



What Is Artificial Intelligence (AI) and How Is It Being Used in Schools?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is technology that lets **computers recognize patterns and provide helpful answers or suggestions** based on the information they're given. AI tools are becoming more common in classrooms. These tools can **help teachers plan instruction, organize materials, and create supports** tailored to student needs. In special education, AI can be especially helpful when used correctly and responsibly. Still, it should never replace teachers' professional judgment, and it cannot be used to override families' rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Schools might use AI tools for things like:

- Drafting lesson ideas, worksheets, or visual supports
- Creating examples, practice activities, or progress-monitoring tools
- Supporting communication with translated or simplified text
- Organizing information for teachers to review
- Helping prepare for meetings or summarizing data (for staff use)
- Developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

AI should **not be used to make decisions** about a child's eligibility, services, placement, IEP goals, or accommodations provided through an IEP or a 504 Plan. These decisions must always be made by people — families, teachers, and specialists — working together as an IEP team.

How Families Can Talk with Schools About AI Use

AI should always be used with human oversight, and decisions about a child's educational program should never be automated. Clear communication helps ensure that AI supports — not replaces — thoughtful, individualized special education services.

Questions families may want to ask their school team:

1. How is AI being used in my child's classroom or by their teachers?
2. Are all AI-generated materials reviewed by a teacher or specialist before being used with students?
3. How does AI support — and not change — the specially designed instruction or services in my child's IEP?
4. What steps does the school take to protect student privacy? Is any personally identifiable information (PII) being entered into AI tools?
5. If AI is used to help draft parts of the IEP (such as goals or summaries), how does the team make sure the information is accurate and truly reflects my child?
6. How does the school check AI-generated information for accuracy, bias, or errors before using it?
7. What safeguards and guidelines are in place to ensure that AI is used responsibly, and are staff trained in these guidelines (including Virginia's state AI policies)?

Artificial Intelligence in Special Education What Families Need to Know

A Resource Document

Families can also share their preferences about how AI is used when developing their child's IEP or other materials. For example:

- Please avoid overly formal or generic AI-generated language in my child's IEP. I want the document to reflect my child's unique strengths and needs.
- If AI is used to support writing drafts, I'd like to know how staff will review and personalize the text to ensure it represents my child.
- If AI tools are used, please let me know what information is being entered so I can confirm it is accurate and up to date.
- Please ensure that any AI-supported suggestions are checked against my child's current data, goals, and services—not used automatically.

Special Education Rights Still Apply

Even with new technology in classrooms, nothing replaces a family's rights under IDEA. Schools must still:

- Provide individualized instruction based on your child's needs
- Ensure that trained professionals and families, not technology, make IEP decisions
- Use valid assessments and data to determine eligibility and services
- Protect student privacy and follow all confidentiality requirements
- Provide accommodations and modifications as written in the IEP or 504 Plan

If you have concerns about how AI is being used, request an IEP meeting or ask for clarification.

Where Families Can Learn More

- Virginia Department of Education - Virginia Guidelines for AI Integration: [AI-Education-Guidelines.pdf](#)
- Virginia Department of Education - Artificial Intelligence: <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/programs-services/school-operations-support-services/technology-in-education>
- U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Technology - Artificial Intelligence Guidelines: <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/documents/ai-report/ai-report.pdf>
- OCEDD - Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to Support Students with Special Education Needs
- Center for Democracy and Technology - From Personalized to Programmed: The Use of Generative AI to Develop Individualized Education Programs for Students with Disabilities: [2025-10-28-CDT-AI-IEP-Brief-1.pdf](#)



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