

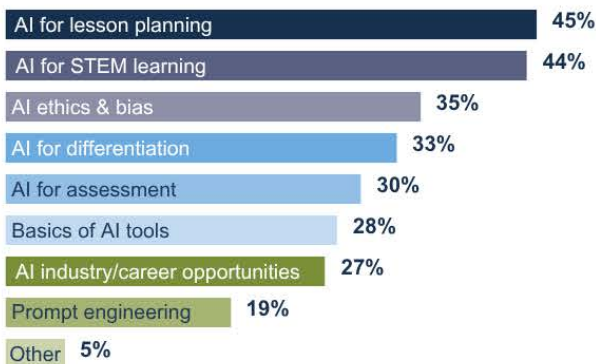
Building AI Literacy for Inclusion in STEM

A National Landscape Study of K-12 Educators

AI is reshaping how young people learn and prepare for the future, but the field lacks a clear picture of how prepared educators are to guide them. This national landscape study, a mixed-methods design combining a survey of 552 K-12 formal and out-of-school-time (OST) education professionals with eight focus groups of 47 educators, fielded January–May 2026, examines where educators stand on AI use, confidence, and need, and where the biggest gaps in equitable access remain.

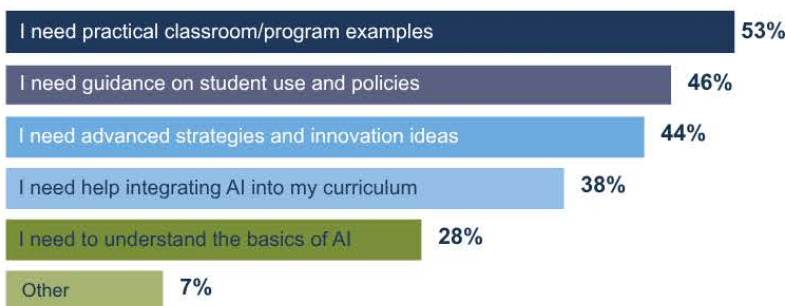
552 K-12 formal & OST education professionals	8 focus groups	47 educators interviewed	March–May 2026 field period
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Most Want to Learn



*Respondents could select more than one option

What Educators Say They Need



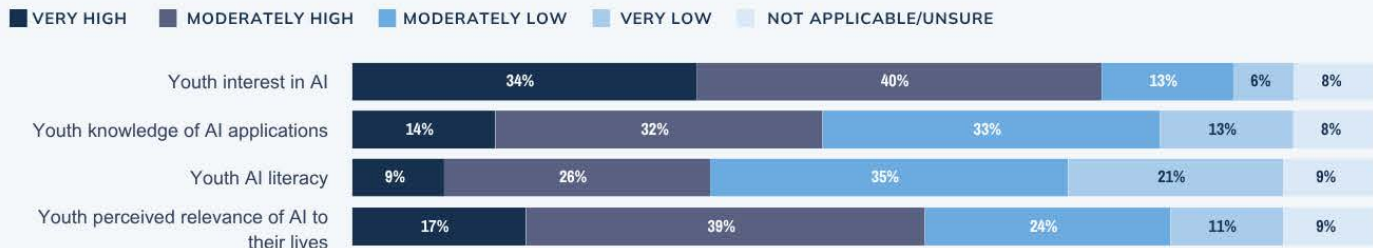
*Respondents could select more than one option

Amount of AI-related professional development received



4x Educators with 8+ hours of AI-related professional development were more than four times as likely to use AI frequently as those with none.

Educators' Perceptions of Youth Experiences with AI



What We Learned

AI use is already common, but still practical, not strategic.

Educators lean on it for quick answers, admin work, and content — not yet for deeper instructional or strategic decisions.

Training is the clearest driver of confidence. Educators with 8+ hours of AI-related professional development were more than 4x as likely to use AI frequently as those with none.

Ethics, privacy, and unclear policy — not disinterest — slow adoption. Student misuse, data privacy, and AI's broader societal role are the top-cited barriers, compounded by a lack of institutional guidance.

Educators want hands-on implementation support, not AI 101. The most requested resources are real classroom examples, policy guidance, and advanced strategies tailored to their subject and setting.

Meaningful equity gaps persist. OST and community-based educators, elementary teachers, women, and those with limited training consistently report lower AI use, confidence, and access.

Youth enthusiasm for AI is outpacing their literacy. Educators see students experimenting eagerly with AI tools, but rate their critical understanding of how AI works — and its ethical implications — much lower.

Recommendations to the Field

1

Invest in sustained, tiered AI professional development matched to educators' experience level.

2

Develop clear AI guidance, policies, and decision-making tools for education settings.

3

Prioritize equity-focused supports for OST/CBO educators, elementary teachers, women, and other lower-access groups.

4

Create practical, youth-centered AI literacy resources, co-designed with young people, that connect to STEM pathways and careers.

5

Build a shared field-wide learning network so educators stop reinventing the wheel in isolation.

6

Advance research to fill evidence gaps, especially in OST/informal settings and on long-term outcomes.

Educators are not waiting on the sidelines for AI to become part of education — they are already experimenting, adapting, and asking for practical support. Pairing professional learning with clear guidance, accessible resources, and a commitment to equity is the field's clearest path forward.