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BEFORE THE
EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE COMMITTEE
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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
“BUILDING AN AI-READY AMERICA: TEACHING IN THE AI AGE”

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Good afternoon and thank you, Chairman Kiley, Ranking Member Bonamici, Members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today. My name is Allyson Knox. I am Senior Director of Education and Workforce Policy at Microsoft, and I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss issues related to artificial intelligence and its impact on teachers.

Today, I will share insights we have gathered from teachers about their experiences, challenges, and needs as they integrate AI in education; outline the steps Microsoft and other organizations are taking to facilitate this transition; and recommend legislative approaches to help policymakers strengthen these efforts. These legislative approaches include supporting professional development for teachers; encouraging public-private partnerships; promoting AI literacy; providing guidance on responsible AI use; and supporting innovation.

I would like to begin by quoting from Microsoft's vice-chair and president, Brad Smith, in his recent foreword to *Degrees of Change: What AI Means for Education and the Next Generation*ⁱ:

“Generative AI has become the fastest-spreading technology in human history, adopted at a pace that even the most seasoned technologists could scarcely imagine. This speed is breathtaking, but it also compels us to pause and ask, “Are we ready for what comes next?” AI’s promise is extraordinary. It can help solve problems that have challenged humanity for decades—improving health outcomes, advancing education, and unlocking new opportunities for economic growth. But, like every transformative technology before it, AI brings new questions and new responsibilities.”

This thought-provoking quote is apt for today's conversation on how AI is impacting teachers. The speed of AI adoption in our nation's schools and classrooms is indeed breathtaking. Just three years ago, AI had barely made a mark in education. However, our 2025 Study on AI in Education found that 80% of U.S. K-12 teachers have used AI in their roles or for school-related purposes at least once or twice and one-fifth report daily use of AI. Additionally, 58% of K-12 teachers think AI usage at their school/district will increase in the next year.

What we are hearing from teachers on the impact of AI:

The breadth of adoption has been profound. We have heard directly from teachers who are using AI to streamline lesson planning, curriculum development, and personalize student learning in ways that were unimaginable a few years ago.ⁱⁱⁱ AI is also reducing the time it takes to carry out administrative tasks, allowing more time for teachers to focus on their students.

Despite these benefits, we know teachers face challenges when it comes to AI in the classroom. We found roughly one in three teachers lack confidence in using AI effectively and responsibly. Many teachers also express concerns about how AI can exacerbate cheating and are worried about issues such as data privacy and student safety.

Teachers know AI is here to stay, and based upon countless surveys, forums, and focus groups, teachers are ready to tackle these challenges and ask for support in three main areas:

- I. **AI literacy** - Teachers want the skills, knowledge, and support to build AI literacy and critical thinking in their students;
- II. **AI guardrails** - Teachers want students to use AI responsibly and safely; and
- III. **AI tools** - Teachers want classroom-ready AI tools and opportunities to provide feedback that improve them.

I'm excited to share a few ways Microsoft, along with many of our partners, are committed to providing teachers with the support they are requesting.

I. AI literacy - Teachers want the skills, knowledge, and support to build AI literacy and critical thinking in their students

At the core of this support is listening to and learning from teachers and understanding what they want and need to become AI literate themselves and teach AI literacy to their students. These conversations have resulted in exciting initiatives, including the recent launch of the Microsoft Elevate for teachers program, part of the company's broader commitment^{iv} to help schools and educators build skills, expand opportunities, and ensure everyone benefits from AI.

Microsoft Elevate for Educators

The Microsoft Elevate for Educators program equips educators and school leaders with access to one of the world's largest and most connected peer educator networks and offers free professional development resources. It will provide free access to a new industry-recognized credential for educators, developed in partnership with one of the leading national nonprofit focused on technology and innovation (ISTE+ASCD).¹ This partnership is aligned to the AI Literacy Framework, which is intended to help educators gain confidence

¹ ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) + ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development)

and expertise in integrating AI into their teaching and learning. As part of this work, we also support ISTE+ASCD in advancing AI in teacher preparation programs.

National Academy for AI Instruction

Along with OpenAI and Anthropic, we are supporting the National Academy for AI Instruction, through a partnership with the American Federation of Teachers and the United Federation of Teachers. The Academy describes itself as a national training hub designed by educators – shaping the future of AI in public education, grounded in safety and people-first technology, and improving student learning. From everything we have heard from teachers, this is exactly the type of support they need to promote AI literacy. The Academy also focuses on building critical thinking skills for students and educators.

Rob Weil, who heads up the Academy, recently shared an update on their work with me. He noted through direct engagement with teachers, they listen to what the primary concerns teachers have around using AI in the classroom are, and then work with them to design trainings that are directly responsive to their concerns and meet them where they are – including using whatever technology they are already using in their classroom.

Their goal is to train 400,000 teachers over the next 5 years. The Academy is centered around a “train the trainer” model, building capacity to provide AI literacy to teachers at scale – providing the potential of millions of teachers to benefit from this initiative. Weil noted that interest and participation in the Academy has been taking off, largely due to word of mouth. This month, 1,000 teachers showed up for a virtual session, and another in-person session was overprescribed had to turn away a hundred interested teachers.

Why the interest? Teachers want to learn from their peers and trusted partners; they also want to ensure they are using AI effectively and safely. Weil explained that one of the most popular aspects of the training is centered around the Academy’s Commonsense Guardrails for Using Advanced Technology in Schools,^v which helps empower teachers to address the challenges they are facing in implementing AI. Some teachers describe AI as the wild-wild west, and this guide has helped provide a roadmap for understanding how to navigate bringing this technology into the classroom.

The trainings also provide real-world, hands-on experiences with using technology which teachers themselves are bringing to the table. At the trainings, teachers are asked what they could use the most help with and then have time to experiment with different tools to do things like start a draft of a lesson plan or an outline for a rubric – allowing them more time

and flexibility to incorporate their expertise. In addition, the Academy creates opportunities for educators to influence the development of AI for schools.

Support for Special Education Teachers

We also recognize the potential that AI holds to support students with disabilities – and the need to ensure special education teachers have the support and resources to fully unlock this technology.

Recently, we launched a course to support educators in exploring how Microsoft AI tools can be thoughtfully used in special education environments to reduce administrative demands, strengthen accessibility, and support clear communication with families. Throughout the learning path, responsible use of AI, privacy, and transparency are emphasized so educators can determine when and how AI fits into their practice in ways that align with student needs and professional values.

After our engagements, we tailored our trainings to special education teachers by incorporating their direct feedback. Key topics included privacy with sensitive medical information and using AI to assist parents and caregivers in IEP meetings. We emphasized clear communication, parental inclusion, and ensuring parents understand the meeting's goals and how best to support their children.

Finally, special education involves a collaborative team beyond just teachers, and we've revised our approach to address the needs of occupational therapists, physical therapists, and all other members involved in special education.

Support for Teachers in Rural America

We have found there's a significant gap in daily AI usage by urban teachers versus their rural and suburban counterparts (39% vs. 24%).^{vi} This gap underscores why ensuring AI tools, resources, and professional development are attuned to the needs of rural teachers is critical.

For the last five years, we've been working with the National Future Farmers of America (FFA) and agricultural science teachers to develop FarmBeats for Students and ensure it is responsive to agricultural science teachers' needs. We engaged in an iterative process with them – collaboratively designing and building curriculum and training with agricultural science teachers from the very beginning of development.

FarmBeats for Students brings AI to agricultural education through a hands-on educational program that brings precision agriculture directly into the classroom. The program consists of an affordable hardware kit and a free curriculum aligned with rigorous educational standards. Activities give students direct experience with topics like digital sensors, data analysis, and AI.

We brought FarmBeats for Students to the National FFA convention and held a series of workshops with teachers across the country. They experimented with the kits and provided input to ensure this technology was directly responsive to what they wanted to see in the classroom.

In addition to our partnership with the National FFA, Microsoft helps meet the needs of rural teachers by deploying the online content referenced above through Elevate, as well as supporting community-based organizations that help facilitate activities and events which promote AI literacy in rural communities.

AI Literacy Frameworks, Standards, and Guidance

Teachers want frameworks that help them integrate AI into their classrooms. We are pleased there is bipartisan interest in establishing strong frameworks around AI and education, especially highlighting the need for widespread AI literacy. Microsoft has provided support, guidance, and input to organizations and initiatives such as Code.org and TeachAI who work to develop and promote frameworks, guidance, and standards.

Microsoft encourages state and local policymakers to review and leverage these resources as they incorporate AI in education:

- The TeachAI Foundational Policies^{vii}: This resource, endorsed by dozens of policy organizations and associations, provides practical guidance for national, state, and local leaders to harness AI's benefits in teaching and learning while mitigating risks. The policies focus on five priorities—fostering leadership, promoting AI literacy, providing clear guidance, building educator capacity, and supporting responsible innovation—to ensure AI strengthens education systems and prepares learners for an AI-enabled workforce.
- The TeachAI *AI Guidance for Schools Toolkit*^{viii}: The Toolkit helps education authorities, school leaders, and educators develop clear, responsible guidance for using AI in K–12 education, balancing potential benefits with risks such as privacy, bias, and academic integrity. It provides a practical framework, principles, sample policies, and communication templates to support safe and human-centered AI

adoption across school systems. The Toolkit has been used by the majority of states in constructing guidance for schools.

- *The AI Literacy Framework*^{ix}: The AI Literacy Framework defines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students and educators need to understand, use, and critically evaluate AI in education. It is organized around four core domains—Engaging with AI, Creating with AI, Managing AI, and Designing AI—and emphasizes critical thinking, ethics, and human judgment alongside technical understanding. It also emphasizes the foundational computer science concepts that prepare students to not just use AI but understand how AI works and its societal impacts. The framework is designed to be interdisciplinary, practical, and durable, helping schools integrate AI literacy into curriculum, professional learning, and policy in age-appropriate ways.

II. AI guardrails - Teachers want students to use AI responsibly and safely

We have heard from teachers that one of the greatest hesitations they have with AI is around safety for students. This includes ensuring AI tools used in the classroom protect student privacy, don't collect their information, and are safe from a mental health perspective.

Some of the strategies teachers use to promote safety are a significant focus in the professional development referenced earlier. In addition, the frameworks include key components to help teachers understand responsible AI use.

Microsoft takes our responsibility as a developer and deployer of AI technology very seriously. Paramount to deploying this technology in classrooms is ensuring it is responsible. Microsoft has identified six principles that we believe should guide AI development and use.

- **Fairness:** AI systems should treat all people fairly.
- **Reliability and Safety:** AI systems should perform reliably and safely.
- **Privacy and Security:** AI systems should be secure and respect privacy.
- **Inclusiveness:** AI systems should empower everyone and engage all people.
- **Transparency:** AI systems should be understandable.
- **Accountability:** People should be accountable for AI systems.

These principles are the foundation for other tools and resources we share with teachers to provide guidelines for them to deploy AI in the classroom.

As another example of our commitment to safety, earlier this month, on Safer Internet Day, we launched our new Microsoft Education Security Toolkit,^x which provides educators and IT teams with practical guidance tailored to the realities of modern education.

III. AI tools - Teachers want classroom-ready AI tools and opportunities to provide feedback that improve them

Teachers often lack the right AI tools tailored to their needs for boosting student achievement. It's essential to develop AI solutions based on teacher input rather than just delivering generic options. Microsoft strives to meet this responsibility by designing tools and partnerships that address educators' needs. We believe this approach creates a critical feedback loop that will allow us to constantly evolve our tools to maximize their benefit in the classroom over time.

In fact, at Microsoft, our engineering teams collaborate closely with educators and students to advance the development of AI tools for classroom use. We partner with teacher organizations and directly engage with the disability community to better understand instructional requirements and design technology that enhance student learning outcomes. Some examples include:

Reading Progress

One of the tools we offer to teachers is called Reading Progress, which helps teachers analyze students' fluency and generates reading passages and comprehension questions.

From the beginning of development, we worked with individual teachers through our Educator Insiders program and with entire schools or districts through our Technology Adoption Preview, where educators test prototypes of our products and provide feedback.

For example, teachers asked for a tool that could generate tailored passages to meet the needs of their students. We incorporated that feedback and now, teachers can get as specific as saying they want a passage generated about sports that is for a third-grade reading level and includes specific words their class is learning.

Teachers also told us they wanted reading comprehension questions generated faster and better. With AI, it's easy to do this in a high-quality way.

Teachers report increased comprehension, higher reading fluency, and higher scores, especially for struggling or reluctant readers.

Teach for America (TFA)

Microsoft has been a proud supporter of TFA's efforts to improve the education system and expand opportunities for children across the U.S. It has been great to see all of the ways in which TFA has worked to equip their teachers with AI fluency in order to help them integrate this technology into the classroom.

TFA recently completed a cloud migration to Microsoft Azure, unlocking countless avenues to improve program design and delivery, direct the most possible funds toward its mission to ensure all kids have access to an excellent education, and evolve to offer the best learning options inside and outside the classroom.

Where do we go from here

What is both exciting and daunting about AI is that while we can take lessons learned from previous technological transformations in the classroom, much of the book has not been written on AI adoption. Meaning tech companies, teachers, government, and other stakeholders have the opportunity to shape where AI goes in education and beyond.

I want to conclude my remarks today with policy recommendations for the Committee to consider:

- **Support professional development for teachers to effectively teach about AI and responsibly integrate AI tools in the classroom.**
 - At the Federal level, this means providing priorities for competitive grant programs, such as those recently proposed by the U.S. Department of Education.
- **Encourage public-private partnerships.**
 - Incentivize and prioritize Federal funds and grants that support partnerships between technology companies and educational programs, including apprenticeship and credentialed organizations, to develop up to-date AI curriculum.
- **Promote AI literacy across the U.S.**
 - Integrate AI skills and concepts, including their foundational principles, social impacts, and ethical concerns, into existing curriculum and instruction.
- **Provide guidance.**
 - Equip schools with guidance on the safe, effective, and responsible use of AI, including considerations related to student privacy, data security, accessibility, transparency, and appropriate human oversight.
- **Invest in innovation.**
 - Support research and evaluation to better understand the impacts of AI in education, including its effects on teaching and learning and student

outcomes, and to identify effective, scalable practices that mitigate the digital divide.

ⁱ Smith, Brad. “Foreword.” *Degrees of Change: What AI Means for Education and the Next Generation*, by Juan M. Lavista Ferres, John Wiley & Sons, 2026.

ⁱⁱ See [Microsoft 2025 AI in Education Survey Details](#), August 2025

ⁱⁱⁱ See [Microsoft 2025 AI in Education Survey Details](#), August 2025

^{iv} See [Microsoft Elevate: Putting people first](#), July 2025

^v See [Commonsense Guardrails for Using Advanced Technology in Schools](#), March 2025

^{vi} See [Microsoft 2025 AI in Education Survey Details](#), August 2025

^{vii} See [TeachAI Foundational Policies](#)

^{viii} See [TeachAI AI Guidance for Schools Toolkit](#)

^{ix} See [AI Literacy Framework](#)

^x See [Microsoft Education Security Toolkit](#), February 2026