



What's Actually Happening with AI in High Schools? Alignment, Adoption, and the Gaps in Between

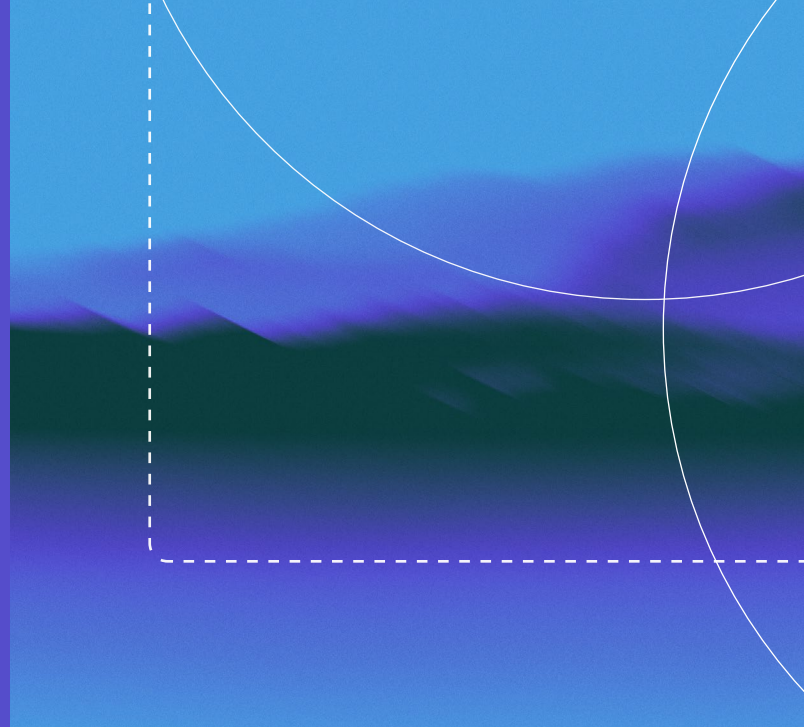
Insights from educators, with practical guidance for leaders

Read any headline about AI in education, and the narrative is deeply polarized: “AI is transforming learning,” or “No, it’s undermining critical thinking.”

A recent survey of high schools tells a more nuanced, more optimistic story. More than half of educators say using AI in their classrooms leaves them feeling “excited” or “curious.” That optimism extends to families: 65% of educators describe parents and caregivers as supportive of AI in schools, and fewer than 10% report any real opposition. The optimism is grounded in what educators are seeing, as 81% say the quality of student writing has improved since AI tools became widely available.

The survey gathered insights from 151 educators, 93% of whom worked specifically in a high school, with the remaining 7% holding a district-level role ([see the methodology](#)). It was conducted by K-12 Dive on behalf of Superhuman (formerly Grammarly), which works alongside faculty, staff, and students to fill gaps in the tools they already use and improve communication, collaboration, and student outcomes.

While the data shows a shift toward AI acceptance and adoption, it also confirms that the systems and policies surrounding it are still catching up. In other words, teachers are open to AI but still working out how to use it well. Only 21% say they feel very prepared to manage AI use in the classroom, and 70% report they don’t have formal policies that are well understood or applied.



21%

of teachers say they feel very prepared to manage AI use in their classrooms

70%

say they lack formal policies that are well understood or applied

81%

say the quality of student writing has improved since AI tools became widely available



Four key AI tensions leaders can't ignore

The survey findings revealed that enthusiasm for AI is growing faster than current systems can keep up. Across classrooms and districts, educators described a landscape defined less by resistance and more by tension.

“While everyone recognizes that technology, and AI in particular, matters and is here to stay, we see that many schools are still trying to define what responsible AI use actually means in real time and in practice as they try to balance innovation with humanity.”



Yolanda Wiggins,
Senior Researcher at
Superhuman

Tension 1:

While teachers lead AI use, they have limited say in the decision-making guiding it, creating a disconnect between policy and classroom practice.

Tension 2:

AI is saving time, but its full instructional potential isn't yet realized.

Tension 3:

There's high perceived value in AI.
There's also high institutional risk.

Tension 4:

With AI access and implementation uneven, access to high-quality learning is at risk.



Tension 1:

While teachers lead AI use, they have limited say in the decision-making guiding it, creating a disconnect between policy and classroom practice.

Only 3% of individual teachers say they have a say in AI decisions — a disconnect that likely feeds the implementation tensions noted above.

The issue is even more concerning given the limited flexibility educators feel they have to experiment with AI in their roles, with only 19% reporting having a “great deal.”

In fact, only 2% of educators believe that they personally have complete control over how AI tools are used in their own classrooms, independent of school- or district-wide policies.

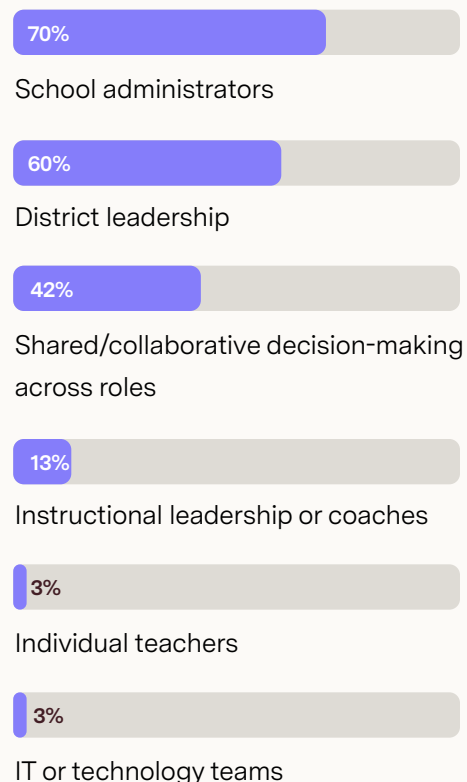
“Teachers don’t need to be convinced of the benefits of AI, yet they still very much need clear guidance on how to use it, grounded in the practical demands of classroom life,” Wiggins says. “When policies feel disconnected, implementation becomes inconsistent very quickly.”

As a result, teachers may be tempted to create unofficial workarounds on their own to meet student needs in real time.

Wiggins believes educators should be included early in decision-making and treated as partners rather than end users. “The schools navigating this most successfully are grounding AI use in everyday educational contexts. Give teachers a voice through demos and let them troubleshoot its uses.”

Who primarily influences decisions about AI use in your school or district?

Note: Respondents could select all that apply.



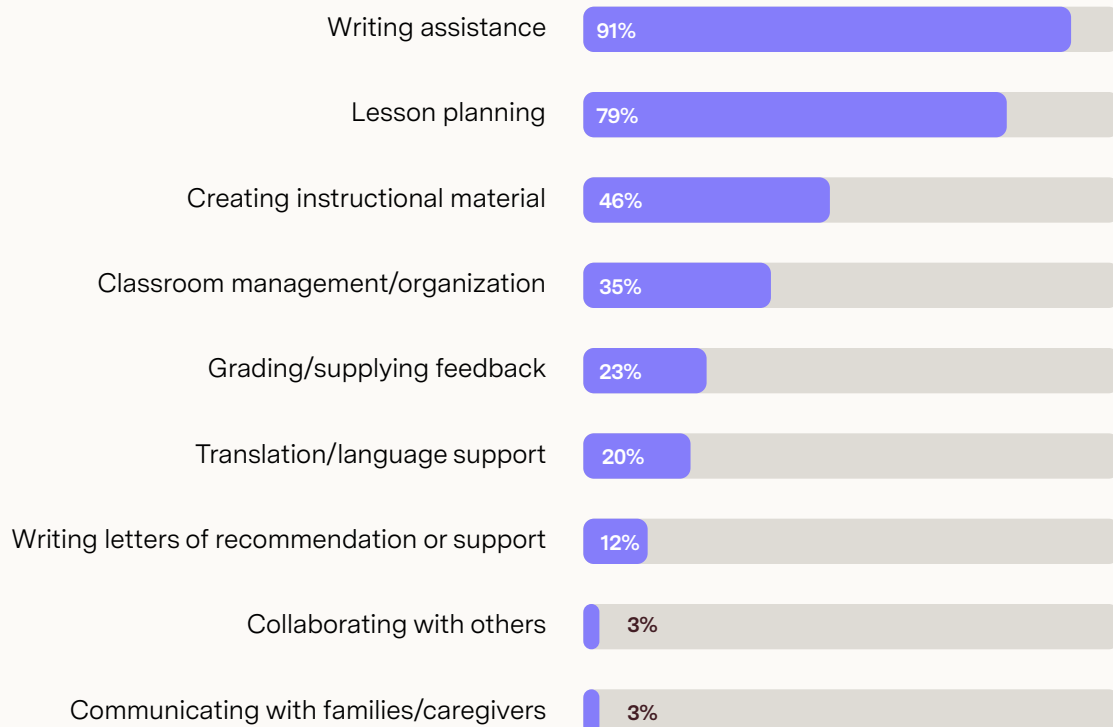
Tension 2:

AI is saving time, but its full instructional potential isn't yet realized.

While AI is already helping educators streamline tasks like writing and lesson planning, there is a gap between the most common and the highest-value use cases. “Schools are just scratching the surface of their potential to allow educators to focus more on the human-centered work of teaching,” Wiggins says. Here’s how the gap manifests itself.

In which areas is AI currently being used in your school or classroom?

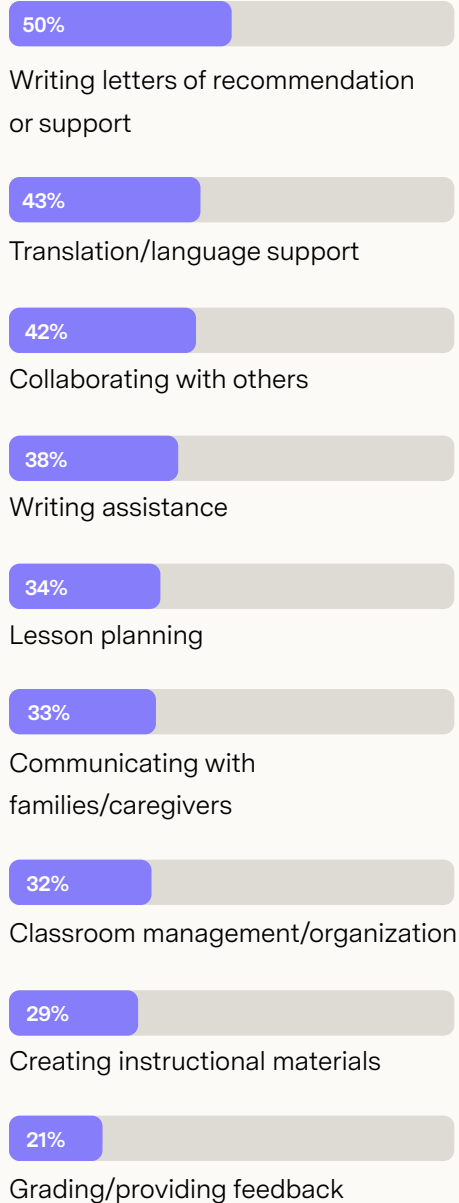
Note: Respondents could select all that apply.



And yet, when asked where they thought AI would be most effective in aligning with goals such as improving instruction or supporting students, they shared very different views:

Where do educators think AI would be most effective?

Note: Respondents could select all that apply.



Wiggins draws a sharper distinction between using AI faster and using it better.

“Efficiency alone isn’t transformation. To move toward that potential, schools need to give educators concrete examples of what instructionally sound AI integration looks like in practice, along with instructional coaching, rather than just providing access to these tools and broad encouragement to use them.”

Examples she cited include showing teachers how AI can promote differentiated instruction, support multilingual learners, generate more individualized feedback, and perform other tasks that free up time for deeper student interaction and discussion.

She also believes family engagement may represent one of the biggest missed opportunities in educational AI right now.

“AI can act as a bridge to families, helping translate, summarize, personalize, and clarify communication so schools feel more accessible and less intimidating for multilingual families or those who might not have historically had positive experiences with education themselves.”

Yolanda Wiggins,
Senior Researcher at Superhuman



Tension 3:

There's high perceived value in AI. There's also high institutional risk.

For educators, data privacy sits on both sides of the ledger — it's nearly their biggest concern about AI and their single biggest barrier to using it more. That overlap is where institutional risk concentrates.

Asked about their biggest concerns, educators named ethical concerns and bias (48%) and data privacy and security (47%) — well ahead of the issues you might expect. Even academic integrity, often assumed to be educators' top AI fear, ranked lower at 30%, and student disengagement lower still at 23%.

But the deepest concern and the biggest barrier aren't the same thing. Ethical and bias concerns top the worry list, yet what actually limits broader use is more practical: data privacy (48%) and technical or infrastructure limitations (44%). A strategy that addresses one without the other leaves risk on the table.

Educators' biggest concerns about AI:

48% Ethical concerns or bias
47% Data privacy and security

Top reasons educators limit broader AI use:

48% Data privacy
44% Technical or infrastructure limitations

“Decision makers need to understand that schools are balancing two realities at once. While educators are seeing immediate value from AI tools, at Superhuman, we recognize that institutions are responsible for protecting critical aspects like student data privacy,” Wiggins says.

In fact, as educators become more familiar with the tools, the concern isn't about how or when to use them, but about how transparent systems are regarding where student data is going.

“I think trust will be the defining issue in educational AI adoption, as it's not sustainable without it,” Wiggins says. For that reason, she advises schools to move thoughtfully, as the decisions they make today can shape institutional trust for the foreseeable future. “The fastest rollout isn't always the most responsible one.”



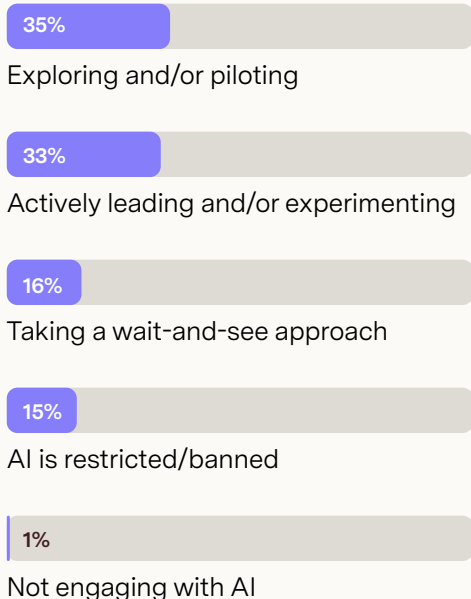
Tension 4:

With AI access and implementation uneven, access to high-quality learning is at risk.

AI adoption is growing, however, access to AI and the ability to use it effectively remain inconsistent across schools. Uneven access can have chilling effects on downstream student outcomes, including learning quality and opportunity gaps.

That's reflected in the survey data, which illustrated the varying approaches to AI use in teaching and learning. Respondents described their schools' commitment to AI adoption on a wide spectrum:

Which best describes your school's or district's current approach to AI use in teaching and learning?



With policies still in development, 70% report not having formal policies that are well understood or applied, especially as students' experiences with AI may depend heavily on the priorities and readiness of individual teachers and schools.

In their own words:

"AI policies fail to address the diverse learning needs of students related to different subjects."

—Instructional coach

"The policy was made for students to use AI as a tutor, but the majority of them are using it as a personal agent."

—High school principal

"The accessibility gap is huge — some students use the latest GPT models, while others don't even have a laptop."

—Classroom educator



The downside of inconsistent deployment is that students may graduate with vastly different levels of AI fluency and preparedness, depending on their schools' approaches, which can impede their progress in college or in the workforce.

Wiggins points out that AI equity is about educator preparedness and thoughtful implementation as much as the tools themselves.

"Here at Superhuman, we certainly recognize that technology alone doesn't eliminate inequality. Schools need strong guidance and infrastructure to help students develop the skills to use AI critically, thoughtfully, and responsibly."



Yolanda Wiggins,
Senior Researcher at Superhuman

What equitable AI deployment looks like

Access & Opportunity:

- ✓ Pair access with preparation: only 21% of teachers feel very prepared to manage AI use in the classroom, so fund the training 47% say they need most.
- ✓ Give teachers real room to experiment — just 19% feel they have any today.
- ✓ Don't let a student's AI experience come down to which teacher they're assigned.

Inclusivity & Reach:

- ✓ Close the family gap: only 2% of educators use AI to reach families, the single biggest untapped use case in the data.
- ✓ Lead with translation and multilingual support to make schools less intimidating for families who've had hard experiences with education.
- ✓ Back the 20% already using AI for translation with real guidance, so it scales past one-off teacher workarounds.

Outcome-Oriented:

- ✓ Shift from using AI faster to using it better — efficiency alone isn't an outcome.
- ✓ Measure whether AI improves instruction, not just whether it's been adopted.
- ✓ Watch for a new equity gap: uneven access means students graduate with very different levels of AI fluency.



Moving from AI adoption to AI readiness

There's no question that AI is already reshaping learning in real time, and its uses and effectiveness will only accelerate. But the onus is on schools to figure out what effective, responsible implementation looks like in practice, and with no clear roadmap, schools are improvising in real time.

As schools look ahead to the next six to 12 months, Wiggins has some unconventional advice: encourage leaders to slow down. "When we work with schools, we advise them to be intentional. Not every AI tool needs to be adopted immediately, and we're already seeing a shift from reactive AI policies to more thoughtful long-term integration."

"The future of education isn't AI versus humans, but humans learning how to use AI well while protecting trust, mentorship, and the human connection that make education meaningful," Wiggins adds.

What school leaders should prioritize next

- ☒ Involve teachers and students from the beginning as you evaluate tools.
- ☒ Offer ongoing and consistent professional development to give teachers concrete, straightforward examples of how AI can promote learning in classrooms and connect to their teaching goals and learning outcomes.
- ☒ Focus on adaptable guidance rather than overly rigid policies, given how quickly the technology is evolving.





Superhuman is the trusted technology partner for education institutions to complete your AI strategy, not compete with other AI tools.

The Grammarly you trust, evolved to support education in the AI era of learning. Superhuman for Education extends Grammarly's trusted writing support into a human-centered AI platform designed for teaching, learning, and working. It helps students write and learn with AI through visible, defensible processes, and provides faculty and staff with context-aware, agentic assistance embedded in their workflows. This enables transparent, controlled, agentic AI use that helps institutions innovate and meet today's challenges head-on.

[Learn more](#)

Methodology:

Findings are based on an online survey of 151 U.S. educators conducted by K-12 Dive for Superhuman in March 2026. Respondents primarily support high schools, grades 9–12 (93%), or hold district-wide roles (7%), and all have five or more years of experience in instructional or leadership roles. Roles included classroom educators (39%), principals (19%), instructional coaches or specialists (16%), school administrators (12%), district leaders (8%), and department heads (7%). Respondents were sourced from K-12 Dive's educator database. Some questions allowed multiple responses, so totals may exceed 100%.



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