AI & EdTech Vendor Pledge

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Why a pledge? Who is our audience?

There's a continuum of recommendation → **pledge** → certification → mandate. Organizations on a national and global level have already put work into developing recommendations for ethical AI, both generally and specific to educational settings. Pledges take the next step of asking companies to commit to certain standards voluntarily and demonstrate commitment. Some pledges are legally enforceable once an organization signs on. Pledges do not necessarily require organizations to submit for evaluation as certifications do, and are not broadly mandatory like laws or policies.

When it comes to AI in educational settings, a pledge can help set the lowest bar that certifications and regulations can then build on. By developing this pledge, we are building on a growing body of educational technology pledges that ask edTech vendors to ensure transparency, privacy, data interoperability, and other important issues (more details on other pledges below).

We hope that this pledge can and will be signed by any educational technology companies that are developing tools that use artificial intelligence. We hope that this pledge will serve as a joint statement of values and set the lowest bar for acceptable use of AI in educational technology to improve education as a whole. Finally, we hope that we can provide sufficient incentive to companies to sign on to this pledge. If you are reading this document, we would appreciate your feedback on our pledge components, including anything that we may have missed or might be out of reach for EdTech companies at this time, and would appreciate feedback and ideas on how to make this pledge appealing and mutually beneficial to companies as well as educational institutions

AI in EdTech Privacy, Agency, and Equity Pledge

Introduction

The growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in educational technologies has the potential to improve and support learning in and out of the classroom. AI educational technologies are personalizing education to support the needs of individual learners, helping researchers more deeply understand learner experiences, and simplifying teachers' tasks to free up time for attending to classroom activities.

To continue producing AI tools that truly support learning, we believe it's crucial to be on the same page about the way AI is designed, developed, deployed, and improved. We recognize that AI tools are created by humans and thus are embedded with potential biases of their producers and developers. By making ethical standards explicit, we hope to guard against unfair or biased AI tools. For example, we hope to move away from tools that might automatically grade essays in ways that are biased for or against certain ethnic and racial backgrounds (see Baker and Hawn, 2021 for more), and towards AI development that is tested on a wide range of racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds and led by the needs of teachers and students rather than assumptions about classroom needs.

Building on existing AI recommendations and educational technology pledges (described in more detail below), this pledge is an alignment of shared values that aim to better achieve equity, trust, and user agency amongst organizations serving the education industry. We hope that this pledge can support responsible AI and discourage unethical AI by promoting equitable development and access to AI tools, preventing coercion into using AI tools, enabling student/teachers/parents to have more agency in curricular decision making, encouraging continuous improvement, and pointing EdTech vendors to additional resources that encourage responsible development of learning technologies.

This pledge contains four value statements. Under each statement, you'll find visible actions that we suggest to demonstrate commitment to this pledge. To make this pledge accessible to educational technology companies and educators alike, we've also included sets of questions that educational decision makers can use as a guideline for finding out more about a potential vendor's practices in developing AI tools. These questions could also be used by a company to evaluate actions towards ethical AI.

The Pledge

1. **We value including underserved and underrepresented groups in the design, development, deployment, and continuous monitoring of AI educational technology.**

   <<Suggested Visible Actions>>
   - Pilot and test new AI technologies in both high-income and low-income school districts AND with diverse learners (i.e. ethnicity, neurodiverse, non-traditional, emerging

bilinguals) and/or disclose the degree to which the AI technology was created in this way.
- Accurately represent the demographics of the datasets on which the AI tools were tested and trained.
- Consider codesign as a method for creating AI and Education tools and technologies that take into account the needs of their intended users.
- Have discussions with AI designers/developers about mitigating bias in datasets and algorithms.
- Hire experts in equity and access to consult on appropriate design, development, deployment, and continuous monitoring on AI tools.
- Hear from a variety of teachers from different settings when designing the technology

<<Questions for Educational Decision Makers>>
- How are underserved and underrepresented learners represented in the design of the AI?
- What measures are taken to minimize potential bias during development?
- What could go wrong and what is being done to prevent that?
- What do you do when the AI produces unsatisfactory results and/or does not have the intended impact on certain populations?
- Are periodic reviews of the technology conducted?

2. **We value informing students, teachers, and administrators how and when AI decisions are being made that affect their educational lives.**

<<Suggested Visible Actions>>
- State clearly and plainly to students, teachers, and parents if and when, to the best of your knowledge, your technology uses an AI system
- Create easy-to visualize external privacy policies in a company so users know what they are agreeing to/consenting with (almost like nutrition labels for a technology)
- Deploy tools with an AI system that do not produce unexpected results
- Disclose details about training and testing data to the extent that your company is able, or state why disclosure is not possible
- Describe how the AI algorithm was trained
- Support teachers' professional development by weaving trainings into deployment of the AI technology

<<Questions for Educational Decision Makers>>
- How does your technology use AI algorithms?
- What data is being collected with your tool and what steps are being taken to ensure our student's privacy is respected?
- How have you tested the efficacy of your AI technology?
- What kinds of data did you use to train and test your algorithms?

3. **We value promoting student, teacher, and parent control and agency during the use of the educational software, such that all stakeholders have meaningful choices with whether and how they are interacting with AI.**

<<Suggested Visible Actions>>
- Get consent from users for employing AI technologies within the educational software
- Add a meaningful non-AI option to the software that does not collect or use data about an individual student who has opted out.
- Include options for people (students and/or teachers and/or parents) to override any technology decision
- Collect and implement feedback on decisions made by AI technologies within educational software

<<Questions for Educational Decision Makers>>
- What options do you offer for people to opt out of the use of AI within your software?
- Are you developing alternatives to the use of AI at major decision points within your software?
- How do you get feedback on how AI is operating within your technologies? Are we able to offer feedback?
- What changes have you made based on feedback you've received?

4. **We value the work that other regulating agencies have already done to promote ethical AI and plan to comply with all pertinent regulating bodies during the creation of the AI technologies.**

   <<Suggested Visible Actions>>
   - Comply with federal rules and regulations for student data privacy, including FERPA, COPPA, etc.
   - Publicly state examples of how algorithm design, development, deployment, or evaluation complies with state and federal regulations
   - Sign on to other educational technology pledges detailed below.
   - Publicly acknowledge our commitment to this pledge.
   - Hold our vendors accountable to these same standards

   <<Questions for Educational Decision Makers>>
   - Have you made sure your tools comply with state and federal AI regulations?
   - Have you signed on to any additional pledges for educational technology? If so, which ones?
   - Are you making a public statement of commitment to regulations and/or additional pledges?
   - Do your partnering vendors commit to the same regulatory compliance and/or pledges that you do?

How does this Pledge build on existing Pledges and recommendations?

Regulating bodies and other educational technology pledges set crucial guidelines that ensure technologies deployed in educational settings are transparent, interoperable, private, and protect students, teachers, and parents. Beyond regulations, a number of national and global organizations have made recommendations on ethical development of AI.

In developing this pledge, we discussed recommendations from other frameworks, many of which go

into more depth on best practices for AI in education. These guidelines include UNESCO's guide to [Artificial Intelligence in Education](#), the Institute for Ethical AI in Education's [Ethical Framework for AI in Education](#), and The U.S. Government Accountability Office [Artificial Intelligence Accountability Framework](#). The Accountability Framework specifically inspired the visible actions in our pledge to focus on four stages of AI creation: design, development, testing, and continuous improvement.

We are also following in the footsteps of other groups who have developed pledges for educational technology vendors. The [Student Privacy Pledge](#), one of the more popular legally binding pledges, summarizes federal law and regulatory guidance to encourage educational technology providers to safeguard student privacy in collecting, maintaining, and using student personal information. Project Unicorn has recently developed a [Data Interoperability Pledge](#) that asks vendors to commit to four items that promote seamless, secure, and controlled exchange of data between applications for better school data practices and connected technologies. Finally, the [EqualAI Pledge](#) details three steps that AI developers can take to ensure that AI tools do not perpetuate pre-existing biases not specific to education. This pledge builds on the work of these organizations and we encourage companies who are signing our pledge to also consider signing the three pledges detailed above.

Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer:

This is a living document. Please contact circls-contact@digitalpromise.org with any feedback or suggestions regarding this documnt.