

# The Board's Role in AI Decision-making



Governance teams play an essential role in establishing the conditions for the effective and ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Their leadership provides a local educational agency's (LEA's) vision, direction, inspiration and the guardrails to protect its students and other stakeholders from harm, while also encouraging safe experimentation with these powerful and fast-evolving technologies.

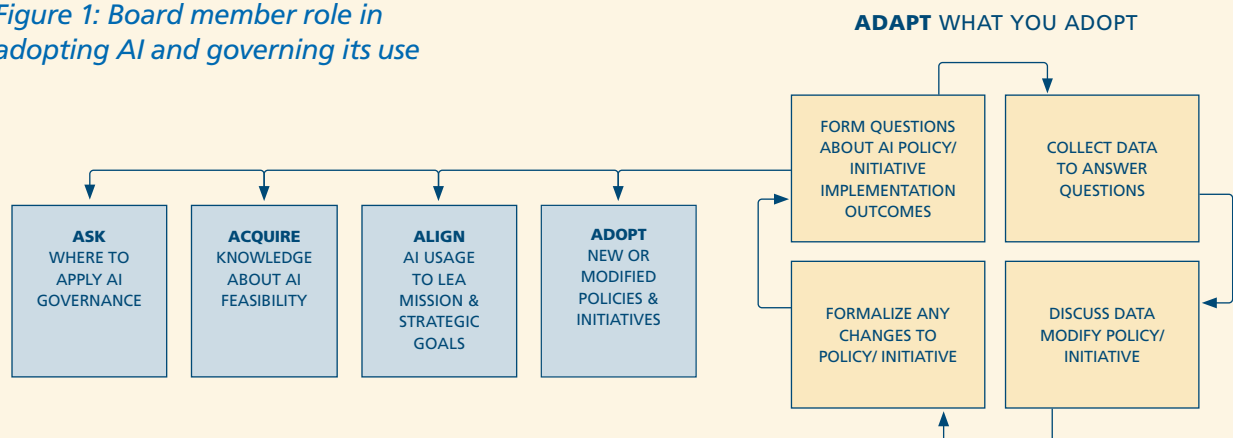
The image below outlines a process that school boards might use to help govern their LEA's AI innovations and usage properly and should be considered both iterative and adaptable to the board's existing processes. A board of education may start from different points within the process and decide as a board to move back and forth through the steps (noted by the two-way arrows) before moving to the adaptation step.

The process described in Figure 1 is outlined in the following steps:

## 1. *Identify where AI governance applies in education practices*

In some cases, the AI policies or initiatives a school board discusses will be driven by requests to the local educational agency and communicated through LEA

*Figure 1: Board member role in adopting AI and governing its use*



officials. In other cases, the board may wish to proactively engage in AI adoption. In these cases, school boards will need to ask where AI implementation fits within local policies. Questions can include:

- ▶ What existing policies might need to be modified to incorporate language and guidance about AI?
- ▶ What new policies might need to be created?
- ▶ What AI projects at the LEA level might require board oversight, and how should that oversight be administered?

## ***2. Evaluate the benefits and risks of using AI***

Transparency is critical for understanding and addressing potential barriers to successful implementation of AI tools, as well as mitigating harm to students and employees. School board members must ask questions of their leadership before new policies are released, and major technology initiatives are launched. In the section “Questions to Ask About AI in K-12 settings,” sample questions are provided for board members regarding the transparency and accountability practices of the vendor, the bias and fairness of the tools, privacy and security of the data used (both input and output), the effectiveness of the tool for the particular tasks, how humans will be centered in the use of the tool and ethical considerations.

Given the fast-paced evolution of AI, not every risk or benefit can be known before a product is used. The board plays an important role in setting guardrails that enable an environment that encourages some level of LEA experimentation. CSBA’s AI Taskforce offers a suite of resources for LEAs evaluating AI vendors and creating policies, including the [Promising Practices and Policy Resources](#) page. Boards may also wish to tap into other resources to help think through appropriate policies and practices. The American Federation of Teachers’ lesson “[Commonsense Guardrails for Using Advance Technology in Schools](#)” is an example of such a resource. Additional guidance documents can be accessed on CSBA’s [AI Taskforce website](#).

## ***3. Align AI usage with the LEA’s mission and strategic goals***

It is easy to get caught up in the rapid advancement and potential benefits of AI and rush to experiment with these tools. But before staff are

deployed to create solutions using AI, boards play an important role in confirming the alignment of these efforts with the strategic goals and mission of the LEA. Understanding how education is delivered is paramount to executing this step correctly, and boards should anticipate that views may evolve and warrant revisiting.

## ***4. Adopt AI policies and innovations***

This step memorializes work already familiar to boards — setting or modifying policies and approving innovations rising to the level of the board. The procedures your board of education already has in place to formally approve policies are likely sufficient and easily applied to AI initiatives. CSBA also provides periodic updates to sample policies to subscribers to GAMUT, and several policies have already been revised to incorporate AI-related content. Additional information can be found on this [AI Taskforce webpage](#).

## ***5. Use a continuous improvement cycle to keep policies up to date***

The purpose of continuous improvement is to learn alongside the LEA whether policy implementation is working as intended or needs to be revised to better meet goals. It is a collaborative learning process, and it need not be extensive. For example, the board may enact updates to an employee use-of-technology policy to include language around the use of AI. As a matter of continuous improvement, the board might inquire a few months into the policy’s adoption about whether the policy has been enacted fully by administration and if it is working as envisioned. The LEA could survey its educators to assess their use and understanding of the policy. If the survey demonstrates understanding and correct application of the policy, no further action is needed other than a potential follow-up in a year to ensure continued compliance.

If the survey results indicate there is confusion about the new policy, however, the board and LEA can together decide the strategies the LEA might deploy to improve understanding and implementation. The board can later assess if those strategies were successful or if new interventions are needed.

It is crucial that this work be performed in the least intrusive manner possible to reduce workload and streamline communications. For example, the board

should collaborate with the LEA to align their inquiries to similar inquiries the LEA may also be making. In addition, the LEA may have preferred data and information collection practices that can be leveraged for the board's purposes.

## Questions to ask about AI in K-12 settings

Boards of education play an important role in setting policy to promote the appropriate and ethical use of AI in an education setting. By asking the questions below of the LEA staff responsible for the procurement and use of new AI tools, board members can develop an understanding of the potential benefits and risks of using AI to accomplish its goals in alignment with the LEA's mission, objectives and legal obligations.

Here are some sample questions that board members can ask of the superintendent:

### *Transparency and accountability*

- ▶ **Disclosure:** Is the use of AI in a particular process clearly disclosed to affected parties (employees in their evaluations, parents in the development of IEPs , etc.)?
- ▶ **Human oversight:** What role do human evaluators play in the use of the tool, and how is their judgment incorporated in final outputs?
- ▶ **Auditability:** What mechanisms are in place to audit AI's analytic processes and ensure accountability?

### *Bias and fairness*

- ▶ **Training data:** What kind of training data was used to develop the AI tool, and how does the vendor/user ensure outputs are representative and reduce bias?
- ▶ **Bias mitigation:** What measures are in place to identify and mitigate potential biases in the AI's algorithms?
- ▶ **Human review:** How are human evaluators involved in reviewing and addressing any biases that may arise from the AI's output?
- ▶ **Continuous improvement/audits:** What processes are in place to refine the AI's algorithms to better account for individual differences, biases and related issues?

### *Data privacy and security*

- ▶ **Data protection:** Are personally identifiable data involved in the use of this tool? If so, what measures are in place to protect the privacy and security of data stored and processed by AI?
- ▶ **Compliance:** Does the use of AI in this tool comply with relevant data privacy laws and regulations and LEA policy?
- ▶ **Staff training:** What measures will the LEA take to ensure that all relevant staff understand and follow the applicable data privacy laws and regulations?
- ▶ **Data minimization:** Is the AI collecting and using only the necessary data for evaluation purposes?
- ▶ **Secure storage:** Are robust security measures in place to protect sensitive data?
- ▶ **Insurance:** Does the LEA's insurance cover any relevant AI-related risks?

### *Effectiveness*

- ▶ **Validation:** Has the AI's effectiveness and accuracy been validated through rigorous testing?
- ▶ **Reliability:** How reliable is the AI in providing accurate and consistent outputs?
- ▶ **Feedback:** How is the feedback of affected parties on AI-generated evaluations incorporated into the evaluation process (e.g., employees being evaluated, parents of students with individualized education programs [IEPs])?
- ▶ **Compliance:** How does the system ensure compliance with federal and state laws relevant to the tasks for which the AI tool is used?
- ▶ **Integration:** How well does the AI tool integrate with existing data systems related to the tasks being performed? What data is moving between them?
- ▶ **Analytics and reporting:** What analytics and reporting capabilities does the system offer to help LEAs track key metrics, identify trends and make data-driven decisions as they pertain to the business process?

### *Individualization*

- ▶ **Person-centered approach:** In circumstances where the AI tool is used to support employee performance evaluations, does the AI prioritize the individual needs and goals and/or does it utilize standardized data?

- ▶ **Human expertise:** How is human expertise and judgment incorporated into the evaluation process, even when AI is used?
- ▶ **Flexibility:** Is the AI flexible enough to accommodate unique circumstances and changing local needs?
- ▶ **Collaboration:** Does the system facilitate collaboration among the relevant parties (employees, educators, administrators, parents, etc.)?

### *Ethical considerations*

- ▶ **Human impact:** How does the use of AI impact employee morale, job satisfaction and overall well-being?
- ▶ **Accountability:** Who is ultimately responsible for the accuracy and fairness of AI-assisted outputs?
- ▶ **Ethical guidelines:** Are there ethical guidelines in place for the use of AI in the tasks being performed?

For additional artificial intelligence guidance and resources, visit CSBA's AI Taskforce webpages at [www.csba.org/AI](http://www.csba.org/AI).