THE SETHI LEDGER
AI + K-12 Brief | 2026-10-28

1. More than half of surveyed K-12 systems reported a cyber incident in the past year

Published Oct. 27, 2026, K-12 Dive reports findings from a CIS and MS-ISAC report: slightly more than half of surveyed schools or districts experienced a cybersecurity incident in the prior year, and about a third reported an incident affecting operations. The survey also found widespread phishing and email compromise reports, while 56% of respondents said cybersecurity programs were underfunded and 70% had delayed projects, investments or staffing because of budget constraints.

Why it matters: The findings put identity security, incident readiness and staffing on the same leadership agenda as technology purchasing. Districts should assess whether current MFA is phishing-resistant and whether limited budgets leave critical response work deferred.

Limits: The report combines MS-ISAC service-user data with a survey of 426 K-12 cybersecurity and technology leaders; the results do not necessarily represent all U.S. districts.

Published unknown. Source: https://www.k12dive.com/news/cybersecurity-incidents-hit-over-50-of-schools-and-districts-in-past-year/872783/

2. Texas districts take sharply different approaches to classroom AI

Published Oct. 27, 2026, this Dallas Morning News report describes contrasting district approaches: Dallas ISD bars elementary and middle school students from AI tools while allowing specified high-school uses, and Houston ISD plans to expand its AI-focused Future 2 model to 25 additional campuses next year. The article also highlights the central instructional distinction leaders face: using AI to support student reasoning versus using it to produce finished work.

Why it matters: District leaders can use these contrasting policies to test whether age-based access rules, defined permitted uses and assignment-level expectations fit their own instructional goals. The article offers examples, not evidence that either approach improves learning.

Limits: The Houston expansion is a plan, not a completed rollout; the article does not evaluate student outcomes from either district's approach.

Published 2026-10-27. Source: https://www.govtech.com/education/k-12/how-texas-schools-are-enhancing-not-replacing-learning-with-ai

3. University at Buffalo receives $500,000 federal award to expand K-12 AI guidance work

Published Oct. 27, 2026, the University at Buffalo announced that its Center for Early Literacy and Responsible AI received an additional $500,000 from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. The planned work includes partnerships with

state and regional education leaders, policy and implementation planning, and a common guidance document for educators and families, with particular attention to young children.

Why it matters: The award could give districts and state agencies another source of research-informed planning resources, especially around early literacy, privacy and safety. Leaders should treat the guidance as forthcoming and assess its recommendations against local policy and evidence needs when available.

Limits: This is an announcement from the grant recipient; the guidance and planned convening have not yet been delivered, and the release does not evaluate their future impact.

Published 2026-10-27. Source: https://ed.buffalo.edu/news-events.host.html/content/shared/ed/news/ticker/2026/10/27.detail.html

4. Washington superintendent urges FCC to preserve E-Rate connectivity funding

In an Oct. 27, 2026, statement, Washington's superintendent of public instruction said the FCC had been exploring changes that could reduce, restructure or eliminate E-Rate and reported submitting comments opposing many potential changes. The FCC had not made a final decision; the statement says it would review comments before determining how to proceed. Washington's K-20 network and participating districts rely in part on E-Rate support.

Why it matters: Because connectivity funding underpins core district operations as well as classroom access, leaders should model potential cost shifts and track the FCC's proceeding rather than assume the program will remain unchanged. The state's account describes potential consequences, not a finalized federal policy.

Limits: This is an advocacy statement from a state education agency; it does not establish that the FCC has proposed a final rule or decided to eliminate E-Rate.

Published 2026-10-27. Source: https://ospi.k12.wa.us/about-ospi/news-center/news-releases/state-superintendent-chris-reykdal-urges-federal-government-protect-internet-connectivity-funding

5. Kuna plans screen-time guidance after measuring student device use

Published Oct. 27, 2026, Idaho Education News reports that Kuna School District plans to recommend screen-time guidance before the end of the school year and will begin measuring device use to build a districtwide report. Interim teacher guidance calls for planned, directed screen use, tech-free options during downtime and collecting usage data. The district says it currently lacks clear data on how much students use screens.

Why it matters: The district's sequence-measure use, provide interim practices, then develop guidance-offers leaders a way to address community concerns without treating anecdotes as a usage baseline. Any resulting limits will need to account for instructional requirements and differences in student access.

Limits: The districtwide guidance is planned, and the article does not report results from

the usage measurement effort.

Published unknown. Source: https://www.idahoednews.org/news/we-dont-have-data-kuna-to-evaluate-student-screen-time/

6. Long Beach Unified surveys families and students as it weighs classroom technology policies

Published Oct. 27, 2026, the Long Beach Post reports that Long Beach Unified opened surveys asking students and parents about classroom AI and screen use, including effects on learning, well-being, privacy and attention. The district is establishing a workgroup of teachers, students, guardians, administrators and industry experts to review survey results and other input; its findings may inform policy recommendations after the survey closes Nov. 6.

Why it matters: The district is responding to public pressure through a defined input and review process, but the account describes deliberation rather than a policy change. Leaders should ensure consultation includes a representative range of families and weighs instructional, privacy and cost considerations alongside concerns about screen use.

Limits: The workgroup's recommendations and any resulting policy decisions are not yet available; claims by advocacy groups and students about harms are not presented as established findings.

Published 2026-10-27. Source: https://lbpost.com/news/education/ai-survey-long-beach-unified-classroom

7. Reed Union plans age-based framework for screens and AI

Published Oct. 27, 2026, The Ark reports that Reed Union School District's director of information systems told the board on Oct. 13 that an age-appropriate framework for devices and AI would come before the board in February. The discussion followed approval of the district's first AI policy four months earlier and board concerns about whether preschool-through-eighth-grade students spend too much time on screens.

Why it matters: An age-based framework could connect AI rules and device expectations to student development instead of relying on one districtwide standard. The board discussion signals a work in progress, so leaders should not treat the framework as adopted policy.

Limits: The February framework is forthcoming; the article does not specify proposed limits or report evidence about student screen-time effects.

Published 2026-10-27. Source: https://www.thearknewspaper.com/live/reed-union-schools-to-develop-age-based-framework-for-screens-ai