



The AI Readiness Report

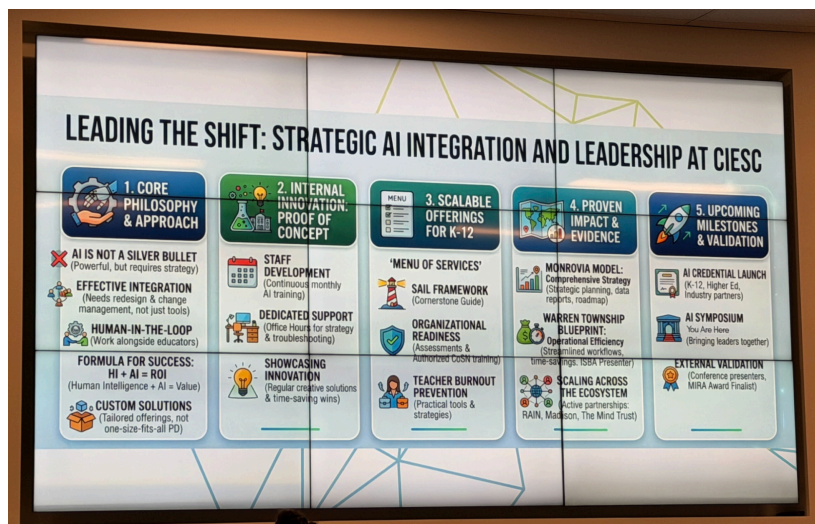
May 2026

May has been a month of tremendous momentum with educators. From a wave of state-level policy wins to the launch of new classroom curricula and the kickoff of two of our flagship professional learning experiences, the field is moving and educators are the throughline.

In this edition, there are three updates to take special note of: 37 educators were accepted into our first national Spark the Future cohort that will be starting in June; the 2026 Community Catalyst Program is kicking off next month with a sharpened focus on educator capacity-building; and new state and federal K–12 AI policies/guidance have been introduced.

Spotlight Events

aiEDU Keynote to Teachers Union



Alex delivered the keynote at the National Council of State Education Associations (NCSEA) Spring Convening on May 15 in Houston. Alex highlighted the importance of teachers, with a core message being that teachers are the main characters of the story about education in the age of AI.

Vice President of External Affairs & Advocacy, Christian Pinedo, joined the AI Readiness Panel, where the discussion grounded readiness in human skills, explored what meaningful accountability looks like across every level of the system, and pushed back on the idea that complexity has to mean paralysis, helping attendees leave with a clearer sense of where to act.

AI Symposium in Indiana

Central Indiana Educational Service Center (CIESC) hosted an AI Symposium in Indianapolis for educators, district leaders, and partners all leaning into the same big question: What does meaningful AI readiness actually look like for schools? aiEDU's Midwest Senior Programs Lead, Kristen Kayser, facilitated a session on "What AI Changes and What It Doesn't: A Framework for Educators" and participated in a closing panel conversation on the future of AI in Indiana schools. The day reinforced what we keep hearing across the country — there is real appetite among educators and systems leaders to move from awareness to action, and they're looking for partners to help them get there.

Opportunities for Educators

2026 Community Catalyst Program — Demand Outpacing Supply

Letters of Intent (LOIs) for the 2026 Catalyst Program were due last week and demand to join the program is ten times the amount we can offer in subgrants (140+ LOIs), which shows the importance and need for resources and opportunities to develop AI Readiness in underserved communities. The Community Catalyst Program funds school districts, educational service agencies, and nonprofits working to build real AI literacy in the communities that need it most. We prioritize rural and Indigenous communities that have historically been left out of the national conversations about technology and education. Grants range from \$25,000 to \$50,000 and run approximately 12 months beginning in summer 2026.

New Tools & Funding from EDSAFE

EDSAFE just released **Polly C** (in beta testing phase), a 24/7 AI policy navigator to help build district AI governance infrastructure. And their Spark Fund provides Technical Assistance Grants after completing their **Policy Essentials** course that schools could use to further invest in AI Readiness professional learning and implementation support.

Just Released: New aiEDU Classroom Curricula



INDIGITIZE

2 New Classroom Resources



Elementary AI Explorations

Grades 3–5 • Free



Being a Good Relative in a Digital World

Grades 3–5 • Free

AI readiness that reflects the communities it serves

In partnership with Indigitize, aiEDU has released two free curricular resources for teachers in grades 3–5 that bring an Indigenous lens to AI literacy.

- **Elementary AI Explorations** gives younger students a hands-on way to ask big questions: What is AI? Where does it show up? Who decides how it works? The activities are designed to be 15 minutes, with no tech setup required.
- **Being a Good Relative in a Digital World** takes the concept of relationality—a value central to many Indigenous traditions—and applies it to digital life. Students explore what responsibility, community, and care look like when AI is part of the picture.

Thought Leadership & Advocacy

New Federal Legislation

The K–12 AI Literacy and Readiness Act of 2026 was introduced on May 12. The bill would amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to explicitly allow federal funds for student instruction on the safe, effective, and responsible use of AI and professional development for teachers, support staff, and others to use and teach AI effectively.

New AI Guidance from Michigan Department of Education

Earlier this month, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) published guidance to local school districts on how to best use AI in classrooms as the technology becomes more prevalent. MDE's AI webpage has been updated to include: AI Starter Guide for Districts, AI Comprehensive Guide for Districts, and a Michigan K–12 AI Learning Alignment Framework – CS, among other resources. Notably, aiEDU's resources were included in the comprehensive guide.

AI Readiness in the News

Substack (5/1/26): AI Readiness Is An Organizing Problem

aiEDU Studios Podcast (5/1/26): Michelle Culver, Founder of the Rithm Project — "Why Human Connection Has to Be a Design Goal of School"

aiEDU Studios Podcast (5/7/26): Matt Sigelman, CEO and Founder of the Burning Glass Institute — "What Should Students Actually Learn Now?"

aiEDU Studios Podcast (5/14/26): Dr. Patrice Johnson, CEO of Project Scientist — "Confidence, Not Skill"

Substack (5/17/26): What We Learned After Deploying \$1.2M in Rural & Indigenous Grants

Looking Ahead

May 28

Vibe Coding for Educators Webinar (Ohio only)

Virtual

June 2–5

Education Writers Association Annual Conference

Baltimore, MD

June 8

Excellence in Service Awards

Washington, DC

June 8

Future-Proof Philanthropy: Resilience and Growth in a Changing World

Minneapolis, MN

June 9

Alex Kotran Keynote at Centerbridge Foundation and Partners Event

New York, NY

June 9

CAST Vibe Coding Workshop

Virtual

June 16–17

Transcend Retreat

Chicago, IL

June 28–July 1

ISTE Live 2026

Orlando, FL

2026 Funders

Amazon Ballmer Group Booz Allen Hamilton Inc. Charter School Growth Fund Cognizant Google.org

The J.M. Smucker Co. NetApp Northrop Grumman Foundation Okta Patrick J. McGovern Foundation

Pull Up Fund Raikes Foundation Salesforce Foundation Stuart Foundation W.K. Kellogg Foundation

"The AI Readiness Report" is aiEDU's monthly newsletter for the philanthropic community to provide insights on our work, what we're hearing in the field, and the latest news on AI Readiness to share with your leadership and stakeholders as you see fit.

The AI Education Project (aiEDU) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, founded in 2019, that is devoted to ensuring all students are ready to live, work and thrive in a world where AI is everywhere.