THE SETHI LEDGER
AI + K-12 Brief | 2026-10-21

1. California students' sensitive records exposed in months-long ETS breach

Update: Published October 20, 2026; the breach involved unauthorized copying of records from May 22 to September 18, discovered September 25. The data could include identifiers, addresses, disability and program status, and assessment information for current and former students; California began notifying families October 16, and ETS paused some enrollment processing and testing while investigating.

Why it matters: This is a major third-party risk event: districts should assess what sensitive student data vendors can access, how access is monitored, and how contracts assign incident-response responsibilities. The breach's full impact and the specific safeguards that failed are not yet established.

Limits: The exact number of affected students is not reported, and CDE said it had not found evidence that the stolen data was made public.

Published 2026-10-20. Source: https://therecord.media/california-warns-all-public-school-students-of-data-breach

2. Ransomware attack shuts Idaho district for two days and reaches connected building systems

Update: Published October 20, 2026; Jerome schools were closed Monday and Tuesday after a weekend cyberattack, with classes scheduled to resume Wednesday. The superintendent said attackers gained control of some connected systems, including cameras, door locks, and climate controls; the district was still assessing possible data exposure and restoring its network.

Why it matters: The incident illustrates how cyber disruption can affect physical security and facilities as well as instructional systems. District response plans should account for safe building operations and continuity of instruction, not only data recovery.

Limits: The superintendent could not disclose the ransom demand or the extent of any data access; the investigation was ongoing.

Published 2026-10-20. Source: https://www.kmvt.com/2026/10/20/jerome-schools-open-wednesday-after-weekend-cyber-attack-targets-district-networks-demands-ransom/

3. Wake County reviews device strategy as screen-time data informs upcoming board decisions

Published October 20, 2026; Wake County Public School System reported device-use data from the first 30 days of the school year and surveyed about 1,400 instructional staff. The board was scheduled to discuss the findings before considering device-purchasing options on November 12 and a future strategy on December 1; a pilot at one elementary school uses one device for every two students.

Why it matters: The district is examining whether its device model, instructional needs, and budget align, rather than treating one-to-one access as settled. The staged review and pilot may offer a useful process for leaders, but the article reports no results showing that lower device use improves learning or saves money.

Limits: Screen-time figures describe logged activity and staff survey responses; they do not establish effects on student learning.

Published 2026-10-20. Source: https://www.wral.com/news/education/wake-student-screen-time-new-data-teacher-survey-october-2026/

4. Berkeley Unified says it blocked student Gemini access and is expanding AI-site restrictions

Published October 20, 2026; Berkeley Unified's October 7 board update described existing technology decisions and 2026-27 priorities. The district said Gemini had never been enabled for student accounts, that it had recently blocked many generative AI websites, and that it was reviewing policies and planning educator training and family engagement.

Why it matters: The update offers a concrete example of limiting student access while the district reviews broader technology practices. Leaders considering similar controls should pair restrictions with clear policy, communication, and review processes; the district's account does not establish the effects of those measures.

Limits: This is the district's own account of its practices and plans; it provides no independent evaluation of their implementation or impact.

Published 2026-10-20. Source: https://www.berkeleyschools.net/2026/10/technology-in-busd-what-we-believe-what-weve-done-and-whats-next/

5. South Pasadena board revises draft AI policy ahead of a November vote

Published October 19, 2026; at its October 13 meeting, South Pasadena Unified's board discussed revisions to a draft policy on generative AI. Proposed changes included describing student access as "blocked," clarifying that educator AI use should support rather than replace instruction, and requiring staff to cite AI-generated class materials or rubrics; a formal vote was expected in November.

Why it matters: The proposal shows how districts are translating broad AI concerns into rules for access and educator use. These provisions remain under consideration, so leaders should distinguish the draft from adopted policy and evaluate how any restrictions would work in practice.

Limits: The policy had not yet received a formal vote, and the report does not establish that the proposed rules were implemented.

Published 2026-10-20. Source: https://southpasadenan.com/spusd-oct-13-board-meeting-parents-

board-members-clash-over-the-future-of-ai-and-smartphones-in-local-classrooms/