

POWERING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING: AI and Education Innovation from the Ground Up

Insights and Actions from the 2024–2025 Chicagoland Coalition
for Human-Centered AI in Education



THE CHICAGOLAND
Coalition
FOR HUMAN-CENTERED AI



A LETTER FROM LEAP

Powering the Future of Learning

Artificial intelligence is transforming our world. It's reshaping how we work, communicate, and create—and it is rapidly making its way into our classrooms.

For students and educators, AI brings extraordinary possibility: more personalized learning, real-time feedback, new ways to access content, and powerful tools to drive equity. But it also brings risk. Without thoughtful leadership, investment, and support, AI could widen the very opportunity gaps we seek to close.

At LEAP Innovations, we believe this is a moment of profound responsibility and of unprecedented opportunity. Chicago has the talent, the infrastructure, and the leadership to be a national model for AI innovation. But we cannot meet this moment alone.

This moment calls for bold leadership and collaboration across our city. Through aligned investment and cross-sector partnerships, we can position Chicago as a national model for inclusive, future-ready education that prepares our city with a world class AI-powered workforce.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP ACCELERATE THE WORK:

- Back efforts to expand AI training and coaching for educators and students, especially in under-resourced schools.
- Fund studies that assess what's working, measure equity implications, and inform best practices in innovation
- Support classroom pilots and co-designed tools that align AI to real classroom needs and new visions for teaching and learning
- Invest in partnerships between education and industry to equip students with the skills and experiences needed for the AI-powered workforce

Together, we can ensure that every student—regardless of zip code—has the tools, skills, and confidence to thrive in an AI-powered world. Will you join us to ensure no student is left behind in the future of learning?

Scott Frauenheim
CEO, LEAP Innovations



WHAT WE DO

LEAP builds capacity for personalized learning and innovation through three Learning Networks that provide strategic guidance, peer learning, professional development, and differentiated support to educators, schools, districts and organizations.

The **Pilot Network** guides school teams to design, test, refine, and implement innovative practices and edtech tools aligned to their personalized learning and school improvement goals.

The **Modern Learning Network** guides districts through classroom, school and system-wide transformation to achieve learner-centered, personalized and competency-based learning at scale.

The **AI Education Network** helps leaders, educators, and systems understand, design, and implement AI to enhance teaching and learning through a personalized learning lens.

The **LEAP Learner Engagement Survey** is a validated, research-aligned tool designed to measure the extent to which personalized learning practices are experienced by students and implemented by educators.

**LEARN MORE AT
LEAPINNOVATIONS.ORG.**



This experience has allowed me to grow, create, and lead with an enhanced lens and renewed energy for empowering my staff and fellow educators. My staff is learning to use AI to expand their practice, enrich their teaching, and deepen student learning in ways we've only just begun to imagine. ”

**Dr. Althea M. Hammond, Principal,
Plamondon STEM Elementary School**



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**THE CHICAGOLAND
COALITION FOR
HUMAN-CENTERED AI**

WHY THE AI COALITION?

During Spring 2024, LEAP connected with hundreds of educators, schools, districts and organizations to understand their priorities for personalized learning and innovation. Through these conversations, it became clear that collaboration was needed to ensure cohesive local innovation and equitable access to emerging artificial intelligence technology for educators and learners.

LEAP Innovations brings deep expertise in transforming the learning experience and effectively leveraging technology to personalize learning. LEAP Innovations launched in 2014, just as 1:1 devices and an explosion of educational technology were entering our schools and classrooms. Our vision was big — to harness the power of innovative teaching and learning strategies, along with technology, to transform our one-size-fits-all education systems into one that is tailored to the individual needs, strengths and interests of each learner. LEAP developed the LEAP Learning Framework, one of the most widely recognized frameworks for personalized learning, and has supported hundreds of schools and districts to design and implement learner-centered innovations.

This foundation enables LEAP to ensure that artificial intelligence and other technology are integrated into classrooms in ways that enhance, not replace, strong instructional practices and human relationships. Artificial intelligence technology became widely accessible as an arrival technology, leaving schools and organizations to determine how to manage and support adoption without a traditional rollout. LEAP recognized a critical need to ensure that adoption and decisions were not driven by new tools alone, but driven by educators, aligned to student needs and integrated into impactful instructional practices .



What started as separate conversations across the education sector grew into an education innovation engine - the Chicagoland Coalition for Human-Centered AI.

Our “City of Big Shoulders” was ready to innovate and lead the way to ensure equitable access to transformational technology for all educators and learners.

WHAT IS THE CHICAGOLAND COALITION FOR HUMAN-CENTERED AI IN EDUCATION?

In the summer of 2024, LEAP launched The Chicagoland Coalition for Human-Centered AI in Education (The Coalition), a cross-sector collaborative focused on the real-world, human-centered applications of artificial intelligence in our educational institutions. Over the past year, The Coalition has convened educators, school and district leaders, researchers, higher education faculty, edtech companies and other education organizations to explore how AI can be integrated into teaching and learning in ways that are responsible, ethical, effective, and equity-centered.

The Coalition is designed to:

- Explore, examine, and design the future of learning with AI
- Build, prototype, and get feedback on compelling AI solutions with educators, students, and leaders across the region
- Develop use cases and identify best practice approaches to AI in education
- Develop a collaborative, cross-sector community of education innovators

Each Coalition convening includes opportunities for deep understanding and sharing of current practices, leveraging the diverse experience and expertise of its membership.



“This Coalition didn’t just talk about AI. We built relationships and brought tactical solutions that can make Chicagoland a national leader in innovation.”

**Brooke McKean,
President & Co-CEO,
REACH Pathways**

Three core programming elements are Innovation Spotlights, Innovation Forums, and opportunities to Learn and Build AI. These structures promote peer learning, building connections, and elevate the voice of the Coalition members.



INNOVATION SPOTLIGHTS

Spotlights provide opportunities for members to share examples of how they are approaching artificial intelligence. The Spotlights are designed to surface insights, spark connections, and inspire new ideas for the practical, human-centered application of AI to enhance teaching and learning. The diversity of Innovation Spotlights have come from Google for Education, Naperville Community Unit School District 203, the Archdiocese of Chicago, Chicago Public Schools, Lockport Township High School, Microsoft, Distinctive Schools, National Louis University and others.



LEARNING AND BUILDING AI

Interactive professional learning opportunities engage members to build AI literacy, deepen AI fluency and develop skills and competencies needed to implement human-centered AI practices and tools in education settings.



INNOVATION FORUMS

Forums are discussions that explore key topics in human-centered artificial intelligence including risks, opportunities and integrations into teaching and learning. Forums develop actionable recommendations that support AI integration and showcase innovative use cases and best practices that support personalized learning and enhance student outcomes. The Coalition discussed designing AI edtech that responds to real classroom needs, AI for personalized learning, AI safeguards and guidelines, AI's impact on durable and future-ready skills, and equity.





MOVING FORWARD
Coalition Recommendations:
A Roadmap for Chicago
and Beyond



The Chicagoland Coalition for Human-Centered AI in Education was founded to explore how schools and systems can integrate artificial intelligence in ways that are responsible, equitable, and centered on teaching and learning. Over the past year, the Coalition has convened more than 100 participants—including educators, district leaders, researchers, and edtech partners—across a series of forums, spotlights, and design sessions.

This work has yielded not only deep insights, but also tangible direction. Across all convenings, over

90%



of participants rated sessions as relevant, thought-provoking, and applicable to their work

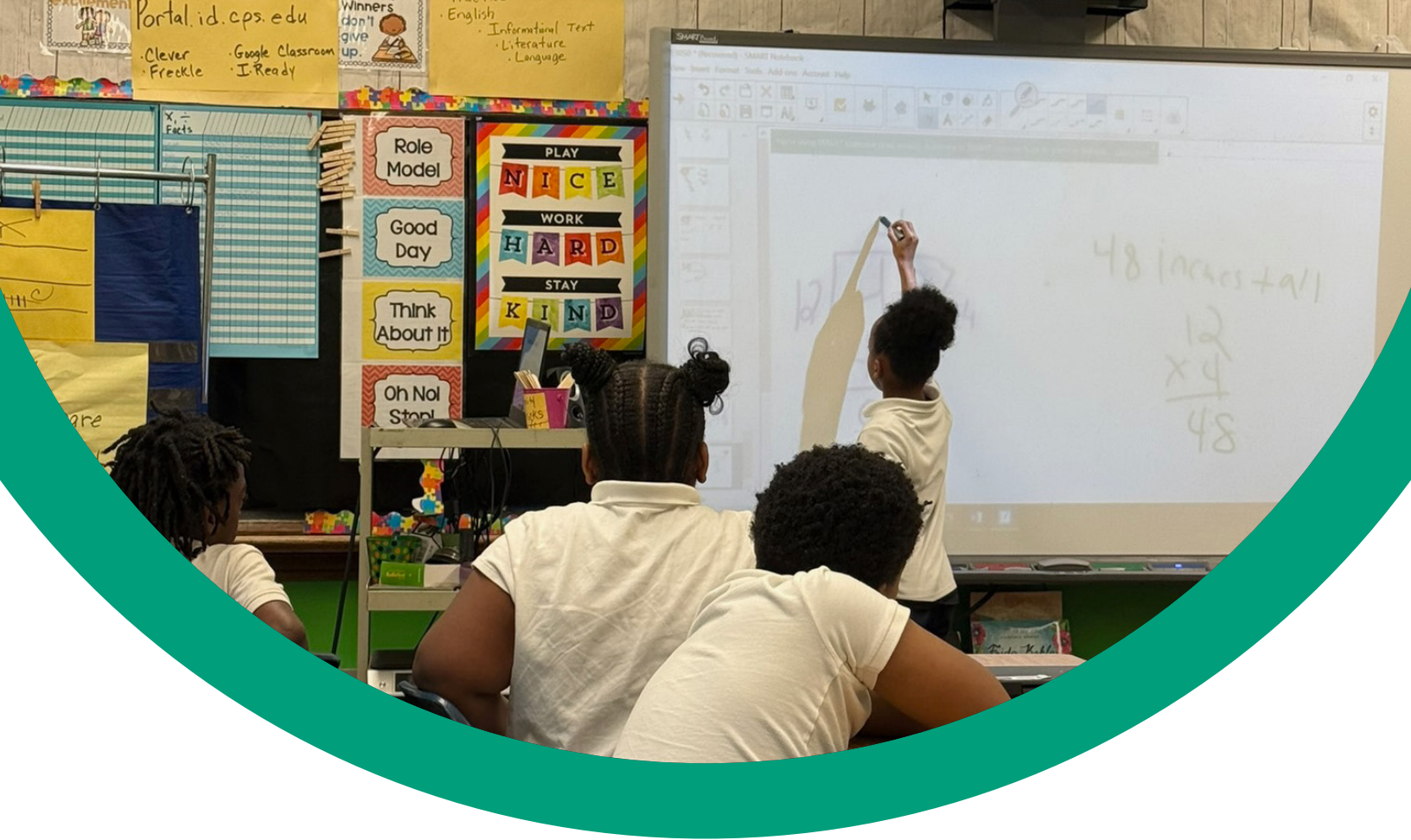
85%



of educators reported increased confidence in integrating AI into their classrooms

Participants consistently cited collaboration and shared problem-solving as the most valuable aspects of their experience—underscoring the need for learning spaces that bridge roles and sectors.





The Coalition identified five key elements that ensure a human-centered approach to artificial intelligence in education:

- 1** | Collaboration and Co-Design
- 2** | Educator and Student Voice
- 3** | Equity and Access
- 4** | Clarity and Transparency
- 5** | Reflection and Iteration

FIVE ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations represent five actionable priorities for the field, drawn from practitioner experience and field-tested throughout the Coalition's first year.

1

DESIGN AI-READY INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendation:
Build systems and guidelines that support AI integration

As AI tools enter classrooms, educators and students need clear guidance but just 19% of teachers report that their school has an AI policy¹. Without dedicated roles, internal processes, or strategic alignment, AI integration remains fragmented and reactive.

Innovation Spotlight: District and school leaders in the Coalition reported forming AI task forces and building cross-functional teams to align innovation, instruction, and IT.



2

COMMUNICATE A CLEAR VISION FOR AI IN LEARNING

Recommendation:
Align stakeholders with a shared purpose, values and instructional goals

AI is not just a technology shift—it's a mindset shift. Without a compelling vision, educators and families may resist change or misunderstand the role of AI in learning. Successful implementation starts with a clear, shared story: how AI enhances—not replaces—strong teaching and deeper student learning. Infrastructure and implementation plans must support responsible experimentation and alignment with instructional goals, not just technology access or adoption.



3

EMPOWER EDUCATORS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Recommendation:

Make AI training accessible, ongoing, and job-embedded.

Educators are at the heart of meaningful AI implementation, but a widening gap in access to professional learning exists between those serving low-poverty and high-poverty schools². Educators need training that builds foundational AI literacy, explores real classroom use cases, and includes clear guidance on student use.

4

START SMALL, LEARN FAST

Recommendation:

Prototype use cases aligned to learning goals—and refine them through short-cycle reflection.

The most effective AI implementations in the Coalition were built from the ground up: educators identified a specific instructional challenge, tested an AI-supported approach, and shared what they learned. Pilots tied to learning goals (like feedback or planning) proved far more impactful than tool-first initiatives. When students were invited into the process as collaborators, not just users, schools and organizations saw higher engagement and more thoughtful application.

Innovation Spotlight: Several Coalition members hosted in-house design sprints, building or testing AI tools in targeted ways then gathering to share insights. The structured, low-risk approach built momentum and led to quick wins.

5

PRIORITIZE ETHICAL AND EQUITY-CENTERED PRACTICES

Recommendation:

Establish guidelines that center student privacy, safety, and voice.

AI tools carry inherent risks: from bias in outputs to opaque data practices. According to a recent report from the Walton Family Foundation and GSV Ventures, around 47% of Generation Z are using AI weekly—yet they feel their schools and workplaces lack proper guidance³. Responsible adoption must be rooted in ethical policies that are co-developed with the school community.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

**Advancing AI Education
Across Chicagoland**





Nationwide, students in under-resourced schools risk falling further behind as others gain access to tools, skills, and opportunities powered by AI. The gap in readiness for the future of work—and for meaningful civic and social participation—will become a chasm. We cannot afford to limit the futures of thousands of students across our region, nor can our city afford the long-term cost of inequitable innovation.

To ensure Chicago students aren't left behind, we must act now. Without coordinated local innovation and expanded investment, the digital divide will only widen.

We must take action to accelerate equitable and effective access to AI, but we cannot do it in silos. The Chicagoland Coalition for Human-Centered AI in Education is demonstrating what's possible when cross-sector collaboration builds the path forward.

We're not just exploring AI—we're designing real solutions alongside the people most impacted: educators, students, and families. In our first year, the Coalition has:

- Engaged over 130 educators and leaders across 45+ schools, districts and organizations
- Shared actionable AI use cases and recommendations now influencing classroom practice and district policy
- Fostered a cross-sector learning community that over 90% of participants rated as highly relevant and applicable to their work

And this is just the beginning.



“As we work to establish a responsible, sustainable, and adaptable foundation AI infrastructure for the 4th largest district in the nation, participating in the Coalition has been instrumental.”

**Lorne Rodriguez,
Manager of Enterprise Generative AI,
Chicago Public Schools**

PLANS FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR

In 2025–2026, the Coalition will deepen its impact and scale its reach through the following initiatives:

Launch Working Groups focused on:

- College and Career Readiness in an AI-powered world
- Policy and Advocacy aligned to local and federal priorities

Expand High-Impact Professional Learning to hundreds of additional educators, prioritizing high-need schools

Host Inspiration Visits for local and national leaders to see promising practices in action across Chicagoland

Publish case studies and Innovation Spotlights highlighting effective strategies, innovative practices, and actionable recommendations that support AI adoption in Chicagoland and beyond

Expanding the Coalition to new cities, building connected and collaborative innovation engines that drive equitable access to AI



“The Coalition has created a model for elevating school leaders as innovators in AI and a space where they can share their ideas for maximizing its impact.”

E.J. Dubinsky
Manager of Educator Supports,
Chicago Public Education Fund

LEAP Innovations' Chicagoland Coalition for Human-Centered AI in Education included participants from schools, districts and organizations across the region's education sector.

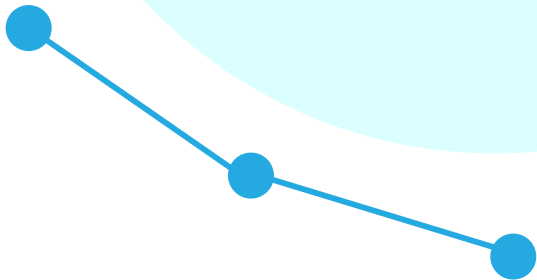
STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Chicago Public Education Fund
Chicago Public Schools
Distinctive Schools
National Louis University
Teach for America Chicago and Northwest Indiana

COALITION MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Aptakisic-Tripp School District 102
Archdiocese of Chicago Office of Catholic Schools
Audubon Elementary
Chicago Public Schools
Distinctive Schools
Code Your Dreams
Distinctive Schools
Doowii
Drummond Elementary
Educational Research and Design Institute (ERDI)
Google
Great Minds
Griffin Museum of Science and Industry
GSV
Indian Prairie School District 204
Innovare
Intrinsic Schools
KIPP Chicago
Leanlab Education
Learning Collider
Lockport Township High School District 205
Michele Clark High School
Microsoft
MJ Ventures
Naperville CUSD 203
National Louis University
P33 Chicago
Parker Dewey
Plamondon STEM Elementary School

THE 2024-2025 CHICAGOLAND COALITION



Playlab
Rachel Carson Elementary School
REACH Pathways
Sayre Language Academy
SEL Plus
Skinner West Elementary School
Sullivan High School
Teach For America Chicago Northwest Indiana
Teach Plus Illinois
The Chicago Public Education Fund
Township High School District 113
Turnaround Learning
Unchartered Learning
Video Pro Learning
Will County School District 92
Youth Engage Consulting

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2. Diliberti, Melissa Kay, Robin J. Lake, and Steven R. Weiner. More Districts Are Training Teachers on Artificial Intelligence: Findings from the American School District Panel. RAND Corporation, RR-A956-31, 2025, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR-A956-31.html.
3. Walton Family Foundation, and GSV Ventures. Gen Z Is Using AI — But Reports Gaps in School and Workplace Support. Walton Family Foundation, 8 Apr. 2025, www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/about-us/newsroom/gen-z-is-using-ai-but-reports-gaps-in-school-and-workplace-support.

Photos courtesy of LEAP Innovations, Allison Shelley for EDUImages, and Brandon Jones for National Louis University.





The Coalition for Human Centered AI in Education is part of LEAP Innovations' AI Education Network.

The LEAP Innovations **AI Education Network** helps organizations, districts, schools, and educators understand, design, and responsibly implement AI to enhance teaching and personalize learning. We provide high-touch support and strategic guidance, including district readiness assessments, design sprints, and implementation roadmaps that align AI priorities with instructional and operational goals. Through professional learning, coaching, and pilots, we build educator capacity in AI literacy, ethical use, and classroom integration while ensuring alignment to district visions, practices, and policies. Grounded in a human-centered approach, the AI Education Network positions generative AI as a strategic tool within the teaching and learning cycle—strengthening instructional practices, driving innovation, and creating sustainable, future-ready learning environments.

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for more information or to partner with the LEAP
Innovations AI Education Network.



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