



K-12 Leaders on AI:

Attitudes, Opportunities, and What Comes Next



Executive Summary

Artificial Intelligence is already making its mark in K-12 education, influencing how districts plan, operate, and prepare for the future. While the momentum is real, most district leaders are still taking a thoughtful, measured approach to adopting AI-powered tools.

To get a clearer picture of where things stand, Frontline Education surveyed nearly 800 school and district leaders as part of its 2025 K-12 Lens initiative. We also analyzed more than 400 open-ended responses to uncover insights directly from those who are navigating AI implementation on the ground.

What we found is a practical, nuanced view of how school systems are approaching AI: the use cases that are gaining traction, the benefits leaders are hopeful about, and the concerns that are holding some back.

There's strong support for using AI to assist with behind-the-scenes tasks like planning, documentation, and communication. But when it comes to student-facing applications, leaders are more cautious. Their comments highlight ongoing concerns about ethics, learning outcomes, and responsible use.

This year's research also comes at a pivotal moment. In April 2025, the Executive Order on Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth signaled a clear federal push for AI in K-12. But translating that national directive into district-level action will depend on local vision, capacity, and confidence.

In this paper, we'll explore:

- How district leaders' attitudes toward AI are evolving
- The factors that shape their support, hesitation, or uncertainty
- What kinds of training, support, and policy they say they need to move forward

AI Insights from The K-12 Lens

55%

Overall administrator support for AI in K-12

32%

AI-neutral administrators

13%

Administrators who oppose AI in K-12

90%

Superintendents who support AI in K-12

61%

Principals who support AI in K-12

43%

Special Education Directors who support AI in K-12

72%

Administrators who support AI-powered tools for teachers

72%

Administrators who support AI-powered tools for school leaders

52%

Administrators who support AI-powered tools for students

K-12 Lens: A Survey Report from Frontline Education

Key Trends in Staffing, Student Support, and Budget Confidence

Frontline's latest K-12 Lens report shares what nearly 800 district leaders are saying about staffing challenges, student services, and budget planning. [See what's trending. Read the Report.](#)

A Federal Push Puts AI on the Map

In April 2025, President Trump signed an Executive Order titled [Advancing Artificial Intelligence Education for American Youth](#). It launched a White House Task Force, encouraged public-private partnerships, and called on federal agencies to help bring AI resources to the classroom, with a strong focus on **educator training and responsible integration**.

What it didn't include? A step-by-step guide for school districts.

That's where local leaders come in. Districts are now navigating both new expectations and a brighter spotlight. The federal push may bring resources, but it also raises questions from parents, school boards, and staff about how AI will affect safety, equity, and instructional quality.

As one curriculum leader put it in response to the most recent K-12 Lens survey:

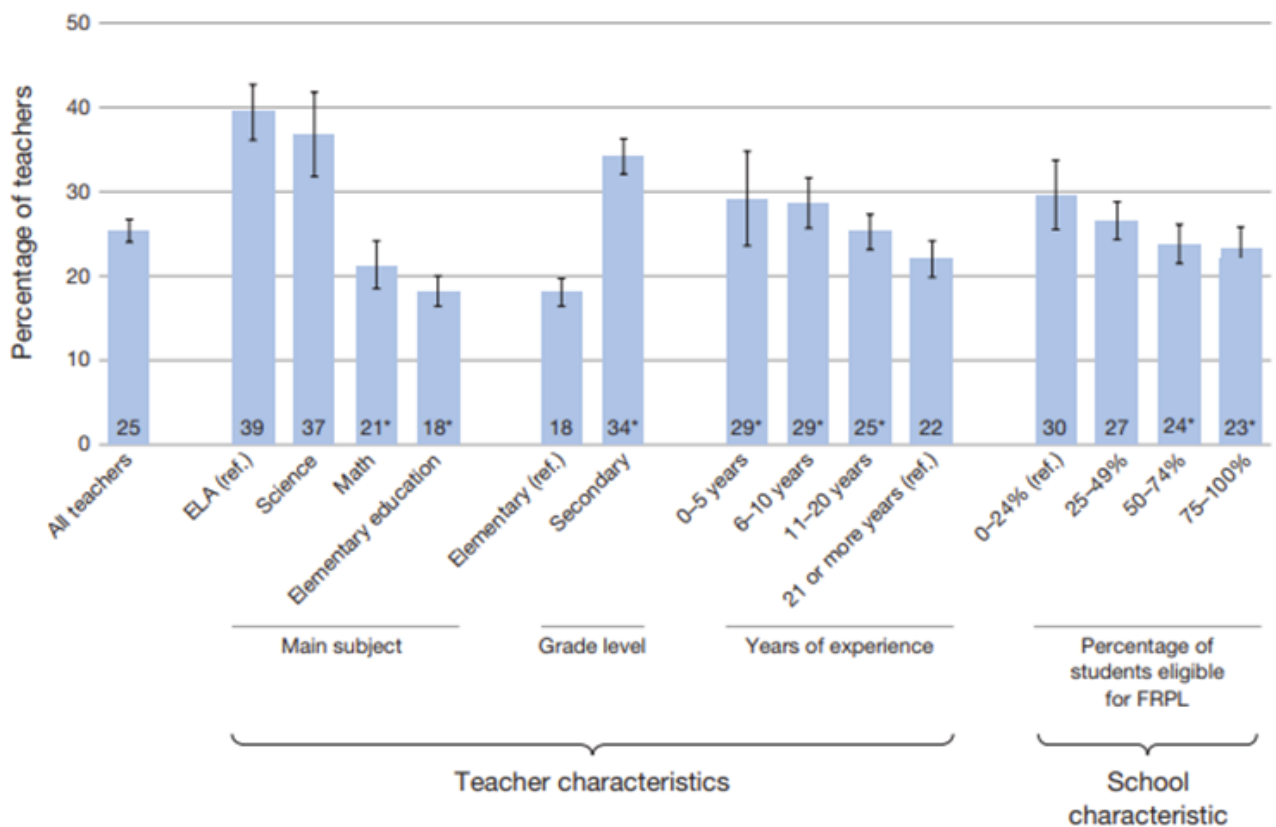
"We want to be thoughtful, not reactive. There's pressure to adopt tools, but we need to know they serve our students, not just check a box."

AI Is On the Agenda, But Adoption Is Uneven

AI is gaining ground in central offices, but most classrooms haven’t caught up. By early 2025, nearly **60% of principals** reported using AI in their work. Only **1 in 4 teachers** said the same for instruction.

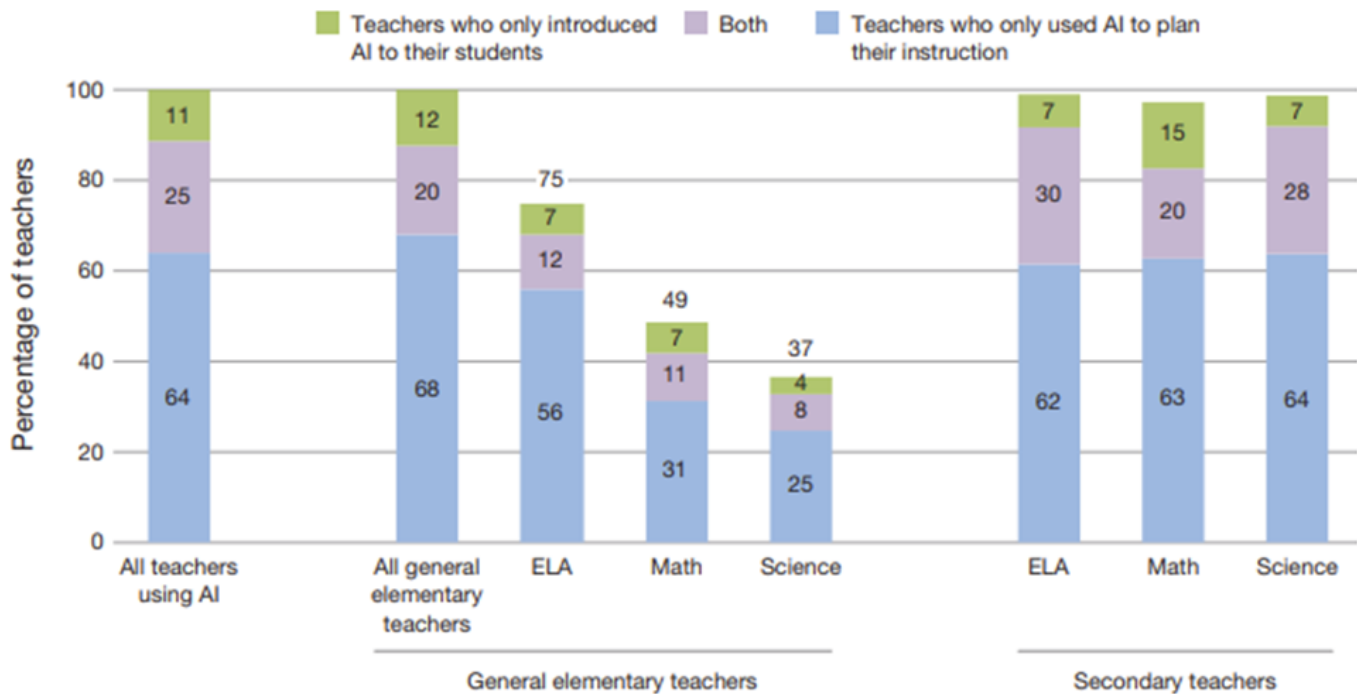
That gap isn’t random. According to [new data from RAND](#), AI use varies by role, grade level, subject area, and district context. Secondary ELA and science teachers are more likely to try it out; those in math and early elementary are more hesitant. Access and infrastructure also play a role. Schools with more resources tend to move faster.

Percentage of K–12 ELA, Mathematics, and Science Teachers Who Reported Using AI Tools or Products for Instructional Planning or Teaching



Even when teachers do use AI, according to RAND’s analysis, it’s usually behind the scenes. They’re drafting newsletters, brainstorming lesson starters, or summarizing notes instead of introducing AI tools to their students. For most, AI is a helper, not yet a teaching partner. See the graph from RAND, below.

Percentage of Teachers Who Reported Using AI with Students and/or in Instructional Planning for ELA, Math, or Science



To deepen this picture, we looked to the latest results from Frontline’s K-12 Lens survey.

What the K-12 Lens Reveals: Sentiment is Shifting, Cautiously

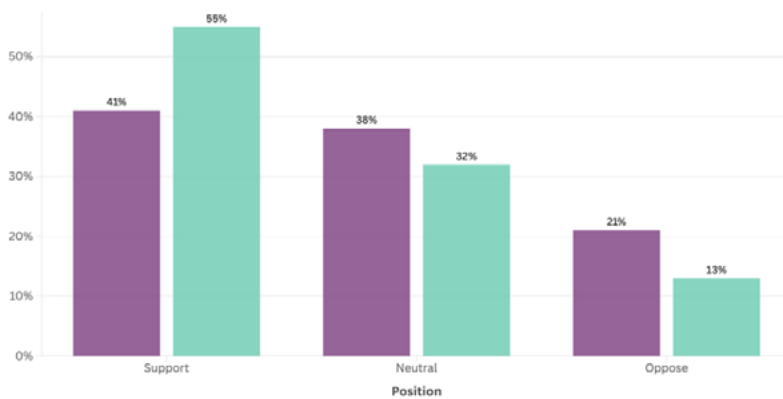
District leaders are becoming more open to AI. In just one year:

- Support rose from 41% to 55%
- Opposition dropped from 21% to 13%

How Administrator Views on AI in K-12 Have Shifted: 2024 & 2025

Findings from Frontline's Annual K-12 Lens Survey

■ 2024 ■ 2025



They're especially optimistic when AI is used by adults:

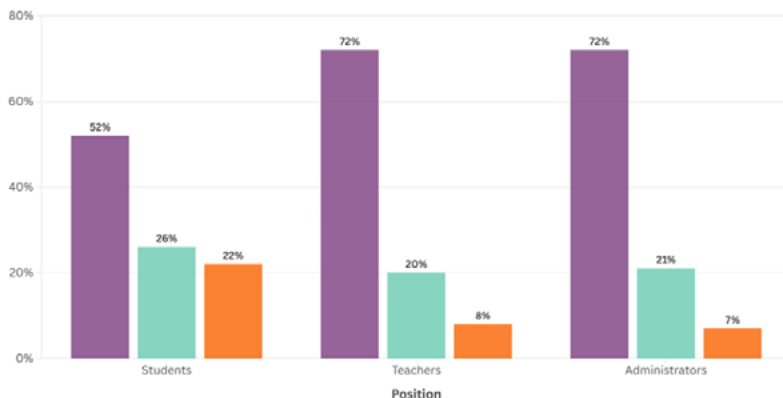
- 72% support AI tools for teachers
- 72% support AI tools for administrators
- Just 52% support student-facing AI, citing concerns around ethics, equity, and misuse

In short, leaders are warming up but with clear boundaries in mind.

How Administrators View AI Integration into EdTech Products Across User Groups

Findings from Frontline's Annual K-12 Lens Survey

■ Support ■ Neutral ■ Oppose

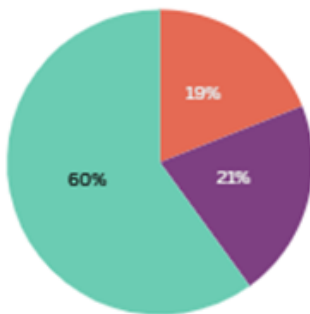


Support Varies Widely by Role and Context

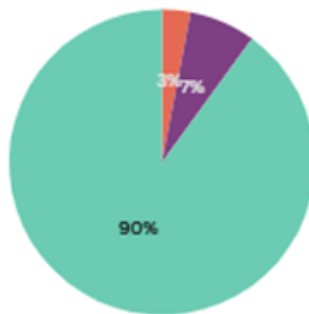
- **Superintendents** were the most supportive (90%)
- **Principals, HR, and curriculum** showed solid support (59-66%)
- **Special Education Directors** were more cautious (43% supportive, 38% neutral)

Oppose Neutral Support

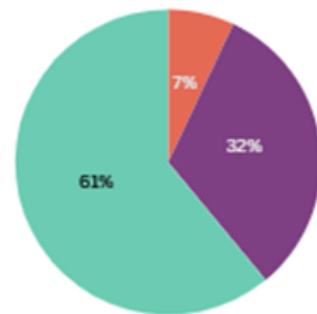
Curriculum & Instruction



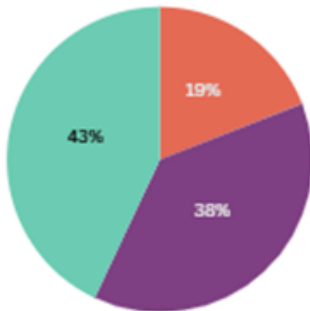
Superintendent



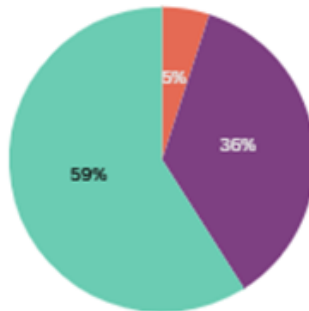
Principal



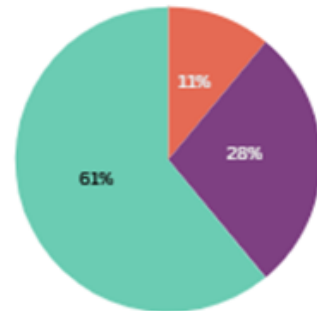
Special Education



Human Resources



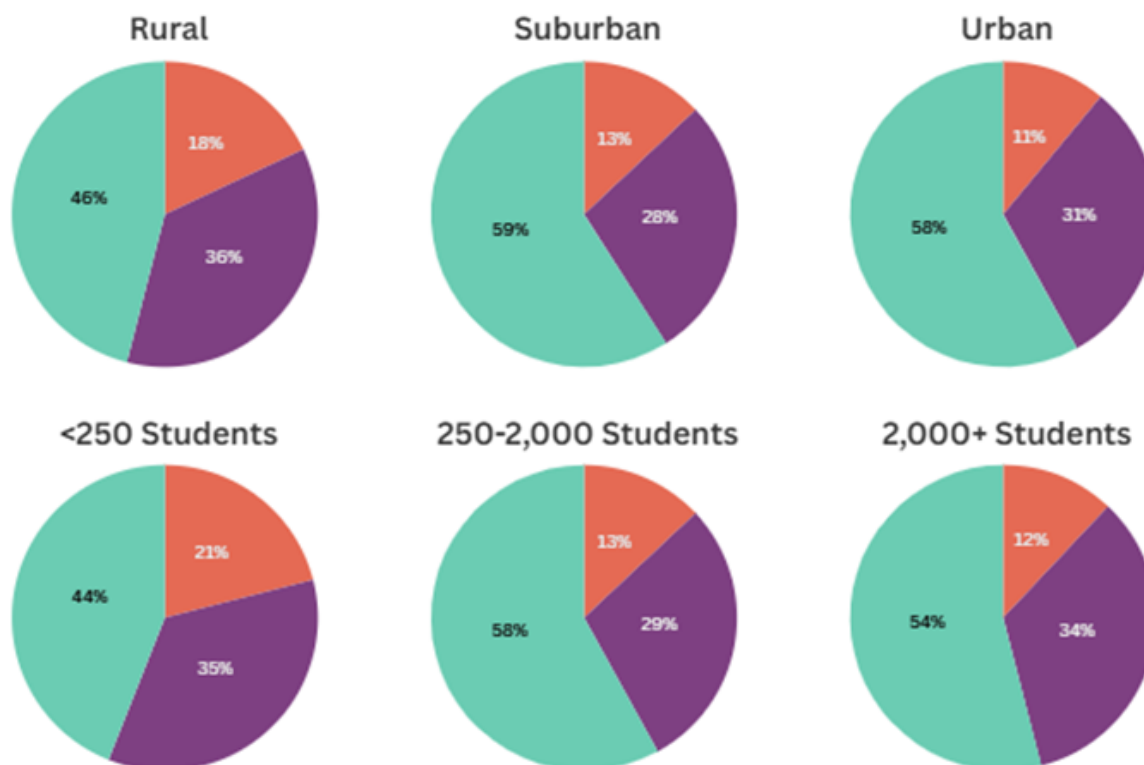
Technology



Geography matters too:

- **Urban** and **suburban** districts showed higher support (58%-59%)
- **Rural** (46%) and very **small** districts (44%) were less enthusiastic, likely due to resource constraints

Oppose Neutral Support

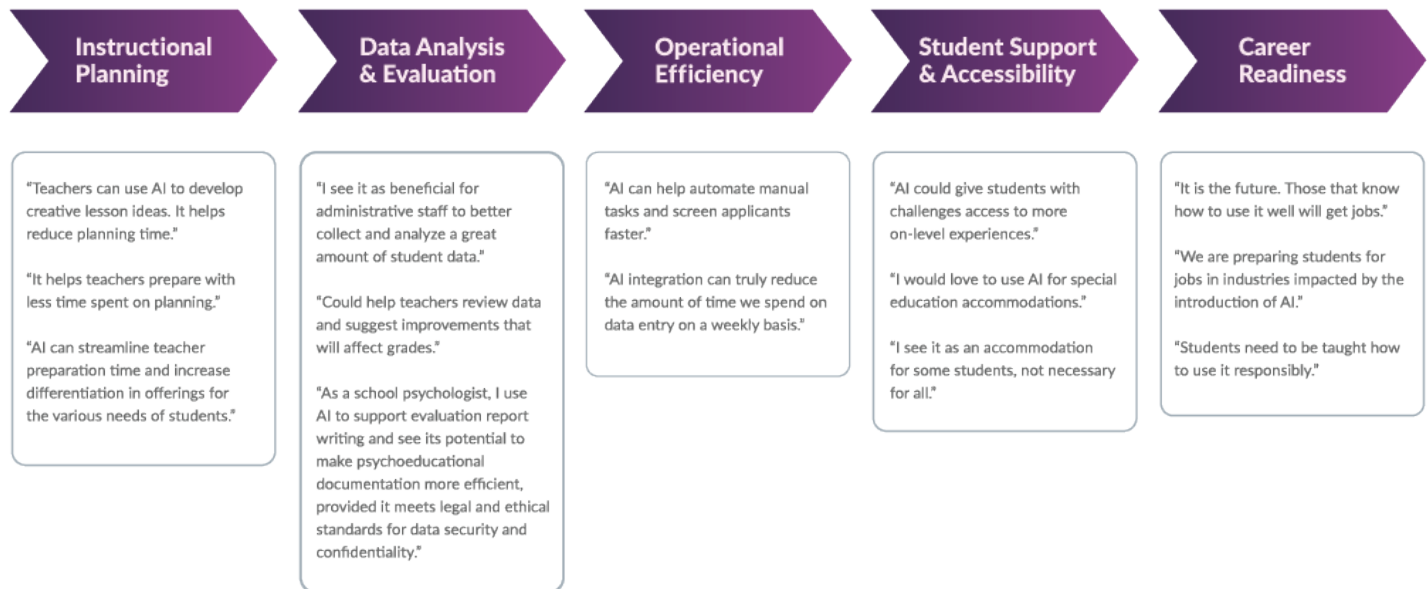


Across the board, the message is clear: If AI is going to be a part of K-12, it needs to earn its place. It should solve real problems, not add to them.

How Leaders Are Using and Imagining AI Today

District leaders shared a range of early use cases and future ideas for AI, mostly focused on making work easier and more efficient:

Figure 4. Potentially Beneficial Use-Cases from K-12 Lens Respondents



Most of these aren't widespread practices yet. They're ideas. But they signal where interest is heading.

Leaders are Sorting Through It With Varying Degrees of Certainty

Even as interest in AI grows, not all district leaders are ready to move forward. While some are fully on board, others are weighing the risks, asking tough questions, or waiting for more clarity. Based on open-ended comments, three broad groups emerged:

Supportive

These leaders see clear value in AI, particularly for easing workloads, supporting planning, and enhancing instruction. Within this group, however, there’s a spectrum:

Advocates focus on innovation and opportunity
<i>“I love the idea of individualized learning plans.”</i> <i>“It takes work off teachers’ plates so they can focus on their students.”</i>
Conditional Supporters want thoughtful, guided integration
<i>“AI would help, but we still need more teachers.”</i> <i>“It might help staff lessen their workload, but the personal touch can be hurt.”</i> <i>“Perhaps the answer to an individual tutor for each student. But, at what costs?</i> <i>Do we put the tool in place and sacrifice true learning experiences for our students?”</i>
Reluctant Supporters feel AI is inevitable and want to keep pace
<i>“It’s happening whether we want it or not.”</i>

Undecided

These respondents aren't opposed, they just don't feel ready. Many want more information, training, or time to reflect before forming a strong opinion.

- "I'm not sure how it would work."
- "I don't know much about it, so I still need more information."
- "Still figuring out what it means for our district."

Resistant

This smaller group expressed firm concerns about AI's role in education. Their comments point to fears of over-reliance, diminished learning quality, and data privacy risks.

Skeptics raise questions about long-term impact

"AI in K-12 can personalize learning, but raises concerns about privacy and over-reliance."

"Concerned students won't learn and will rely on AI to work for them."

Traditionalists emphasize the value of human thinking over technology

"My concern is that people will forget how to think for themselves."

Many Leaders Are Still Looking for Guidance

Confidence remains a major barrier. Nearly a quarter of open-ended respondents said they didn't know enough to weigh in meaningfully. Others expressed interest but lacked the systems, policies, or staffing capacity to move forward.

That's a clear signal: professional learning is a critical next step, but it's not the only one. Districts should focus on building a workforce that's equipped and energized for what's ahead.

Start with Learning, Not Launch

Districts don't need to roll out AI tools overnight. But they do need to create the conditions for thoughtful exploration. That starts with:

- Embedding AI-related topics into existing PD frameworks
- Giving educators space to try tools in low-stakes, real-world settings
- Supporting teacher leaders who can model responsible use and share best practices

[Frontline Professional Growth](#) helps districts take those steps with intention. It allows leaders to align learning goals with district priorities, track progress over time, and create custom learning paths, including those that support safe, strategic exploration of AI tools in instruction and operations.

Educators don't need to master every tool, but they do need a working understanding of how AI fits into their role including when to use it, how to stay in control of the process, and where potential risks or benefits lie. Purposeful, connected professional development makes that possible.

Send a Clear Message: We're Building an AI-Ready Culture

The path to responsible AI integration starts with people, not tools.

Every job posting, interview, and onboarding experience is a chance to signal your district's values. Districts that frame themselves as forward-looking, thoughtful adopters of technology, and invested in innovation are more likely to attract educators who want to grow, take initiative, and shape what's next.

Recruiting & Hiring as a Strategic Signal

Frontline Recruiting & Hiring supports districts in attracting educators who are aligned with their goals. With tools to shape messaging, personalize outreach, and track performance, HR teams can:

- Write job postings that reflect a forward-thinking, innovative culture
- Target and engage applicants with an interest in instructional technology or future-ready practices
- Streamline the hiring process to move quickly on high-potential candidates
- Use data to refine recruitment strategies over time

These choices shape perception. When your district communicates a clear vision through its hiring practices, it sends a strong message that this is a place where educators are supported, trusted, and encouraged to grow.

Making the Vision Stick: Systems That Support Culture

Exploring AI in schools takes more than enthusiasm. Districts need the infrastructure to follow through, which includes systems that keep new initiatives organized, compliant, and moving forward.

[Frontline Central](#) provides that structure. It manages everything from hire to retire, streamlining how districts onboard staff, track credentials, route approvals, and monitor professional development. It brings consistency and visibility to the full employee experience.

With [Central](#), districts can:

- Guide new hires through digital onboarding with real-time tracking
- Manage contracts, certifications, and policy acknowledgements in one place
- Monitor professional learning completion and connect it to employee records
- Empower staff with self-service access to forms, updates, and key information
- Maintain compliance and stay ahead of credential expirations and reporting needs

For districts working to build a future-ready culture, the details matter. When systems reinforce expectations and reduce friction, staff can focus on growing, learning, and leading, not navigating paperwork. Central helps ensure that the foundation is solid, so innovation is possible and sustainable.



Learn how **connected solutions** can help your people do their best work.

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About the Institute:

Frontline Research & Learning Institute generates data-driven research, resources and observations to support and advance the education community. The Institute's research is powered by Frontline Education data and analytics capabilities in partnership with over 10,000 K-12 organizations and several million users nationwide. The Institute's research reports and analysis are designed to provide practical insights for teachers and leaders as well as benchmarks to inform strategic decision-making within their organizations.

