Teacher Confidence Is Falling as Education AI Moves Into Assessment and Procurement

AI in EdTech Weekly

2026-08-10

Teacher Confidence Is Falling as Education AI Moves Into Assessment and Procurement

By AI in EdTech Weekly • August 10, 2026

This week's evidence points to a support and quality-control gap: schools are buying AI and redesigning learning faster than they are giving educators written guidance, time to build judgment, and reliable ways to verify impact.

AI is moving into the routines that determine how people learn—lesson planning, differentiated materials, tutoring, assessment, and purchasing—but the support and quality controls around it are lagging. A spring survey found that 55% of teachers opposed classroom AI and 65% opposed students using AI for schoolwork, while a separate national poll found that 60% were already using it; 54% said AI makes critical thinking harder and nearly six in ten said it is eroding student–teacher trust. At the same time, 37% of surveyed K–12 decision-makers planned AI-tool spending for the next 12–24 months, alongside 68% planning educator professional development. [1, 2]

Trust is being lost in the guidance gap

The coexistence of use and skepticism is the important signal. Across six countries, teacher trust in AI was predicted by self-efficacy—not age or education level. Yet only 18% of U.S. K–12 teachers reported receiving formal, written AI guidance; 69% had no guidance for one-to-one tutoring and 58% had none for grading or feedback. Fewer than one in ten received formal guidance for any specific AI-assisted task. [1]

Support changes the picture: 69% of teachers with official guidance said it encouraged AI use, compared with 51% who received only informal or verbal guidance. The same analysis recommends written policies, protected time for collaborative sensemaking, and objective assessment of AI literacy before training dollars are spent. The gap is global: more than 80% of surveyed Brazilian

teachers reported only basic or limited AI knowledge, while more than 80% wanted continuous online professional development tailored to their level. [1]

This makes the immediate implementation problem less "How do we persuade teachers to try AI?" than "What are they accountable for, what is safe, and how do they build judgment together?"

Assessment is shifting from the submitted artifact to the learning process

The Stanford Accelerator for Learning–ETS white paper *Responsible Assessment in the AI Era* frames learning as continuous, adaptive, and contextual, making single-point performance an increasingly incomplete basis for inference. It argues that AI could make formative assessment more feasible by synthesizing evidence and identifying patterns in large data streams—but also notes that LLM scoring may require more validity evidence and can be less reliable and more costly than traditional scoring. [3]

Its practical design guidance is specific: capture revision, iteration, and collaboration; make AI feedback explainable; surface uncertainty; incorporate educator judgment; and avoid fully automated high-stakes decisions. [3]

A Fairfield University implementation shows what that can look like. Biology professor Christine Rodriguez uses Blackboard's AI Conversations to let nursing students practice explaining infections, tests, side effects, and home safety to an AI patient. The role-play gives students repeated, formative practice before later case-study assessments. Rodriguez reads the prompts and the students' reflections, looking for whether they can synthesize knowledge and communicate it at a patient's level. [4]

Ethan Mollick makes the same distinction in a current interview: simply asking AI for help can remove the mental work, while a tutor should ask questions, explain gaps, and re-quiz without supplying the answer. [5]

" AI "… AI [ ] EP.3 | YTN (8:49)

The emerging model is therefore not "AI grades the essay." It is AI-supported rehearsal and evidence gathering, with the learner's reasoning—and a human's judgment—still visible.

The product and procurement race is now about context and quality

Back-to-school product updates show a common commercial bet: differentiated, standards-aligned lessons embedded in the teacher's existing workflow. A current roundup reports that Claude for Teachers offers verified U.S. K–12 educators free premium Claude, standards-mapped curricula, nine tool integrations, and agentic workflows such as reviewing exit tickets and adjusting the next day's lesson. Its stated data protections include no model training on teacher data and a FERPA-compliant data-processing addendum, but the program is currently for individual educators rather than district-wide rollouts. [6]

Google Classroom's updates add AI feedback, personal NotebookLM notebooks, standards tagging, a Classroom app inside Gemini, and forthcoming teacher-led guided-learning activities. Canva's Learn Grid claims more than 50,000 curriculum-mapped resources, AI generation across 30-plus activity types and 16-plus languages, and multiple readiness versions of the same lesson. These features establish a workflow direction, not evidence of learning impact; the roundup itself describes a shared product bet rather than outcome studies. [6]

Procurement is moving faster than policy. In the survey of 2,277 U.S. education decision-makers, the leading deal-breakers were subscription cost, state-standards misalignment, implementation complexity, and inability to integrate with existing systems. Fifty-seven percent reported no significant AI procurement-policy changes, even as leaders cited privacy, security, and the pace of technological change. [2]

The quality problem is not hypothetical. Chalkbeat found obvious errors and flawed graphics in AI-looking Teachers Pay Teachers resources, a marketplace the parent company says is used by 85% of U.S. pre-K–12 educators. TPT's parent company said algorithmic tools demote low-quality AI stores and that such products represent a "minuscule fraction" of sales; teachers and researchers nevertheless describe a market where time pressure and fluent-looking language make weak materials easy to miss. [7]

One more grounded signal comes from outside generative AI. Carnegie Learning reports a matched comparison involving 144 Texas students in grades 6–8: after an average of 10 hours of live virtual tutoring, students gained 3.8 additional months of math learning, statistically significant, on top of regular instruction and the MATHia platform. It is a provider-reported virtual-tutoring result, not evidence that a generative model caused the gain—but it illustrates the kind of dosage, comparison, instructional design, and implementation detail that feature claims need. [8]

Higher education is being asked to make AI rigor public

The U.S. Department of Education's national call to action asks every postsecondary institution to publish, by the end of 2026, a public statement committing to reforms intended to restore trust. One of its seven guiding questions is how institutions will "incentivize rigor in the age of AI, combat grade inflation, and prioritize excellence in teaching and learning." [9]

A current governance proposal offers a concrete way to answer that question: separate assessment redesign from AI-literacy work. Its "Two-Lane Assessment Framework" distinguishes secured, supervised tasks for validating mastery from open, authentic tasks where AI use is assumed and integrated; suggested evidence includes oral defenses, process artifacts, reflections, and live applied performance. The proposal also treats AI literacy as curriculum—covering how systems work, their social and ethical effects, and discipline-specific co-reasoning—not merely a syllabus disclaimer. [10]

What This Means

- **For K–12 leaders:** Publish task-specific guidance and fund collaborative teacher learning before expanding AI access. Screen-time decisions should begin with learning goals and student needs, not a universal clock; ISTE's Richard Culatta argues that non-instructional screen use should be zero,

while thoughtful use needs flexibility. [1, 11]

- **For assessment leaders:** Deliberately separate evidence of individual mastery from open-ended learning tasks. Use oral explanation, revision history, dialogue, and reflection where they reveal learning, and keep humans responsible for high-stakes decisions. [10, 3]
- **For faculty and L&D teams:** Make AI a structured tutor or rehearsal partner, not an answer engine. Require productive difficulty, feedback, reflection, and another attempt; Rodriguez's nursing role-plays show how this can work in a discipline-specific setting. [5, 4]
- **For product teams and investors:** Standards alignment, privacy, interoperability, and low implementation burden are entry requirements. The differentiator must be credible evidence that learners retain or improve a capability, not simply that a system can generate more material. [2, 3]

Watch This Space

- **Screen caps colliding with digital curricula:** One Dallas–Fort Worth middle-school science teacher reports a 120-minute Chromebook cap while grades 6–8 science materials remain online-only, with no physical textbooks or lab workbooks available. A follow-up reports that administrators are tracking each student's daily allocation, much of which is already consumed by reading and math software. This is a local anecdote, but it captures the implementation test for screen-light schooling: reduce low-value device use without removing the materials needed for instruction. [12, 13]
- **Students as participants in AI governance:** At Boston's America's Youth AI Festival, student leaders debated a proposed national K–12 AI policy. In the accompanying art competition, judges emphasized process, thoughtful AI use, and authentic student voice over impressive generated images; some students deliberately limited or avoided AI to keep parts of the work their own. [14]

Sources

1. Teacher Optimism on AI Is Dropping. The Reason Isn't the Technology.
2. The State of School Purchasing Report (2026)
3. Responsible Assessment
4. "What does it mean to catch students learning with AI?"
5. " AI "… AI [ ] EP.3 | YTN
6. Claude for Teachers, Google Classroom & Canva: What's New for Back to School
7. An alphabet without an F: AI slop seeps into Teachers Pay Teachers curriculum marketplace
8. The Data Behind Our Texas Tutoring Success

9. U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon Issues National Call to Action to University Presidents and Governing Boards
10. Why Your AI Committee Keeps Stalling
11. Q&A: The case against blanket screen-time limits in schools
12. r/Teachers post by u/rudbeckia87
13. r/Teachers comment by u/rudbeckia87
14. Me, Myself, and AI: Student Artists Wrestle with AI's Promise and Peril