THE SETHI LEDGER
AI + K-12 Brief | 2026-10-29

1. Survey finds widespread teen chatbot use for schoolwork and emotional support

A JED Foundation survey of more than 5,000 tweens and teens found 58% used chatbots for schoolwork and a similar share turned to them when distressed. NPR reports that companionship or distress-related use correlated with worse mental-health indicators, while researchers cautioned that the data cannot establish which way the relationship runs. Published Oct. 28, 2026; survey timing is not specified in the article.

Why it matters: District AI policies may need to address student use for emotional support alongside academic use, with clear routes to trusted human support. The reported association warrants attention but is not evidence that chatbot use caused the mental-health outcomes.

Limits: Survey findings are correlational; the article does not provide the survey's full methodology or establish causal direction.

Published 2026-10-28. Source: https://www.npr.org/2026/10/28/nx-s1-6016285/most-tweens-and-teens-use-ai-for-schoolwork-and-emotional-support-a-new-survey-shows

2. National student survey points to AI-literacy gap in schools

Project Tomorrow's survey of more than 95,000 students, parents, educators, and administrators found that 46% of high school students learned about AI through independent experimentation, compared with 30% who learned about it in class. Weekly or daily student use of AI for studying and research rose from 23% in 2023-24 to 40% in 2025-26. Published Oct. 28, 2026; the article reports survey findings, not an intervention or policy change.

Why it matters: The findings suggest districts should assess whether AI literacy instruction is keeping pace with student use and whether educators have support to teach evaluation and responsible use. Survey responses describe reported behavior and comfort, not verified learning outcomes.

Limits: The findings are self-reported and do not demonstrate that AI instruction improves student outcomes.

Published 2026-10-28. Source: https://www.govtech.com/education/k-12/students-call-for-ai-literacy-purposeful-tech-use-in-schools

3. Justice Department sues Maryland district over student-record and parent-access practices

The Justice Department sued Anne Arundel County Public Schools on Oct. 27, alleging violations of FERPA and PPRA related to a transgender student's records and parent access. The district had changed its policies in August, but DOJ says those changes did not meet its demands; the district did not respond to K-12 Dive before publication. Published Oct. 28, 2026; lawsuit filed Oct. 27, 2026.

Why it matters: The case illustrates how student-record access, privacy obligations, and parent-notification practices can become intertwined in contested policy areas. District leaders should distinguish the complaint's allegations from established legal findings and seek qualified counsel on local requirements.

Limits: The claims are allegations in a pending lawsuit, not a court ruling; the district's position was unavailable at publication.

Published 2026-10-28. Source: https://www.k12dive.com/news/a-maryland-district-changed-its-pronoun-policy-the-justice-department-stil/873115/

4. Georgia district takes systems offline after detecting unusual activity

Seminole County School System in Georgia took technology systems offline after detecting unusual activity on Oct. 19 and brought in outside specialists. A ransomware group claims the district as a victim, but the district has not confirmed data theft, encryption, or the attacker's identity; restoration was not confirmed as of Oct. 28. Published Oct. 28, 2026; incident detected Oct. 19, 2026.

Why it matters: The account is a useful reminder to separate a threat actor's leak-site claim from verified district findings when communicating about incidents. Leaders should prepare for operational disruption while preserving uncertainty about attribution and data exposure.

Limits: The district had not confirmed a cyberattack or data theft, and the ransomware group's listing contains conflicting location details.

Published 2026-10-28. Source: https://dysruptionhub.com/seminole-georgia-schools-cyber-incident/

5. APA report offers 10 evidence-based recommendations for K-12 educational technology

An American Psychological Association expert report, created in July 2026, offers 10 recommendations for evaluating educational technology, including defining learning goals, assessing what technology replaces, protecting privacy, and adding age-appropriate guardrails for generative AI. It cautions that engagement and performance within a tool do not by themselves demonstrate learning. Published July 2026; the page does not specify a separate event date.

Why it matters: The recommendations provide a useful framework for procurement and evaluation that considers learning outcomes, implementation, privacy, and learner needs together. They are guidance for decision-making, not evidence that any particular product or approach is effective.

Limits: The page summarizes an expert report; districts should consult the full report and assess evidence for individual tools and implementations.

Published unknown. Source: https://www.apa.org/test/malissa/educational-technology

6. Florida approves school AI-safety rule for implementation by July 2027

Florida's Department of Education approved Rule 6A-1.0957 on Sept. 16, requiring district and charter policies on AI-related internet safety by July 1, 2027. The article says the rule includes parent notification when AI tools are approved for instruction, review of tools for accuracy and appropriateness, and parent opt-out provisions; it is approved but not yet in effect. Published Oct. 28, 2026; approval occurred Sept. 16, 2026.

Why it matters: The described requirements make tool approval, family communication, and implementation timelines relevant to district governance and procurement planning. Districts should verify the rule's actual text and seek state guidance before translating this student-newspaper account into compliance steps.

Limits: The source is a student-run newspaper and characterizes the measure as a law; the underlying rule text is not supplied here.

Published 2026-10-28. Source: https://oviedocommunitynews.org/2026/10/28/florida-department-of-education-passes-law-regulating-ai/

7. Teachers redesign assessments as students gain access to AI chatbots

Reuters reports that teachers across the United States are shifting some assessment toward in-class writing, discussion, oral exams, and live demonstrations as students gain access to AI chatbots. The article draws on interviews with teachers and experts and describes varied approaches, from restricting devices to using AI for preparation; it does not establish that any one approach improves learning. Published Oct. 28, 2026; practices described began at different times.

Why it matters: The reported changes suggest districts may need to revisit assessment design and provide teachers with coordinated guidance rather than leaving them to respond individually. Local decisions should account for accessibility accommodations and evaluate learning evidence, not just reduced opportunities to use AI.

Limits: This is interview-based reporting, not a systematic evaluation of assessment strategies or their outcomes.

Published 2026-10-28. Source: https://www.investing.com/news/general-news/how-teachers-are-remaking-classrooms-for-the-ai-age-4978228