHERING INFORMATION SHALL REPRESENT DIVERSE SUBJECT AREAS.

Professional Development

As MSDE and LEAs adopt policies and best practices around AI, educators must receive ongoing, **paid or job-embedded professional development** to promote AI literacy and agency. We urge the inclusion of more specific language specifying when and how professional development will be implemented.

We also encourage MSDE to continue providing AI-related courses that are eligible for professional development points toward teachers' licensure renewal.

Collaborative on Artificial Intelligence

We commend the sponsor's inclusion of educator voices on a collaborative that will make recommendations regarding the use of AI in schools. We are requesting the revision of the items assigned to the Collaborative to streamline its objectives and better align its work with the experience and expertise of its membership. This includes striking "on the level and quality of:" from §7-2204(J) and striking the items listed in §7-2204(J)(1)-(7).

-

As the use of AI in schools and beyond continues to evolve, we will continue to urge alignment with the NEA principles and seek opportunities to maximize the benefits of AI for education while mitigating potential risks, harms, or overreaches. This bill represents a timely step toward those aims in our current context.

With these amendments, we would urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 720.

SB0720 - State Board & MSDE - SWA.pdf
Uploaded by: Richard Kinkaid
Position: FWA

Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools
Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D.
President, State Board of Education

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 0720 - Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)

DATE: February 26, 2026

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and State Department of Education (MSDE) extend their support for Senate Bill 720 - Education - Artificial Intelligence - Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act), with amendments. The bill reflects a shared commitment to ensuring that artificial intelligence is integrated into Maryland's public schools in ways that are safe, equitable, transparent, and centered on student learning. MSDE supports SB 720 with amendments that clarify roles, preserve local responsibility for tool selection, and ensure sustainable implementation.

SB 720 calls for statewide guidance on artificial intelligence, local policy alignment, the designation of local AI coordinators, integration of AI literacy into workforce preparation standards, educator professional development, and the creation of a Maryland AI Education Collaborative. MSDE has already undertaken substantial work in several of these areas, including publishing statewide AI guidance, developing implementation resources for local school systems and educators, and establishing clear expectations related to equity, privacy, academic integrity, and vendor governance. The bill's core framework aligns with this direction and reinforces the importance of coherent statewide guardrails.

At the same time, certain provisions would benefit from clarification. As drafted, SB 720 requires Morgan State University or another four-year institution to support the Department in annually evaluating and certifying AI tools submitted by the State Superintendent and schools. While well-intended, this approach would require MSDE to assume responsibility for vetting and certifying a potentially large and rapidly evolving set of AI tools used across local school systems. Given the pace of technological change and the volume of available products, this would significantly expand state operational responsibility and introduce potential liability concerns.

MSDE therefore recommends amending this provision to require the Department to develop and publish a standardized evaluation rubric and related tools to guide local education agencies in reviewing AI tools for consistency with state guidelines. Under this approach, each local education agency would have access to resources they can use when selecting tools, such as a rubric and procurement checklists, and the Department would commit to periodically updating the tools to reflect changes in technology, law, and policy. This amendment preserves statewide consistency while maintaining local procurement authority and responsibility where it appropriately resides.

Similarly, the bill's professional development provisions reflect an important priority but prescribe a specific train-the-trainer model, compensation structure, and implementation timeline in statute. MSDE agrees that meaningful educator preparation is essential to responsible AI use and has already begun advancing professional learning in this area. To ensure flexibility and fiscal sustainability, MSDE recommends revising this section to focus on outcomes rather than a mandated delivery model. The amended language would require that educators and school leaders receive professional development of sufficient duration and quality to prepare them to use AI professionally, apply it instructionally, and understand its ethical, privacy, security, and academic integrity implications, including foundational AI concepts and safeguards against misuse or overreliance.

Finally, SB 720 establishes a Maryland AI Education Collaborative to study implementation and make recommendations. MSDE supports a collaborative structure that convenes stakeholders and informs continuous improvement. To ensure alignment with Department capacity and to promote focused deliverables, MSDE recommends specifying a two-year term for the Collaborative's work, after which the General Assembly may review its impact and determine next steps.

MSDE appreciates the thoughtful leadership behind SB 720 and shares its goal of positioning Maryland as a state that approaches artificial intelligence in education with clarity, responsibility, and foresight. With the targeted amendments described above, the State Board and the Department can fully support the bill in a manner that strengthens statewide guardrails, clarifies state and local roles, and ensures durable, high-quality implementation.

For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.

2-26-2026 FWA SB0720 AI Framework in School System

Uploaded by: Ronza Othman

Position: FWA

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND
MARYLAND

Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
15 Charles Plaza, #3002
Baltimore, MD 21201 president@nfbmd.org

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to give a favorable report with amendments to SB0720 – A Framework for AI in the Local School Systems.

Amendment 1: On page two of the bill where the bill lists each group to receive published guidance on its website, the bill lists "Students" as the first group. The bill should be amended to say "Students; including those with disabilities" because not all AI technology has been designed to be compatible with access technology.
By following well-established practices, developers of AI tools can ensure that their technology is accessible. However, presently there is considerable variance in terms of the degree to which AI companies comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). It is critical that educators in Maryland do not inadvertently exclude students with disabilities due to ill-informed choices. Providing advice specific to students with disabilities will eliminate the need for time-consuming, and potentially frustrating, experimentation to find the most accessible solution.
By expressly requiring consideration of inclusion and accessibility, the state of Maryland may incentivize AI companies to do the right thing. If companies know that they risk another entity being chosen due to an accessibility barrier, this may encourage them to address accessibility deficits. This amendment would therefore use the power of procurement for good.

Amendment 2: On page three of the bill, where subsection E (1) says "in evaluating a prioritized list of artificial intelligence tools", it should be amended to add "and their effectiveness in meeting non-visual access standards". The possession of expertise in the functionality of AI tools does not guarantee knowledge of access technology, such as screen readers that speak or display in Braille what is on a computer screen.

Amendment 3: On page four of the bill, the bill lists who will be part of the Maryland AI Education Collaborative on Artificial Intelligence in K–12 Education and there are currently nine categories of members. The bill should be amended to add a tenth category where the Secretary of Disabilities or their designee is added and an eleventh category for the Executive Director of the Maryland Initiative for Digital

Accessibility or their designee. This addition is important because it will give representation to the needs of students with disabilities.

Amendment 4: On page six of the bill, the bill lists what findings the Collaborative will report each year. At the end of Subsection J (3), it should be amended to say, "and whether chosen AI tools are compatible with access technology to facilitate the full inclusion of students with disabilities".

The bill represents a very good framework for the use of, and instruction on, artificial intelligence in K-12 education. The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland is optimistic about the benefits of AI. AI can enrich the lives of blind students and others with disabilities. We already see AI giving detailed textual or audible descriptions of visual content and answering clarifying questions for a blind student. The reverse is also true, that is to say AI can assist a blind student to produce visually compelling content once they provide a clear textual description of the content they wish to create.
AI can also synthesize material that may be on websites that pose accessibility barriers.
However, these benefits only exist if accessible options are chosen. The use of inaccessible tools is exclusionary and will cause real harm to students with disabilities, who will struggle to use tools while other students thrive.
A few small amendments to this bill will ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, can benefit from AI tools.

For those reasons, we ask for amendments before voting in favor of SB0720. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.

National Federation of the Blind of Maryland
Ronza Othman, *President NFBMD* | 15 Charles Plaza, #3002, Baltimore, MD 21201 **|** 443-426-4110**|** www.nfbmd.org

MDOD_SB0720_LOI_EEE_2026.02.24.pdf
Uploaded by: Anne Blackfield
Position: INFO

Carol A. Beatty, Secretary
Anne Blackfield, Deputy Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Maryland
DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES

BILL: **SB 720**
POSITION: **INFO – Letter of Information**
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
DATE: February 24, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Maryland Department of Disabilities
217 East Redwood Street, Suite 1300, Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members,

The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is submitting a letter of information for **SB 720 – Education – Artificial Intelligence – Guidelines, Professional Development, and Collaborative (Artificial Intelligence Ready Schools Act)**. SB 720 would require, among other mandates, that local school systems procure artificial intelligence tools consistent with the provisions of Title 3.5, Subtitle 8 of the State Finance and Procurement Article.

In this letter of information, MDOD wishes to highlight another procurement requirement that was intended to ensure that students with disabilities are able to access educational tools and can learn alongside their nondisabled peers. There has been some misalignment in recent years between these accessibility requirements and efforts to promote AI in schools.

In 2022, the General Assembly passed the Equivalent and Nonvisual Access Accountability for K-12 Education Act (Acts of 2022, ch. 215). This law added a requirement that local school systems consult with MSDE and MDOD to ensure that digital tools procured for student instruction meet technical accessibility standards under Section 508 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It is our understanding that digital tools inherently include digital tools that use AI.

Last year, language was included in the MSDE Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act (Acts of 2025, ch. 237) that exempted AI tools from the requirements under § 7-910. Specifically, the following language was added to § 7-910: "(a–1) Beginning with the 2025–2026 school year through the 2027–2028 school year, this section does not apply to the procurement and use of a digital tool that utilizes artificial intelligence, as defined in § 3.5–801 of the State Finance and Procurement Article, to support student learning."

While MDOD is not aware of the specific rationale for the 3-year exemption of AI tools from the § 7-910 requirements, we wish to emphasize that the best way - and truly the only way - to support learning for students with disabilities is to ensure they can access educational tools in school. Once the exemption from the § 7-910 requirements expires at the end of the 2027-2028

school year, MDOD anticipates that local school systems will once again be expected to fulfill their obligations under § 7-910 for digital tools that utilize AI.

Students with disabilities are incredibly diverse in their educational needs. Some K-12 students may require intensive special education supports through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) while other students with disabilities can access standard curricula with the assistance of reasonable accommodations. AI is increasingly regarded as an important next step in assistive technology that can address these diverse learning needs. Such tools include apps for blind people that read documents and describe the immediate environment; apps that are using AI to learn to translate ASL into spoken language and vice versa; and AI tools that can help people with cognitive disabilities organize and communicate their ideas. Although AI tools have a potential to help people with disabilities, not all tools are created with accessibility standards in mind. It is always required that students with disabilities have full inclusion in educational settings, it would be particularly unfortunate to inadvertently prevent students with disabilities from benefitting further from AI through the acquisition of inaccessible AI tools.

Thank you for reviewing this letter of information.

Sincerely

Carol A. Beatty

Carol A. Beatty
Secretary, Department of Disabilities

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