

EDUCATION WEEK

These State Lawmakers Want All School Districts to Craft AI Policies. Will Others Follow?

By [Alyson Klein](#) — January 24, 2024

School districts in Tennessee would have to come up with a policy for using artificial intelligence under a pair of bills recently introduced in the state legislature.

The [legislation](#), which has been submitted in both the House and Senate, would require schools and charters to specify how AI can be used for instruction and assignments by teachers, other staff, and students. But importantly, it doesn't direct districts on whether to ban AI tools like ChatGPT, encourage their use, or choose an approach in between.

That was deliberate, said State Sen. Joey Hensley, a Republican on the education committee who sponsored the Senate's version of the bill. Rep. Scott Cepicky, also a Republican, introduced the House version of the legislation.

"We're not telling them what their policy should be, but just that they need to have a policy and to try to get control of AI," Hensley said. "I would expect the school board to have people who were experts on it to advise them on their policies. We don't want [AI] to be misused."

The vast majority of districts in the country have not released AI guidance, even though educators say they need it. Fifty-five percent of respondents in an EdWeek Research Center survey last year reported that they were seeing an increased need for guidance or policy around the [use of AI in the classroom](#).

So far, at least five states—California, North Carolina, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia—have put forth AI guidance that explains how AI applies to existing laws and offers suggestions on best practices for developing school district policy.

Other states—including Iowa, Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming—have declined to issue similar guidance because of their rules on local control of schools, according to a report from the Center for Reinventing Public Education.

The Tennessee legislation, which has been referred to the education committees in each chamber, is among the first bills requiring districts to create AI policies. But there could be a flurry of similar measures, experts predict.

"I think with 51 states, including [the District of Columbia], we're gonna see 51 different responses of how different states approach or do not approach helping their districts set up AI" guidance, said Bree Dusseault, a principal and managing director at CRPE.

Many district leaders want "someone to help guide them in creating policy," in part, because they are "overloaded and overwhelmed" with a lot of other responsibilities, Dusseault added.

That help, though, doesn't necessarily have to come from their state education departments, she said. It could originate with "trusted nonprofits" with expertise about the role of artificial

intelligence in education.

Some organizations have already stepped into that void. For instance, the **Council of Great City Schools** and the Consortium for School Networking [released a list of 93 questions for schools to consider when using AI](#). And Teach AI, an initiative launched by a cadre of nonprofits to help schools think through AI guidance and policy, offered another piece of practical advice: a [toolkit of principles to think through when crafting AI guidance](#).