CASE STUDY

How to Foster a Culture of Learning and Manage Change

AI Integration at Chicago Public Schools

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PROJECT EVIDENT

About Project Evident

Project Evident harnesses the power of data, evidence, and technology to achieve greater impact. We believe that by empowering practitioners to drive their own data and evidence building while also strengthening the surrounding ecosystem, we can increase the number of effective solutions in the social and education sectors and scale them faster, ultimately producing stronger, more meaningful, and more equitable outcomes for students and communities.

Project Evident's **OutcomesAI** practice provides consulting, technical assistance, resources, and tools to support practitioners – nonprofits, school districts, and funders. We achieve this by strengthening their ability to use AI to enhance their understanding, improve their impact, support informed decision making, advance R&D, and allocate resources toward achieving better and more equitable outcomes. We recognize the potential for misuse of data, evidence, and technology and seek to limit harmful practices. We serve on the EDSAFE AI Steering Committee and strongly recommend the S.A.F.E. Benchmarks Framework for K-12 AI efforts. Project Evident's differentiator is its use of AI to drive outcomes. We support processes to detect and avoid technology overriding our evaluative work in delivering equitable outcomes.

About the Equitable AI Adoption Project

Artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI hold great promise for helping nonprofits expand their services and achieve more equitable outcomes for the people and communities they serve. Few in the philanthropic, social, and education sectors would claim satisfaction with society's progress in addressing persistent social problems. Grantmakers and nonprofits share the goal of scaling impact, and AI provides new tools to achieve this goal.

A February 2024 working paper by Project Evident and Stanford's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence found that approximately 80% of funders and nonprofits believe their organizations would benefit from using more AI, specifically for mission-related work. However, there is a question about "how" – a lack of clarity about how AI will benefit individuals and organizations, as well as a lack of organizational expertise and materials about AI for social and education sector organizations, were the most frequently cited barriers for funders and practitioners, after concerns about bias. With the support of the Gates Foundation, the Equitable AI Adoption (EAIA) project aims to inspire and inform practitioners and educators on how AI can help them achieve their mission. To that end, EAIA is surfacing, creating, and disseminating stories of early adopters to study progress, distill broadly applicable insights, and share findings. At the same time, we are leading a Community of Practice comprising 15 nonprofit organizations in developing a practical and actionable tiered AI adoption framework to support others on their journey.

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Introduction: Why Change Management Matters for AI Adoption

A common business maxim states that the success of technology implementation is determined by "80% people, 20% technology." It is people, not the tools themselves, that are the primary determinants of whether the anticipated increased impact will be achieved. While much recent discussion and writing focuses on the AI technology revolution, considerably less attention is given to the fact that AI implementation, like all other organizational changes, works with and through people. While emerging technology is by definition new, the work of fostering a culture of learning and managing change is not. The academic field of change management is nearly 80 years old, and its core theory that organizational transformation requires systematic attention to human and social dynamics is central to successful AI adoption.[1]

There are many publicly available general-use change management frameworks backed by academic research; this case study is not meant to duplicate that work. Organizations seeking to implement AI within their program models would benefit from familiarizing themselves with these frameworks. Prominent models include Kurt Lewin's Three-Step Model; Kotter's Eight-Step Process; and the Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement (ADKAR) Model, all of which are included in the Resources section at the end of this case study. However, change management to support AI implementation has nuances beyond standard change management frameworks due to divided public perceptions of AI and the rapid pace of technological change. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is an example of an organization implementing AI while prioritizing people and addressing nuances specific to AI. CPS staff and stakeholders are living in a “change-saturated environment where people are being asked to do more with less,” as noted by Kelli Johns, Senior Change Management Specialist, and their thoughtful design for managing AI implementation addresses that reality.

By sharing CPS’s story, we aim to highlight the importance of attending to the people side of change during AI implementation and to underscore the nuances that matter in social and education sector AI adoption. Nonprofits planning for AI to enhance program outcomes should embrace four key principles:

[1] Newton, Richard, A practitioner’s view of the evolution of change management, NUST Business Review, November 2019.

DEVELOP AND TRAIN ON SAFE AND ETHICAL AI GUIDELINES: Since free, public, large language models, such as ChatGPT and Claude, are already available to staff, establish a foundation for safe and fair use of AI before launching AI implementation. At a minimum, require the review of AI model outputs for errors and prevent the sharing of personally identifiable information (PII) or private organizational data or information. This creates safe conditions for staff to learn, experiment, and pilot AI tools to solve shared problems.

FOLLOW A CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS: AI implementation is an organizational change. Plan for AI implementation using the guidance of proven change management frameworks to address the human and social dynamics of managing change.

IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS THROUGHOUT THE CHANGE PROCESS: Due to divided public perceptions of AI, centering stakeholder voices during AI implementation is vital. This can be done through committees, surveys, interviews, or the creation of informal spaces for dialogue.

PROVIDE ONGOING AI TRAINING: Because technology is changing rapidly, provide ongoing, hands-on AI training and create time for AI play and experimentation to discover new use cases or better solutions to existing ones. Encourage shared learning across teams, because good ideas and insights can come from anywhere inside an organization.

Guiding people through change is never an easy journey, and guiding organizations through AI adoption at this particular moment presents unique challenges given the current context of the general public's mixed opinion about AI, the change-saturated environment, and AI's continued and rapid evolution. CPS is a strong example of enterprise adoption of AI that centers people within the AI adoption strategy. The lessons from CPS can apply to all nonprofits seeking to adopt AI, regardless of their size or complexity. We are grateful to CPS for sharing their story of the human side of technology adoption.

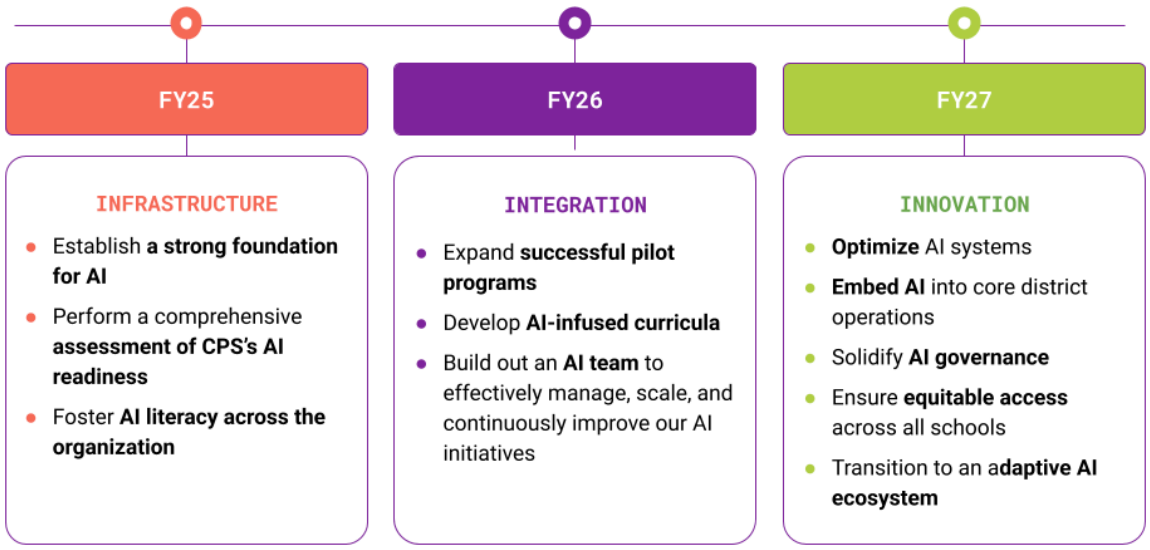
> "AI is, at its heart, a partnership with the rest of the organization. It is different from any technology we've dealt with before."
>
> — *Jessica Morris, Director of IT Business Partnerships*

Who is Chicago Public Schools?

Chicago Public Schools is the fourth-largest school district in the United States, with just over 325,000 students enrolled. It is a complex and diverse network of 634 individual schools.[2] "We have some really huge schools, and we have some really small schools," notes Casey Fuess, Founding Assistant Principal at CPS's Virtual Academy and co-chair of the School Leader AI Coalition. The district has a diverse student body, including ~47% Black and ~35% Latinx youth, and 71% of the student population comes from economically disadvantaged households.[3] The four-year high school graduation rate has steadily increased each year over the past decade to 85.0% in 2023.[4]

The nearly 45,000 total staff across Chicago Public Schools[5] are united behind one goal: "Our role at CPS, whether you're in the finance department or a teacher, is that we have to prepare the student for life after CPS. Once they leave our system, they need to be able to be a productive member of society, they need to be prepared for whatever job they go into, and they need to have the skills necessary to succeed," shared Lorne Rodriguez, Manager of Enterprise Generative AI and member of CPS's AI Steering Committee. He goes on to note that the fact that "AI is on an exponential curve, radically changing what life is going to look like when that kindergartner graduates high school," is what catalyzed CPS to launch an AI Steering Committee; develop safe and fair practice AI guidelines; and create a three-year Enterprise AI Roadmap. The first year of the roadmap laid the groundwork for AI adoption by focusing on people, creating an on-ramp for AI implementation and innovation in years two and three. The aims for year one include establishing a strong foundation for AI by identifying and engaging stakeholders, as well as fostering AI literacy across the school system.

Roadmap Timeline Overview



[2] Stats and Facts, Chicago Public Schools website.
[3] Demographics, Chicago Public Schools website.
[4] Mahaffie et al, The Educational Attainment of Chicago Public Schools Students: 2023, October 2024.
[5] Stats and Facts, Chicago Public Schools website.

Laying the Groundwork for Safe and Fair AI Practice

In January 2024, Chicago Public Schools launched the AI Steering Committee (AISC) to "ensure a holistic and equitable approach to GenAI across the District."[6] The creation of the AISC was a powerful signal by leadership to CPS staff about the prioritization of AI adoption. When managing change, "you are fighting an uphill battle without leadership backing and 'trust at the top.' You are asking teammates to do different things; they need to have their bosses ready to say you need to complete this because their bosses believe in it too," said Johns.

The AISC's design reflects a deliberate, cross-functional approach that emerged from CPS leadership's understanding of AI's district-wide implications. "We had people from law, talent, transportation, IT, teaching and learning . . . cross-pollination across teams was really potent, because it made us realize we're all in this together and that our ideas had relevance to each other's," Jessica Morris, Director of IT Business Partnerships and member of the Operational Efficiency AI Committee said. This approach also recognizes that change management is a team sport and that it cannot be successfully led by an individual or a single department, regardless of the organization's size.

Notably, the AISC's first action was to develop AI guidelines, creating a container for safe AI experimentation in light of the public availability of large language models. A February 2024 working paper by Project Evident and Stanford's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence found that 78% of nonprofits and 72% of funders did not have an organizational policy guiding AI usage, which introduces organizational risks, such as exposing sensitive data and incurring opportunity costs by limiting AI experimentation. CPS's quick movement relative to its peers in responding to society's rapid AI adoption supported staff in adapting to this pervasive technological change. "What I think was great about what CPS did is they formed a steering committee relatively early," Morris said. "And the first thing that the committee did was put out AI guidelines."

> "We wanted to establish our definition of AI literacy and AI principles. They're in our guidebook, they're on our website. We ensure that gets pushed out whenever we do communications."
>
> *— Lorne Rodriguez, Manager of Enterprise Generative AI*

CPS's decision to create AI guidelines versus a policy was a proactive choice. Peter Leonard, Executive Director of Student Assessments and Multi-Tiered System of Supports, noted that the AISC chose to develop guidelines and "very intentionally didn't pursue developing a 'capital P' policy. We know the landscape is going to evolve quicker than our policies could."[7] Policies are legally binding and, as such, may require longer timelines, legal advice, and oversight by the executive or board of directors during their development and approval. If organizations are using

[6] Chicago Public Schools, AI Guidebook Version 4.0, July 2025.

[7] AI Decisionmaking in School Districts: Insights from Chicago Public Schools, EducationFirst blog, January 7, 2025.

AI, publicly available advice, or policy builders to create a policy, they should proactively review and adapt for their particular context. Guidelines represent best practices, may require fewer resources for their development, and be easier to update given AI's rapid evolution. While staff training is crucial to ensure adherence to any policy or guideline, AI policies should be incorporated into all onboarding materials and ongoing training, much like other organizational policies that aim to mitigate risk. Note that an organization may already have policies and guidelines in place, possibly focused on data governance or other adjacent topics, that can be enhanced to cover AI rather than creating a new document.

The Difference Between AI Policies and AI Guidelines

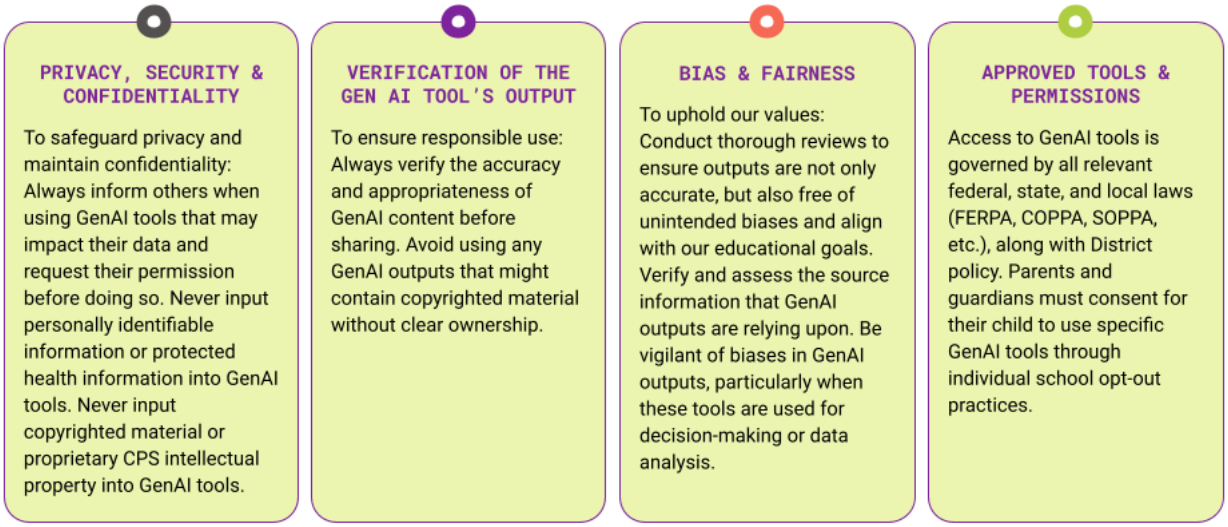
Organizations should proactively determine whether an AI policy, AI guidelines, or both are the best fit for ensuring the safe and fair use of AI. A policy is a formal and binding document that sets clear rules for behavior. Because it is often legally enforceable, failure to follow a policy may create legal liability for the organization and could result in disciplinary action. In contrast, a guideline is advisory rather than mandatory. It offers best practices and recommended approaches to support decision-making, but allows for flexibility.

In July 2024, CPS released the first version of its AI Guidebook to its staff, despite not yet having provisioned its entire community with AI tools. Developing AI guidelines in advance of AI tool provisions tacitly acknowledged that AI was already in use by its staff and students. CPS's AI guidelines accounted for both AI "shadow use" (i.e., the use of AI outside of explicitly provisioned and approved tools) and anticipated future operational and program use. Morris attests to this reality: "We know both students and educators will use AI regardless."

The AI Guidebook ensured "the legal, ethical, and pedagogically sound use of AI technology within the District" and empowered "staff to responsibly explore and leverage this new technology to enhance educational outcomes and improve the daily student experience."[8] The AI Guidebook included AI principles, a definition of AI literacy, an overview of AI basics, general AI guidelines for the CPS community, and specific AI guidance to six stakeholder groups, including students, staff, and vendors. Recognizing how quickly technology is evolving, AISC updates the AI Guidelines quarterly.

[8] Chicago Public Schools, AI Guidebook Version 4.0, July 2025.

CPS AI Guidance



*Adapted from CPS AI Guidebook. For full text, please see AI Guidebook Version 4.0

Change is a Team Sport: Identifying and Engaging Stakeholders

As a large organization constantly managing change, CPS has a dedicated change management department that supports all change initiatives. That department uses the Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement (ADKAR) model as its foundation for planning and executing enterprise change projects. This model is also used to underpin their implementation of their three-year Enterprise AI Roadmap.

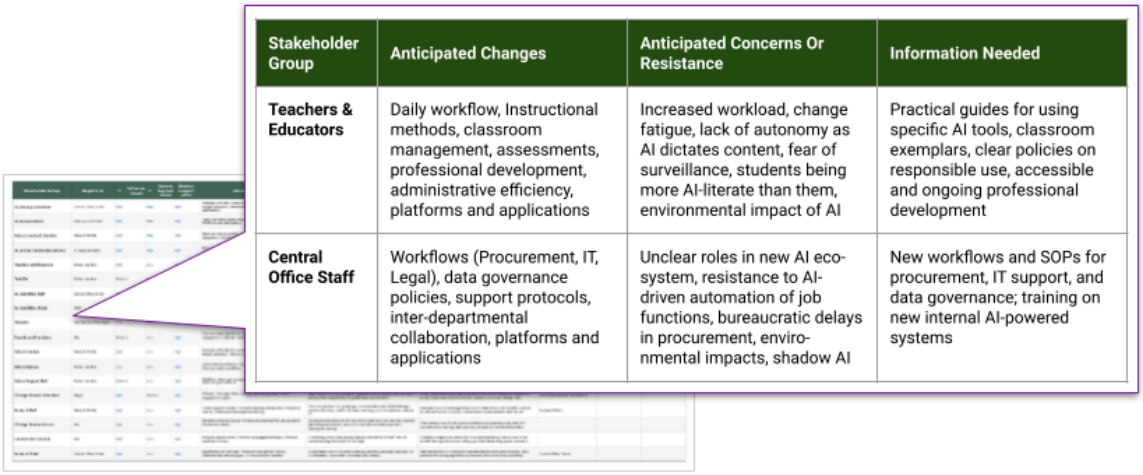
Given the generally mixed public opinion about AI, deploying AI may alter external stakeholders' perceptions of an organization or school and may alter internal stakeholders' roles. Rodriguez shared, "There are definitely concerns, and there were times where, during [staff] presentations, very rarely, I would get individuals who were anti-AI." In addition to using ADKAR, CPS has endeavored to map and engage stakeholders from the very beginning of its AI implementation journey. Johns defines a stakeholder in a change management process as "someone who is involved or affected by the change." She goes on to say, "Identifying and engaging them allows for comprehensive inclusion."

CPS has taken multiple actions to ensure that stakeholder voices influence the design and direction of AI implementation, including detailed identification and mapping, comprehensive surveying, and the creation of a thoughtful governance structure to complement AISC. "When we think about all of the different stakeholders that exist within our organization, we cover the spectrum, and therefore also a spectrum of responsibilities, workflows, and tasks," said Rodriguez.

As part of supporting the change management process, Johns and Rodriguez led the creation of a detailed map of 18 distinct stakeholder groups that could be affected by AI implementation,

14 of which represent CPS employees. These groups range from students and parents to the Chicago Board of Education, school principals, teachers, and central office staff. Johns emphasized that it is “important for both back office and programmatic delivery of service to be included. Each group is equally important in making this change happen.” For each of these groups, they mapped:

- To Whom They Report
- Influence Level
- Current Support Level
- Desired Support Level
- Anticipated Changes to their Area of Responsibility from AI Adoption
- Anticipated Concerns or Resistance
- Information Needed to Move the Stakeholder to the Desired Level of Support
- Primary Source of Information
- Modes of Communication



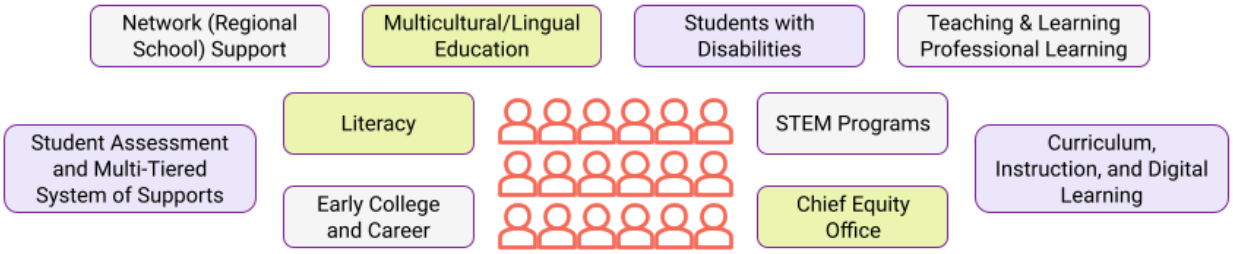
Stakeholder Group	Anticipated Changes	Anticipated Concerns Or Resistance	Information Needed
Teachers & Educators	Daily workflow, Instructional methods, classroom management, assessments, professional development, administrative efficiency, platforms and applications	Increased workload, change fatigue, lack of autonomy as AI dictates content, fear of surveillance, students being more AI-literate than them, environmental impact of AI	Practical guides for using specific AI tools, classroom exemplars, clear policies on responsible use, accessible and ongoing professional development
Central Office Staff	Workflows (Procurement, IT, Legal), data governance policies, support protocols, inter-departmental collaboration, platforms and applications	Unclear roles in new AI eco-system, resistance to AI-driven automation of job functions, bureaucratic delays in procurement, enviro-nmental impacts, shadow AI	New workflows and SOPs for procurement, IT support, and data governance; training on new internal AI-powered systems

This mapping enabled Johns and Rodriguez to develop a tailored communication and engagement plan for each stakeholder group, increasing the likelihood of success for AI implementation. Importantly, part of the communication plan was listening in addition to sharing.

In February 2025, AISC launched multiple additional committees to extend its listening and reach throughout CPS, including the School Leader AI Coalition (SLAC) and specialized AI Operating Committees organized around three domains: Instructional Practice; Operational Efficiency; and Data and Analytics. Fuess points out that the size of the governance structure also means "we're getting a lot of people involved so that you could pick up the phone and find answers to questions and actually know somebody who's only one connection away from the (committees)," helping to create many nodes for change. Just because AI is in the technology domain does not mean that leading change management for AI implementation should be the responsibility of the technology department. For example, CPS did not approach committees as

the provenance of the Information Technology Services (ITS) team for either leadership or membership. Morris pointed out, “The committees were representative across the district, not ITS-heavy, often with just one IT person per room.”

Department Representation – Instructional Practice AI Committee



Rodriguez points out that CPS’s “big tent” committee design philosophy is core to successful change management. “When we think about approaching AI implementation in our district, we need to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all of our stakeholders,” he said, “and the only way to do that is to ensure that we have all of the voices represented in the work, which is very much the core of everything that we've done in CPS.” Inherent in the design of the governance structure is also the idea of what Alexander Fishman, Manager of Digital Learning Design and Instructional GenAI and interim chair of the Instructional Practice Committee, referred to as distributed leadership.

> “Distributed leadership means that it's actually the school-based coaches and the instructional leadership teams at the schools that really are the ones driving the change. How do we reach those folks? We make sure somebody representing those different worlds is represented on our Instructional Practice Committee.”
>
> *— Alexander Fishman, Manager of Digital Learning Design and Instructional GenAI*

SLAC serves as the mechanism to capture the voices of school leaders from across the district's complex organizational structure. Fuess, who co-chairs SLAC, said, “We're trying to get representation from all of the different networks, which are regional structures that divide the district into smaller regional sub-organizations.” They described the importance of formal committees to inform and support AI adoption, “Our vision is two-way communication,” Fuess said. “We surface what's happening on the ground — problems and opportunities.” All AISC, SLAC, and operating committee members receive enhanced AI access through upgraded licenses, encouraging continued experimentation and use.

The thoughtful and robust nature of the committee structures ensures that CPS has a diverse set of stakeholders throughout the district who are influencing and championing change. Morris notes that the people involved in committees become “informal change champions in our own teams, spreading practices and enthusiasm.”

In August 2025, CPS launched a comprehensive, district-wide survey to gather insights, perceptions, and experiences with AI tools and training, as well as to collect anonymous information about the current state of AI within CPS. The survey aimed to collect all perspectives about AI, including those that indicated resistance to it. “[The online poll] changes depending on how the questions are answered, really iterates depending on how [the interviewee] is responding,” Johns noted. “This helps us find pockets of resistance and pockets of fear, which is part of all change processes.” And while CPS is currently using third-party research to understand youth perceptions of AI, she looks forward to qualitative CPS student feedback that lets her “hear their actual voices."

> "We've added stakeholders along the way; it is not a one-and-done thing! It has to be done as early as possible and then repeated throughout the process."
>
> *— Kelli Johns, Senior Change Management Specialist*

Provide Ongoing AI Training

The availability of free public generative AI models and a range of online training materials contributes to a wide array of AI skill levels across organizations. "I start basically every session I do with a couple of questions: ‘On a scale of 1 to 5, how familiar are you with GenAI?’ The main reason I do that is because no matter what, in every room, you're gonna get people that respond to every single number, “ shared Rodriguez. When designing AI capacity building, plan for continuous learning. AI training is not a one-and-done activity, Fuess advises: “Build a structure that can adjust as capabilities change — the pace will only increase. You need a way to slot in new capabilities without re-examining the whole organization each time.”

To meet staff where they are in terms of comfort and skill level with using AI, CPS has created a comprehensive learning ecosystem that is cross-functional, group-based, and hands-on, supporting all employees in developing AI literacy and practical implementation skills. “Every day I'm talking to non-AI people who are saying, ‘I don't know what this is, or why should I care’,” Fishman shares, “and I tell them that they, as a pedagogy leader, should have a seat at the table, and should take up space.” CPS’s learning ecosystem is a mix of formal, ongoing training, such as the AI Foundations Badge and AI professional learning communities, in addition to informal opportunities for collaboration and play. To be cost-effective, CPS leverages online training developed by third parties and free public training from technology companies. The design of the overall learning ecosystem acknowledges that meaningful AI implementation requires both individual learning and collaborative problem-solving, while providing multiple entry points and ongoing support for staff with varying levels of technical experience and diverse job responsibilities. Central to this approach is CPS's hands-on learning philosophy, Morris says: ”If you have a training on AI that doesn't involve something hands-on, it's a miss. You've just wasted everyone's time. You can't talk your way into change.” This practical approach ensures

staff move beyond theoretical understanding to actual engagement with AI tools and applications across all roles in the district.

Identifying and Running Pilots

An essential aspect of leading AI implementation is identifying areas where AI can address persistent problems and then conducting pilots. Just as hands-on AI play is essential to training on AI, AI pilots help organizations envision how this technology can enhance organizational efficiency and outcomes. The cross-functional Operational Efficiency AI Committee brainstormed places where AI could make a meaningful difference. Morris shared that they created a "use-case pipeline." She added, "We had a spreadsheet of a couple of dozen ideas, peer-reviewed them, and shared solutions." They agreed on an idea offered by a member of the transportation team. At the start of the school year, she went on to say, the transportation team "typically receives 5,000 calls a week and many calls were procedural — what form to submit, how to check status — even though a self-service tool existed." Morris created an AI assistant to take numerous unstructured pieces of information – from transportation staff interview transcripts to existing documents – to produce "eight clear, readable knowledge articles." These articles were used to create a persona, train, and refine an out-of-the-box chatbot.

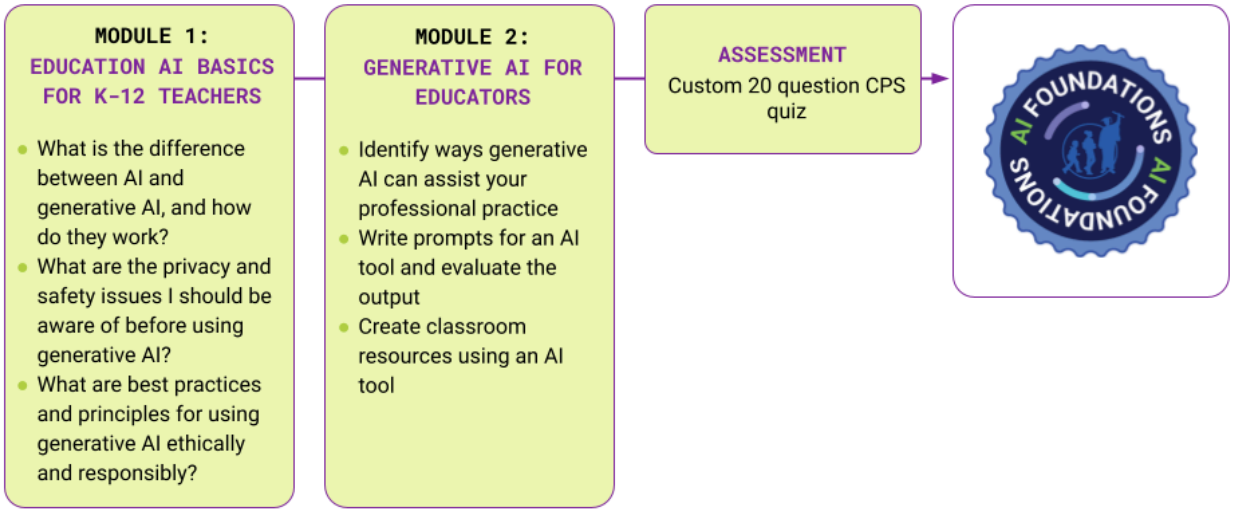
According to Morris, the pilot was a huge success: "In the first ten days we had 258 users and 310 queries; [about] 85% were the procedural topics we wanted. That's hundreds of calls deflected in the first two weeks." But much more importantly, the pilot represented a "durable knowledge transfer, a repeatable testing plan, and a method we can scale to other teams — equity, local school councils, student information systems, and our new data metrics work."

The AI Foundations Badge, an asynchronous individual online training, serves as the universal starting point, providing essential AI literacy concepts, ethical considerations, and practical applications relevant across the district's more than 30,000 employees. This is the first of three badge levels. All members of AISC, SLAC, and the operating committees are required to obtain this badge.

The professional learning communities are collaborative groups within CPS where cross-functional teams of educators and staff engage in ongoing learning about and implementation of AI tools. These digital classrooms feature hands-on, ongoing learning and provide structured spaces for "sharing experiences, discussing challenges, and exchanging best practices around AI implementation," and feature monthly live webinars focused on training on new AI tools and promoting continuous improvement.[9] Fishman describes the purpose of these formal training opportunities as "enabling change makers that are at the school level, and they're actually the ones that are going to own that change." Badges and the professional learning communities are in addition to other formal one-off AI training sessions and offerings within annual professional development days and opportunities.

[9] Chicago Public Schools, AI Guidebook Version 4.0, July 2025.

CPS AI Foundations Badge Pathway



CPS is also invested in finding informal ways for staff to learn from and with each other, and to generally encourage experimentation and play with AI. CPS hosts monthly "Neural Networking" hours to create space for AI play. “We don't really come into that space with an agenda. It's more of an opportunity just to talk,” said Rodriguez. “If you have ideas, if you want to just chat with somebody, if you want to share something you're doing and get some feedback, this is a safe space to do that.” In addition, there is a digital space with an online whiteboard tool for collaborative ideation and planning, where staff "share ideas, questions, concerns, resources, experiments, prompts they're doing," he added. Importantly, these spaces are not organized by functional areas, allowing for the cross-pollination of ideas.

> ”If you have a training on AI that doesn't involve something hands-on, it's a miss. You've just wasted everyone's time. You can't talk your way into change.”
>
> *– Jessica Morris, Director of IT Business Partnerships*

How to Foster a Culture of Learning and Manage Change

Chicago Public Schools' transformation from January of 2024 through the first year of its Enterprise AI roadmap demonstrates that successful AI implementation begins with intentional change management. Their experience in creating a safe space for AI learning and welcoming stakeholders from across the organization to engage in AI transformation can inform the journeys of other education and nonprofit organizations seeking to integrate AI into mission attainment.

DEVELOP AND TRAIN ON SAFE AND ETHICAL AI GUIDELINES: Successful AI adoption must be grounded in clear principles that prioritize data privacy, safety, and ethics. Organizations can enhance existing policies or guidelines already in place or craft new principles that will govern AI use. CPS created new guidelines with flexibility for revisions and, through their AI Guidebook, referenced other existing policies relevant to the use of AI for students and staff.

> "Recent reporting has focused on [AI] harms — some very serious. That shouldn't halt creative use, but it underscores the need for appropriate-use training and proactive risk management."
>
> *– Jessica Morris, Director of IT Business Partnerships*

FOLLOW A CHANGE MANAGEMENT PROCESS: AI implementation is an organizational change. Plan for AI implementation using the guidance of proven frameworks to address the human and social dynamics of managing change. "Creating short term wins" and focusing on staff "desire" are part of Kotter's and ADKAR's change management models to generate staff will for organizational change. CPS encouraged small pilots through its committees to demonstrate the utility of AI and catalyze support for AI implementation.

> "AI is unique because it evolves so fast. Usually, there's an endpoint to change management for technical implementation, but AI is so rapidly evolving. It is not a one-and-done thing."
>
> *– Kelli Johns, Senior Change Management Specialist*

IDENTIFY AND ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS THROUGHOUT THE CHANGE PROCESS: Meaningful stakeholder engagement must be continuous, authentic, and influential in the decision-making process. This requires creating multiple formal and informal pathways for input, with the goal of understanding and addressing resistance. CPS began by identifying key stakeholder groups and welcoming early adopters who were interested in innovation and learning. It then brought these stakeholders together through committees and training opportunities to create local champions.

> "The key is really listening to and incorporating their perspectives and their feedback and their opinions in this work."
>
> *– Lorne Rodriguez, Manager of Enterprise Generative AI*

PROVIDE ONGOING AI TRAINING: AI technology and best practices evolve rapidly, necessitating that districts develop organizational capacity for ongoing learning, experimentation, and adaptation. This means creating systems for regular reflection, iteration, and scaling of successful practices. Morris shared that the combination of policies, training, and the opportunity to learn and play with peers made AI exploration at CPS feel like an "incubated community."

> Pilot represents "durable knowledge transfer, a repeatable testing plan, and a method we can scale to other teams."
>
> *– Jessica Morris, Director of IT Business Partnerships*

Recommendations

Both grantmakers and nonprofit practitioners should plan for systematic attention to human and social dynamics, essential to the successful adoption of AI. For practitioners, creating a safe context for experimenting with AI through clear policies or guidelines is also critical, as is inviting cross-functional stakeholders into the planning and implementation of AI. Organizations should not assume that AI training is a one-and-done activity. The technology is rapidly evolving, and investing in ongoing hands-on training and pilots, as well as encouraging informal play and experimentation, should be the new norm. For grantmakers, this means asking grantees about change management plans when reviewing proposals that include AI and having candid conversations about the rate of change possible for humans in an AI implementation process.

FOR NONPROFIT LEADERS

- Determine whether a legally binding policy or best practice guidelines are the most suitable fit for your organization's risk tolerance and market context.
- Review current policies and guidelines related to AI, such as data governance or DEI, and determine how they can influence a new policy or guideline, or can be enhanced to address AI.
- Review change management frameworks and select one to support planning your AI implementation process.
- Invest time and resources in identifying and engaging stakeholders before implementing AI tools. Leverage stakeholders who are interested in innovation and learning and deploy them as champions for change.
- Seek to understand resistance to AI implementation and adapt your plans to address the associated fears.
- Develop comprehensive professional learning systems that incorporate hands-on learning experiences to enhance learning outcomes. To support full organization transformation, do not privilege one team or functional area.
- Encourage pilots, experimentation, and play to engage stakeholders and uncover ways that AI can enhance efficiencies or program outcomes.
- Establish clear feedback loops and adaptation mechanisms to respond quickly to what you learn during the implementation of AI.
- Plan for long-term sustainability and technology's inevitable evolution by embedding ongoing learning into your organizational culture and systems.

FOR GRANTMAKERS

- Keep abreast of AI evolution in order to understand the ramifications for nonprofit organizations.
- Fund change management capacity building, not just technology, recognizing that successful AI implementation requires significant organizational transformation.
- Invest in a professional learning infrastructure that can be sustained beyond initial grant periods.
- Engage in thoughtful discussion about AI implementation timelines, keeping in mind that technology adoption can only move as fast as people embrace change.

"I want AI and what we're doing around AI to be integrated seamlessly into what everybody else is doing, because eventually, we won't be talking about AI in the way we're talking about it now. At a certain point, it will just be the norm." —*Lorne Rodriguez, Manager of Enterprise Generative AI*

Appendix

Resources

AI Guideline Examples

- Chicago Public Schools AI Guidebook Version 4.0
- Edsafe AI S.A.F.E. Benchmarks Framework
- NTEN AI Governance Framework for Nonprofits: AI Policy Template
- Fast Forward's Nonprofit AI Policy Builder

Change Management Frameworks

- Kurt Lewin 3-step Change Model
- Kotter's 8-step Change Model
- Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement (ADKAR) Model

CPS AI Foundations Badge Training Modules

- Google Generative AI for Educators
- Common Sense Education AI Basics for K-12 Teachers

Additional Reading from Project Evident

- Equitable AI Adoption (EAIA): Highlighting AI in Action
- Sustaining Scaled Impact, AI & Technology at Crisis Text Line
- Staying Ahead of the Technology Curve: AI Technology Evolution at Quill.org
- Funding the Future: Grantmaker Strategies in AI Investment
- Inspiring Action: Identifying the Social Sector AI Opportunity Gap