



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.39: Safe and Responsible AI in Schools

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 7.39

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Section 7.39 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257), as amended by Sec. 3.13 of S.L. 2026-61 (House Bill 268), requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to update the standard course of study for computer science by adopting content standards for instruction on artificial intelligence (AI) that address AI literacy, including best practices for using AI tools responsibly. The SBE must implement the revised computer science standards by the 2028-2029 school year and update the AI standards every two years to keep up with advancements in AI.

Additionally, this section requires the SBE to update the list of approved introductory computer science courses for middle school students and the list of approved courses that fulfill the computer science graduation requirement to reflect course alignment with the revised standards for use during the 2028-2029 school year. By December 15, 2028, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) must submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) on the adoption of the revised standards by the SBE and on the implementation of those standards in schools.

This section also requires DPI to develop a model policy on AI to serve as guidance for public school units (PSUs) by December 31, 2026. The model policy must (i) include definitions of AI, generative AI, and AI tools, and (ii) provide guidance on developing student and staff AI literacy, including best practices for using AI tools safely, ethically, and responsibly. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must ensure that PSUs have access to the model policy by January 15, 2027. After reviewing the model policy developed by DPI, all PSUs must adopt a policy on the use of AI by students and staff for educational purposes by June 30, 2027.

DPI must also establish an evaluation framework for assessing the suitability of generative AI-powered educational tools for use in schools that addresses the following: (i) student data privacy, security and transparency, (ii) alignment with the standard course of study, and (iii) accessibility. DPI must update the framework at least every two years to reflect changes in technology, evidence, and education practice. Additionally, DPI must maintain a publicly available list of AI tools that have been reviewed with the evaluation framework, and develop procurement guidance, qualified vendor lists, and other mechanisms to encourage the adoption of generative AI-powered education tools that have been reviewed with DPI's AI evaluation framework. Finally, DPI must maintain a publicly available list of all generative AI-powered education tools that are being used in PSUs.

This section also requires DPI to partner with the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University to produce online professional development resources that train teachers on the use of AI by June 30, 2027. The Friday Institute would be required to provide 10 hours of self-paced modules that address the use of AI for educational purposes safely, ethically, and responsibly. All teachers employed by local school administrative units, charter schools, and laboratory schools are required to

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complete the professional development by June 30, 2028. By December 15, 2028, DPI must submit a report to JLEOC on the delivery of the professional development to teachers.

The \$400,000 nonrecurring funds appropriated to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina for the Friday Institute to develop professional development resources will not revert at the end of the 2026-2027 fiscal year but will remain available until the end of the 2027-2028 fiscal year.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.