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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH *of* PENNSYLVANIA

House Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

Member Briefing: Artificial Intelligence in Education

Monday, February 24, 2025 | 12:00 p.m.

OPENING REMARKS

12:00p.m.

Rep. Mary Isaacson, D-Philadelphia

BRIEFING

12:05p.m.

Sari Factor, Chief Strategy Officer
Imagine Learning

Eric Hafen, Program Director
Imagine Learning

Q & A with Legislators

Testimony of Sari Factor, Vice Chair & Chief Strategy Officer, Imagine Learning
February 24, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about how Pennsylvania can lead in responsibly integrating AI into K-12 education while protecting our students and teachers.

Imagine Learning is the largest *digital-first* education solutions provider in the country. Our products and services are used across your state, from implementing our Core math and ELA curricula in Philadelphia – to working in the smallest districts with specialized tools for asynchronous learning that are used to teach English, for math and literacy intervention to help learners achieve grade-level proficiency, and as the backbone for many school virtual programs. We're working with two-thirds of the IUs, providing our solutions and serving approximately 80% of Pennsylvania school districts. Imagine Learning has 211 employees in Pennsylvania to help IUs and districts to positively impact student outcomes.

Our use of AI and machine learning is not new. For us, innovation is a constant, and with it, we see an opportunity to redefine the educational experience. With the advent of generative AI, we're working with educators to create more personalized, engaging, and effective learning experiences.

Through our work with schools, we have unique perspective into both the transformative potential and serious challenges AI presents in education. We're at a critical moment: our schools face persistent learning gaps, severe teacher shortages, and rapidly evolving workforce demands. AI has the potential to help address these challenges, but only with proper guidance and guardrails.

Let me share three key insights and then make some suggestions for your consideration on how Pennsylvania can become a leader in the implementation and use of AI in K-12 schools.

First, educators want to use AI but need direction. While 60% of teachers say they would use AI for creating lessons and analyzing student data, only 2% use it regularly today. Why? Because states and districts haven't established clear policies for its use. Meanwhile, student usage is rapidly increasing. A recent CNBC report showed that as of October 2024, 26% of teens say they regularly use ChatGPT for schoolwork, doubling in one year.

Second, AI's promise lies in empowerment, not replacement. Our focus is to use AI to address the important needs of teachers, learners, parents/guardians, and administrators – the key stakeholders in the K-12 ecosystem – with a priority on teacher enablement and student success.

We envision AI as a *Teacher's Collaborator*, reducing administrative burdens so they can devote more of their time to their relationships with students. AI can also serve as a *Learner's Companion*, attuned to their unique educational journey, to personalize learning for each student's specific needs. AI can even serve as a *Parent's Counselor*, keeping them apprised of their child's progress and suggesting ways they can support their child's learning.

But this vision of the future requires careful implementation focused on enhancing, not replacing, the human interaction that is the heart of teaching and learning.

Third, we must address critical risks proactively. This means:

- Protecting student privacy and data security
- Ensuring equitable access to prevent widening the digital divide
- Safeguarding against bias and misinformation
- Maintaining the integrity of curriculum and assessment

To benefit K-12 teaching and learning with AI, it is essential that we find ways to propel innovation while minimizing risk. At Imagine Learning, we are taking a “walled garden” approach, training our models with our research-backed curricula – we call that “*Curriculum-Informed AI™*” – and we’re testing rigorously before introducing any new solution to schools. This approach also enables us to safeguard the intellectual property of our curricula and the IP of others, such as trade publishers, authors, and artists, from whom we license content, and maintain our educational content's integrity.

Why is this important? Consider the investments that districts and schools make in curriculum. Not only do districts allocate monies to purchase instructional materials, they spend time and effort evaluating the many options, choosing those they believe meets their standards and fits best with what their community, teachers, and students need. Then they spend valuable time training and supporting teachers to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum to deliver the outcomes they intend. Education leaders tell us they want AI-generated lesson plans and activities to be consistent with their chosen curricula.

I respectfully recommend the following actions to spur innovation and to help enable educators and support learners:

1. Establish a state task force to develop standards for ethical AI use in education
2. Invest in teacher professional development for effective AI integration

3. Fund AI literacy programs to both familiarize students with AI as a tool, and to prepare them to become part of a highly-skilled workforce
4. Create guidelines requiring AI systems to align with educational standards
5. Provide grants to encourage innovative, equitable uses of AI in Pennsylvania's schools

Unlike social media, where policy followed problems, you now have the opportunity to shape AI's role in education proactively. With proper guidance, AI can help prepare our students for future success while supporting teachers' vital work.

As this is just the beginning of our discussion, I invite your questions and offer my support – and the support of my many colleagues in the state – to help you and educators across Pennsylvania embrace the potential of AI to address the challenges we face in K-12 teaching and learning.