

Viewpoints

Importance of Strong AI Policies in School Districts



A lawsuit involving a student and a Massachusetts school district highlights the importance of having clear AI policies, procedures and training in schools. In this lawsuit, the school district accused the student of cheating on a paper, resulting in the student receiving a zero on the assignment, and being barred from joining the National Honor Society. The school district alleges the student violated the school district's student handbook that prohibits unauthorized use of AI on assignments. The student's parents argue that the student handbook lacked clarity related to rules of AI use and the discipline will harm the student's academic future, including college placements.

This case serves as a reminder to all school districts of the importance of implementing comprehensive AI policies and procedures that do more than simply allow or prohibit student use of AI. For example, policies should clearly outline which uses of AI are permitted and prohibited and require any AI-generated content or use of AI as a resource to have a citation, just as with traditional sources.



When drafting or updating policies, it's vital to communicate them effectively and train students and staff. School districts might consider revisiting their handbooks, honor codes and policies to specifically address AI-related issues to provide clear guidance. In the event of violations, fair and consistent disciplinary processes should be outlined. Additionally, to stay effective and ensure compliance over time, AI policies need regular reviews and updates to keep up with rapid technological advancements and evolving regulations.

School districts need to take care to make sure they are maximizing AI tools, but also have parameters in place to minimize negative uses. By being proactive, school districts can foster an environment where AI is used responsibly, while minimizing the risk of disputes similar to the case seen here.

The filing accuses the school of a lack of clarity in its rules about AI use, saying the school handbook did not "have any established rules, policies or procedures for not only the use of artificial intelligence, but what any administrators, faculty or students should do when encountering its use."

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