

CPS AI Access Overview

This document provides an overview of the mandatory adjustment to network access for Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools across Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Recognizing and valuing the exploration and innovation happening district-wide, our priority remains enabling productive work within a secure and compliant environment. This overview outlines the district's decision to block access to unapproved AI domains.

Effective Monday, December 22, Chicago Public Schools began blocking unapproved, third-party AI products on the CPS network.

Why This Protective Measure Is Essential

The rapid evolution of AI technology, particularly since the launch of Generative AI tools like ChatGPT in November 2022, has introduced significant data security and legal complexities. To maintain our robust AI Governance and protect our district, this measure is necessary:

- **Risk Mitigation and Data Privacy:** Unvetted, public AI tools often operate without the strict data handling and security agreements required by CPS and laws such as **FERPA, COPPA, and SOPPA**. Any confidential or student Personally Identifiable Information (PII) entered into these platforms is at risk of being used to train external models, creating a high-risk liability for the district, and potentially putting the district in violation of the laws.
- **Ensuring Responsible Adoption:** This action channels our collective efforts toward **vetted, approved platforms** that meet our enterprise security and ethical standards. Our goal is not to restrict access to innovation, but to ensure that all access is equitable, safe, and governed.

Your Approved, Vetted Tools for Productive Use

We strongly encourage you to transition your AI-supported work to the free, approved alternatives available via your CPS accounts. These tools guarantee data privacy for all your workstreams and ensure that your data is never used to train models or otherwise shared in ways that put the District and its stakeholders at risk:

- **[Google Gemini](#):** Provides conversational support and acts as a general-purpose GenAI chatbot.
 - **Gems:** Allows you to customize a topic-specific Gemini chatbot by designing a prompt and adding reference materials.
- **[Google NotebookLM](#):** A research and note-taking tool that uses your uploaded documents (e.g. unit plans, research papers, training decks, policy documents) to create a personalized AI assistant for analysis and synthesis support, or to produce new artifacts.
- **[Microsoft Copilot](#):** A Gemini alternative that also provides conversational support and acts as a general-purpose GenAI chatbot for brainstorming and summarization.

In addition to these tools, there are also approved AI EdTech tools that are not directly provided by the district but are available to use and can be found in the [CPS EdTech Catalog](#).

Student Access and Responsible Use

CPS is committed to providing students with safe, age-appropriate, and equitable access to AI technology. Student access is currently governed by the following parameters:

- **SOPPA-Approved EdTech Tools:** Students may only access AI-enhanced EdTech tools that have been vetted and approved through the district's SOPPA compliance process as identified in the [CPS EdTech Catalog](#). Access to these tools must align with the intended grade level of the specific product. Each approved tool has a specific legal agreement detailing the data elements that can be shared. To remain compliant with SOPPA, only the data elements specified in the tool's agreement can be utilized within the tool.
- **Future Rollout:** We are currently conducting a pilot of Gemini access for students, which is strictly limited to high school students at designated "Early Adopter" schools. Following the pilot phase, a broader rollout of Gemini is planned for the start of the 2026-2027 School Year (SY27). At that time, student access to Gemini will remain limited to the high school level for the foreseeable future.
- **Teacher Readiness and Oversight:** While student access is not restricted based on an individual teacher's status, we highly encourage all educators to provide active oversight of AI use in the classroom. To support this, we strongly recommend that teachers:
 - Review the [AI Guidebook](#) and the [Instructional GenAI Playbook](#)
 - Earn their [AI Foundations Badge](#) to build essential literacy skills.
 - Join the [CPS Neural Network](#) community of practice to explore pedagogical best practices.
 - Utilize Common Sense Education [Media and AI Literacy curriculum](#) available within Skyline to ensure students are using AI to augment, rather than replace, their own critical inquiry.

A Foundational Principle: Human-Centered and Socially Beneficial

Remember, AI must augment, not replace, human expertise, and serve to promote equitable and positive outcomes for all students and staff.

Always apply your professional judgment and critical thinking to review, refine, and verify any outputs generated by these tools. We offer training on this and other best practices, starting with the [AI Foundations Badge](#).



INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Need to Request a Change or Access More Information?

If you encounter an essential, non-AI domain that is blocked, or if you believe an unapproved AI tool needs review, please utilize the appropriate service desk links below:

- **Submit a [Blocking](#) or [Unblocking](#) Request**
- **Access Resources and Training:** For comprehensive guidance on AI literacy, best practices, and training opportunities, please visit the [AI Guidebook Website](#) and join the [CPS Neural Network](#), a Community of Practice where you can connect with other stakeholders across the district to discuss and explore AI together.
- **Check for Approved EdTech Products:** Refer to the official [CPS EdTech Catalog](#) for a full list of approved and conditionally allowed resources.

Thank you for your critical partnership in ensuring the safe and responsible integration of AI across Chicago Public Schools. For any other questions, please email ai@cps.edu.