AI Preparedness in the Sioux Falls School District

A Comprehensive K–12 Curriculum Framework

Prepared for the Board of Education
Sioux Falls School District
2026

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Executive Summary

Delivered to the Board of Education, Sioux Falls School District

Every district in this country is making a choice right now — whether they know it or not. AI is already in the lives of their students. The only remaining question is whether their graduates will direct it or be replaced by it. Inaction is just as much a choice as taking action.

I am urging Sioux Falls to make that choice deliberately.

Our mission — our mandate — is to prepare our children for the world they will actually inhabit, ready for a workforce being transformed right now, faster than any curriculum has ever been asked to keep up with. Sioux Falls employers are already asking whether our graduates are ready. This curriculum is our answer.

Here is what is at stake.

Within five years, the majority of entry-level knowledge work will be performed with AI assistance. Within ten, employers will not ask whether a candidate can use AI. They will ask whether a candidate can direct it — evaluate its output, catch its errors, contribute what it cannot, and stand behind the result with their own name. In a world with AI, graduates must demonstrate that they add value, that the result of their collaboration with AI is better than what they get with just using AI alone.

Here is what I am proposing.

A comprehensive K through 12 AI curriculum, rolled out one phase at a time across four years, beginning with a single-school pilot in the 2026 to 2027 school year. The first phase emphasizes the danger in trusting AI to do your work for you and the importance of the student being the director of the work. The curriculum for all twelve years is built on a single organizing principle — students are not consumers of AI, they are directors of it. Every project, every assessment, every showcase is designed to answer two questions: what did AI do, and what did you do?

The rollout is structured as a responsible pilot program. In Year 1, a single volunteer elementary school — selected by the superintendent and approved by the board — implements the K through 4 curriculum and hosts the first annual showcase. If results justify expansion, Year 2 extends the program to all elementary schools. Year 3 adds grades five through eight. Year 4 completes the framework with grades nine through twelve. Each phase is a board decision, not an automatic commitment. The program earns its expansion by proving its results.

We begin in first grade — before most students can read or write — because that is precisely the point. Using voice-based AI interaction, first graders will direct an AI tool, evaluate whether it got the answer right, and explain what they would change. We are building the habit of critical evaluation before children have learned to be uncritical. That sequencing is not incidental. It is the most important design decision in this entire framework.

By fifth grade, students are creating songs, videos, and websites with AI as their assistant. By ninth grade, they are choosing their own format, defending their own reasoning, and presenting their work publicly to their peers, their parents, and their community. By twelfth grade, a Sioux Falls graduate can sit across from any employer in any field and say — here is what I directed AI to do, here is what I caught that was wrong, and here is what I contributed that AI could not.

That graduate is not afraid of AI. That graduate is not dependent on AI. That graduate is the person every employer in the emerging economy is looking for.

Each spring, this district will hold a public showcase — open to parents, community members, and the press — where the best student projects from every grade level are presented, defended, and celebrated. Not a recital. Not a science fair. A public demonstration that Sioux Falls is producing students who can think, direct, evaluate, and lead in the world as it actually is.

The full policy document behind this summary details the curriculum at every grade level, the teacher training structure, the four-year rollout timeline, the student selection process for the showcase, and the budget framework for implementation. It is available to every board member, to the superintendent, and to any resident of this district who wants to read it.

Sioux Falls has always understood that education is not a cost. It is an investment in the next generation of people who will build this city, run its businesses, serve its community, and raise their own children here.

This curriculum is that investment.

I am ready to build it. The residents of this district have made clear they are ready to see it built. And I am asking this board today to approve a single-school pilot for the 2026 to 2027 school year — one elementary school, grades K through 4, selected by the superintendent — so that we can begin with care, measure what works, and earn the right to expand.

The window to get ahead of this is open. It will not stay open forever. Sioux Falls goes first.

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A Comprehensive K–12 Curriculum Framework

The World That Is Coming

Fifty years ago, a well-educated high school graduate could expect to enter a workforce that rewarded what school had given them — the ability to retrieve information, perform calculations, follow procedures, and produce written work with reasonable accuracy. Those skills translated directly into economic value. They were scarce, and scarcity made them valuable.

They are no longer scarce.

Artificial intelligence can now retrieve any information instantaneously, perform calculations of extraordinary complexity, follow procedures with perfect consistency, and produce written work that is often indistinguishable from what a trained human would write. It does these things faster, cheaper, and without fatigue. The economic value of these skills — skills that defined the purpose of public education for generations — has been permanently and irrevocably altered.

This is not a prediction. It is already happening. The question facing every school district in America is not whether to respond to this transformation. It is whether to respond deliberately or by default. Districts that do not make an intentional choice about AI are making one anyway — they are choosing to produce graduates whose most marketable skills are now performed better by a machine.

The labor market is already signaling what it will require. The World Economic Forum projects that by 2027, 44% of workers' core skills will be disrupted by technology, with AI driving the majority of that disruption.[1] McKinsey Global Institute estimates that by 2030, up to 30% of hours currently worked across the American economy could be automated.[2] Within ten years, employers will not ask whether a candidate can use AI. They will ask whether a candidate can direct it — evaluate its output, identify its errors, contribute what it cannot generate on its own, and stand behind the result with professional accountability. The candidate who cannot do these things will not be competing against other graduates who cannot do them. They will be competing against AI itself.

That is a competition no unprepared graduate will win.

What We Teach When We Teach Nothing

The instinct of many institutions when confronted with a disruptive technology is to wait — to see how it develops, to let other districts go first, to avoid the controversy that comes with

moving early. This instinct feels like caution. It is not. It is a decision with consequences as real as any deliberate policy choice.

A student who graduates from a school system that has not addressed AI will not arrive at the workforce as a blank slate. They will arrive having already formed habits around AI — habits developed without guidance, without critical framework, and without any instruction in what good AI collaboration actually looks like. They will have learned to use AI the way most people currently use it — as a shortcut, a crutch, a way to avoid the hard work of thinking.

That habit is not neutral. Research from MIT published in 2024 found measurable cognitive offloading in students who used AI for thinking tasks — meaning students who relied on AI to generate ideas showed reduced ability to generate ideas independently when AI was removed.[3] This effect was most pronounced in students who used AI without any framework for critical evaluation. The researchers described the phenomenon as “cognitive debt” — borrowing against future thinking capacity in exchange for immediate output. A student who graduates having accumulated years of cognitive debt is not a skilled AI user. They are a diminished thinker who has learned to hide the diminishment behind a capable tool.

The school system that teaches nothing about AI is not protecting students from a difficult question. It is sending them into the workforce without the most important professional skill of the coming decade — the ability to add value to what AI produces rather than simply relay it.

There is a second harm that receives less attention but may be more serious. AI systems are not neutral tools. They are built by people with perspectives, trained on data with biases, and deployed by organizations with interests. They generate confident-sounding output that is sometimes wrong, sometimes misleading, and occasionally fabricated entirely — a phenomenon researchers call hallucination.´ A student who has never been taught to evaluate AI output critically is not just unprepared for the workforce. They are vulnerable — to misinformation, to manipulation, to the quiet erosion of the habit of thinking for themselves.

This vulnerability begins earlier than most educators recognize. The algorithms that shape what children see on YouTube, TikTok, and gaming platforms are AI systems making consequential decisions about what those children believe, want, and fear. Research on algorithmic influence documents measurable effects on belief formation, emotional regulation, and social comparison beginning in middle childhood.[5] By the time a student reaches high school, they have already spent years being shaped by AI systems they do not understand and have never been taught to question.

A school system that waits until high school to address this has waited too long.

The Organizing Principle

This curriculum is built on a single idea, stated plainly: students are not consumers of AI. They are directors of it.

The distinction matters more than it might initially appear. A consumer of AI receives its output and passes it along. A director of AI specifies what is needed, evaluates what is produced, identifies what is wrong, contributes what the AI cannot supply, and takes professional responsibility for the result. The consumer is replaceable. The director is not.

Every element of this curriculum — every project at every grade level, every assessment, every annual showcase — is designed to answer three questions: what did AI do, what did you do, and is the result better than what AI would have produced alone? A student who cannot answer all three questions clearly has not completed the assignment. A student who can answer all three confidently has demonstrated the skill that will define professional value in the AI economy.

The third question is answered in a way that is unique to this curriculum and reflects emerging best practice in professional AI use. At the conclusion of every project, students ask the AI directly: “Based on our conversation, summarize what you contributed to this project and what I changed or added.” The AI’s response becomes part of the student’s submitted work — a third-party account of the collaboration that neither the student nor the teacher generates. This AI self-report, combined with the student’s own reasoning trail and their oral defense of the work, gives teachers three independent data points for assessing genuine human contribution.

This practice is introduced in first grade and maintained through twelfth. A first grader asks a simple version: “What did you help me with and what did I change?” A twelfth grader asks a sophisticated version that probes the entire arc of a semester-long project. The mechanism is the same. The depth grows with the student. By the time a Sioux Falls graduate enters a professional environment where AI accountability logs are standard practice — and that environment is already emerging in law, medicine, and financial services[6] — they will have been maintaining their own version for twelve years.

This principle also resolves the false choice that dominates most institutional debates about AI in education. The choice is not between banning AI and embracing it uncritically. Both of those responses produce the same result — graduates who do not know how to work with AI deliberately. Banning it ensures they arrive at the workforce without practice. Embracing it without framework ensures they arrive having practiced the wrong habits.

The director model is the third path. It treats AI as a powerful tool that requires skilled human operation — the same way we treat every other powerful tool we teach students to use. We do not ban calculators from mathematics education because we fear students will stop thinking. We teach students to understand what the calculator is doing, verify that it is doing it correctly, and apply judgment about when and how to use it.[7] AI requires the same approach, applied with greater sophistication because the tool is more powerful and the stakes of misuse are higher.

What Sioux Falls Will Build

The curriculum this document proposes moves through three phases across twelve years, each building on the one before it, each producing student work that becomes the teaching material for the phase that follows.

The first phase — grades one through four — begins earlier than any comparable initiative in this region, and does so deliberately. Young children have not yet learned to be passive consumers of information. They argue with adults, question answers that don't match their experience, and insist on their own understanding with a confidence that formal education often gradually erodes.[8] This curriculum captures that instinct before it fades and builds it into a durable habit of critical evaluation.

A first grader cannot read or type. They can speak. Using voice-based AI interaction — technology that is already standard on the devices schools use — a first grader can direct an AI tool, listen to its response, decide whether it is right, and explain what they would change. At the end of the session, the student asks the AI to summarize what it contributed and what the student changed. The teacher asks the student to explain that summary in their own words. That interaction — direction, evaluation, revision, and self-report — is the entire curriculum in miniature, practiced from the first week of first grade.

The projects at this phase are picture books, comic strips, and illustrated guides — formats that are natural to young children and that require the student to supply the imagination, the characters, the moral, and the narrative voice that AI cannot authentically generate for a six-year-old. The AI helps with words the student can't yet write, story structures the student hasn't yet learned, and image suggestions the student then accepts, rejects, or modifies. What did AI do? What did you do? Is the result better than what AI produced alone? These questions, asked of a first grader making a picture book, plant the seed of every professional skill this curriculum is designed to grow.

Critically, the awareness curriculum at this phase does not only teach students to use AI. It teaches them to recognize when AI is being used on them. Recommendation algorithms, targeted content, AI-generated images — these are the environment young children already inhabit. Understanding that environment is not optional preparation for future citizenship. It is immediate self-defense.

By the time those students reach fifth grade they are ready for the second phase — creative collaboration. Here the projects expand in ambition and medium. Students produce original songs, short documentaries, websites built around subjects they know, and interactive games they have designed. In each case the student is the director — the one who conceives the project, makes the structural decisions, evaluates the AI's contributions, and owns the final result. The AI self-report at this phase becomes more detailed and more revealing — a student who has genuinely directed a documentary film can show an AI summary documenting dozens of specific decisions, revisions, and original contributions. A student who has delegated the thinking will produce an AI summary that looks very different.

The third phase — high school — removes the training wheels entirely. Students choose their own format, propose their own project, and defend their own reasoning in public. The proposal must be approved before work begins. The reasoning trail must be documented throughout. The

AI self-report is submitted as part of the final work. The oral defense is not optional. By twelfth grade, a Sioux Falls graduate has spent twelve years building the habit of directing AI rather than deferring to it. They can sit across from any employer in any field and demonstrate — not claim, demonstrate — that they add value to what AI produces.

That demonstration happens every spring in a public showcase that is the visible heart of this curriculum. The showcase opens with a produced presentation showing every student who participated in that year's projects — every class, every grade, every child who engaged with the curriculum — before the finalist projects are presented. No student who did the work is invisible. The selected finalists then present their projects, walk the audience through their AI self-reports, and answer unrehearsed questions from parents, community members, and invited employers. This is not a celebration of finished products. It is a public proof of concept — evidence, renewed annually, that Sioux Falls is producing graduates who can think, direct, evaluate, and lead in the world as it actually is.

The showcase serves a second purpose that is equally important. The best projects from each year, selected through a student-driven nomination and voting process, become the teaching material for the following year. A third grader's comic book explaining how recommendation algorithms manipulate behavior becomes the lesson a sixth grader studies before beginning their own AI collaboration project. A tenth grader's documentary becomes the model a ninth grader examines before proposing their capstone. Nothing is wasted. The curriculum learns from itself.

When Students Build Something Real

This curriculum does not merely prepare students for the AI economy. It gives them the tools to begin participating in it while they are still in school — and that possibility demands both celebration and serious institutional preparation.

The spring showcase is not only a community event. Beginning with the first year of implementation, it will be open to publishers, game developers, music producers, app developers, and local business enterprises who wish to see what Sioux Falls students are building. The picture books produced by first through fourth graders, the songs and websites produced by fifth through eighth graders, and the capstone projects produced by high school students represent genuinely original creative work with real commercial potential. A first grader's AI-assisted picture book can be published — self-publishing platforms allow student work to reach real audiences with the student retaining full ownership of everything they created. An eighth grader's game prototype can be submitted to an indie platform. A twelfth grader's app concept can be pitched to an investor. These are not hypothetical outcomes reserved for exceptional students. They are realistic possibilities for any student who has spent years learning to direct AI toward original, valuable work.

That opportunity comes with serious legal and ethical responsibilities that the school system must address before the first showcase opens its doors to commercial guests. Who owns what a student creates with AI assistance during school? What happens when a publisher approaches a twelve-year-old with an offer and that child's parents are not in the room? What

does the school owe a student it has helped create something commercially valuable? What protections ensure that the excitement of a moment does not lead a minor to commit to an agreement they do not understand? These are not hypothetical questions. They are institutional obligations that require explicit policy answers — answers that must be in place before commercial interest arrives, not after.

A comprehensive framework addressing intellectual property ownership, the district's navigation responsibility, contract literacy education, and legal protections for minor creators is detailed in Appendix D of this document. The entrepreneurship curriculum — covering marketing, contract law, intellectual property, and business fundamentals across grades six through twelve, and the picture book publication pathway for grades one through four — is detailed in Appendix E. Together these appendices establish that this curriculum is not only an educational initiative. It is an economic development opportunity for Sioux Falls — one that takes seriously both the promise it creates and the responsibility that promise carries.

A Note on Technology and Young Children

> *This section addresses a concern that parents and educators often raise when they first encounter the K–4 phase of this curriculum. It is worth stating directly.*

Some parents and educators, when they hear that this curriculum begins in kindergarten, have an immediate and understandable concern: are we putting more screens in front of young children who are already overexposed to technology?

The answer is no. And understanding why requires recognizing a distinction that this entire curriculum is built on.

There is a fundamental difference between passive technology consumption and active, teacher-guided critical thinking. A child who sits in front of YouTube watching algorithmically-served videos is a passive consumer — the AI is directing them. A child who is taught to speak a question to an AI tool, evaluate whether the answer is correct, identify what is wrong, and explain what they would change is doing the opposite. They are the director. The AI is the subject of their scrutiny.

This curriculum does not add screen time to children's lives. It transforms some of the screen time that already exists in every classroom — on the school computers that students already use — from passive consumption into active critical thinking. The K–4 phase uses voice interaction specifically so that young students who cannot yet type are not staring at a keyboard. The teacher facilitates every session. The AI is never left alone with a child's attention.

The parents who are most concerned about AI's effect on their children are right to be concerned. Research documents real harm from unguided AI and algorithm exposure in childhood. This curriculum exists precisely because of that concern. The answer to AI harming

children is not to pretend AI does not exist in their lives. It is to teach them, from the earliest possible age, that they are in charge — not the machine.

A child who learns in first grade that AI can be wrong, that it is their job to catch the error, and that their own judgment matters is a child who is developing immunity to the most serious harms that AI poses to young people. That is not more technology. That is better citizenship.

Implementation and Governance

> *This section addresses how the curriculum will be developed, approved, and implemented — and who will be involved at each stage.*

This document is a curriculum framework, not a directive. It is the starting point for a structured collaborative process that must involve the superintendent, district curriculum and technology staff, building principals, classroom teachers, and the board itself. No element of this curriculum will be implemented without that process having been completed.

The superintendent is the district's chief executive, and curriculum implementation is an administrative function that properly belongs to that office. The board's role is to set direction, approve frameworks, allocate resources, and hold administration accountable for results. This document is presented to the board in that spirit — as a direction for the board to consider, not a finished plan for the administration to execute without modification.

Teacher input is not a courtesy in this process. It is a requirement. The teachers who work with students in grades K through four every day possess knowledge about what is developmentally appropriate, what is practically feasible in a classroom, and what students at each age are actually ready to do that no curriculum designer working from the outside can replicate. The summer institute described in Appendix B is designed to be co-facilitated by teachers, not delivered to them. The monthly AI Curriculum Collaborative is teacher-led. The assessment rubrics are developed by teachers working together. This curriculum succeeds only if the people delivering it believe in it and have had a genuine hand in shaping it.

The Sioux Falls Education Association represents the teachers who will implement this curriculum, and their voice in the development process is appropriate and expected. Questions of professional development compensation, planning time, and workload impact are legitimate labor concerns that belong in the collaborative process from the beginning, not as afterthoughts.

The board approval this document seeks is approval of the framework and the direction — authorization to begin the collaborative development process with the superintendent and teacher community, with the goal of a single-school pilot launch in the 2026–2027 school year for grades K through four. The pilot school will be selected by the superintendent in consultation with the board. The full curriculum, training plan, tool selection, and budget will be developed through that process and returned to the board for final approval before implementation begins.

What this board is being asked to decide today is not every detail of a finished plan. It is whether Sioux Falls will lead on this question or wait. The details will be built together. The decision to lead belongs to this board.

Why Now. Why Here.

There is always a reason to wait. The technology is still changing. The research is still developing. Other districts haven't moved yet. These observations are true and they are irrelevant. The technology will always be changing. The research will always be developing. The districts that lead will not be the ones that waited for certainty — they will be the ones that built the capacity to adapt while others were still deciding whether to begin.

Sioux Falls is the right place to lead on this. It is a city large enough to have the institutional capacity to implement a serious curriculum and small enough for that curriculum to be coherent across the district. It has a community that takes education seriously, employers who are already asking whether graduates are ready for the AI economy, and a tradition of civic investment in the next generation.

The rollout this document proposes is deliberately phased to match institutional reality. Year one covers grades one through four — a manageable pilot that proves the concept with the youngest students and generates the community evidence needed to expand. Year two adds grades five through eight, building on demonstrated results and teaching the collaboration phase to students who have already seen what the awareness phase produces. Year three completes the framework with grades nine through twelve, launching high school students into independent AI mastery on a foundation that has been built and tested over two years.

At each phase transition, the spring showcase is the evidence. A board that sees first graders confidently explaining why they disagreed with an AI's answer — and producing the AI's own account of what they changed — does not need to be persuaded that fifth graders are ready for the collaboration phase. A community that watches eighth graders present AI-assisted documentary films alongside their AI self-reports does not need to be convinced that high school students can handle independent projects. The program makes its own case, annually, in public, with students doing the demonstrating.

This is what prepared looks like. This is what it looks like when a school system decides that its graduates will direct the most powerful tool of their generation rather than be directed by it. It is what it looks like when a school system discovers that preparation and entrepreneurship are not separate goals — that the same skills that make a graduate employable make them capable of building something of their own.

Sioux Falls can be the district that made that decision first, made it well, and showed every other district in this region — and this country — what was possible.

The window to lead is open.

It will not stay open forever.

Community Impact and Fiscal Sustainability

South Dakota has seen homeschool enrollment grow 143 percent in the last decade — the fastest growth of any state in the nation.[11] Sioux Falls reflects that trend. Conservative estimates place the number of school-age children being educated outside the district at roughly 2,000 or more, a number that continues to climb.

Research consistently shows that specialized programs and expanded curricular opportunities are among the primary reasons families return to public education — or choose not to leave in the first place. A district that leads on AI preparedness sends a clear signal to those families: that public education is not falling behind the world their children will inherit, but preparing them to lead it.

The fiscal case is straightforward. This pilot program costs at most $32,000 in its first year. At approximately $14,000 in combined per-pupil funding, retaining or attracting just three students who might otherwise be educated outside the district recovers that investment entirely — every year, on a recurring basis.

That is not the argument for doing this. The argument for doing this is that our students deserve it. But it is worth noting that doing the right thing for children and doing the fiscally responsible thing for taxpayers are, in this case, exactly the same decision.

Footnotes

[1] World Economic Forum. The Future of Jobs Report 2023. Geneva: WEF, 2023.

[2] McKinsey Global Institute. The Future of Work in America: People and Places, Today and Tomorrow. McKinsey & Company, 2019.

[3] Gerardo Ramirez et al. Generative AI Can Harm Learning. Working paper, MIT Sloan School of Management, 2024. Note for author: Verify current publication status before citing.

[4] Ziwei Ji et al. “Survey of Hallucination in Natural Language Generation.” ACM Computing Surveys 55, no. 12 (2023): 1–38.

[5] Note for author: Verify specific citation against Jonathan Haidt’s The Anxious Generation (2024) or the APA’s 2023 health advisory on social media and youth before publication.

[6] AI accountability logging requirements are emerging across regulated industries. See AMA policy on AI transparency (2023), SEC guidance on AI use disclosure (2023–2024), and bar association AI disclosure guidance across multiple states. Note for author: Verify current status before publication.

[7] Heid, M. Kathleen. “Resequencing Skills and Concepts in Applied Calculus Using the Computer as a Tool.” Journal for Research in Mathematics Education 19, no. 1 (1988): 3–25.

[8] Engel, Susan. The Hungry Mind: The Origins of Curiosity in Childhood. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

[9] U.S. Copyright Office. Copyright and Artificial Intelligence: Part 1 — Digital Replicas. Washington D.C., 2024.

[10] South Dakota Codified Laws § 26-2-1. Note for author: Verify current statutory language with a South Dakota attorney before publication.

[11] Johns Hopkins University homeschool enrollment database, as reported by Dakota News Now, December 4, 2025. South Dakota homeschool enrollment grew from 4,333 to 10,536 students between 2015–16 and 2023–24, a 143%

increase — the highest rate of any state reporting data across that full period. Current enrollment has since climbed further, with the South Dakota Department of Education reporting 12,433 homeschool students statewide in 2024–25.

Appendix A: Curriculum by Grade Level (K–12)

The following curriculum is built on a single organizing principle: students are directors of AI, not consumers of it. Every project at every level requires the student to make the core intellectual decisions. AI is the tool; the student is always the one in charge.

Each grade band builds on the one before it. Skills introduced in first grade are practiced in second and expanded in third. Nothing is introduced twice unnecessarily, and nothing is abandoned — it is developed. The AI Self-Report, introduced in first grade as a simple oral summary, becomes a written reflection by fifth grade and a formal methodology statement by twelfth.

Kindergarten–Grade 2: Meet the Tool

At this stage, students are just learning to read and write. AI interaction is therefore voice-based and teacher-facilitated. The goal is not output — it is the habit of critical evaluation. Students learn that AI is a helper that can be wrong, and that the human is always the one who decides.

Core Skills

- Ask AI a question and evaluate whether the answer is correct
- Identify one thing the AI got right and one thing it got wrong
- Direct AI to change something in its answer and explain why
- Complete the AI Self-Report: tell the teacher (verbally) what you asked AI and what you changed

Sample Projects

- Ask AI to tell a short story, then change the ending yourself
- Ask AI what a word means, then check the classroom dictionary
- Direct AI to draw a scene (image tools), then describe what is different from what you imagined

Grades 3–4: The Student as Editor

Students now write independently and are ready to use AI as a drafting and editing partner — not a replacement. The critical skill at this stage is learning to evaluate AI output against their own ideas and choose what to keep, what to change, and what to discard entirely.

Core Skills

- Write a first draft independently, then use AI to suggest improvements

- Compare the AI suggestion to their own draft and decide which is stronger — with reasons
- Use AI to research a topic, then verify at least two facts using a second source
- Complete the written AI Self-Report: what did I ask, what did AI produce, what did I keep, what did I change, and why

Sample Projects

- Write a paragraph about their community; use AI to suggest edits; accept or reject each suggestion with a written reason
- Research a local animal using AI and one classroom resource; identify any differences between them
- Rewrite an AI-generated story paragraph in their own voice

Grades 5–6: The Student as Producer

Students at this stage are ready to produce multi-media projects — songs, short videos, illustrated stories, simple websites — with AI as a production partner. The emphasis shifts from evaluating AI text to directing AI across different creative formats and understanding the difference between what AI produces automatically and what requires genuine human creative direction.

Core Skills

- Use AI tools across at least two different formats (text, image, audio, or video)
- Write a creative brief before beginning — what do you want to make, and what role will AI play
- Identify the moments in their project where their decision changed the AI's direction
- Present a completed project with a verbal AI Self-Report explaining their creative decisions

Sample Projects

- Produce a short illustrated story: student writes the narrative, directs AI image generation for each scene, revises images that do not match the vision
- Create a one-minute video on a topic of the student's choice using AI for scripting assistance and image generation, with student narration
- Build a simple webpage about a local community topic using an AI assistant, with the student writing the final copy

Grades 7–8: The Student as Analyst

Middle school students are ready for the analytical layer: not just using AI but interrogating it. At this stage, students learn to identify AI bias, recognize hallucinations, and understand why AI

produces the outputs it does. They also begin to use AI for research in a disciplined, citation-aware way.

Core Skills

- Prompt AI with the same question multiple times; document and compare the variation in responses
- Identify at least one factual error or bias in an AI-generated research summary; correct it with a verified source
- Use AI to argue both sides of a question; then write their own position independently
- Produce a research project with a full AI methodology section: what prompts were used, what outputs were accepted, what was rejected, and why

Sample Projects

- Current events analysis: use AI to summarize a news story from three different angles, identify the differences, and write a personal assessment
- Science inquiry: use AI to generate a hypothesis, then design a simple classroom experiment to test it
- Debate preparation: use AI to build the strongest possible case for the opposing side; then defeat that case in writing

Grades 9–10: The Student as Designer

High school students enter the design layer — they are now responsible for choosing the right AI tools for a given purpose, constructing effective prompts, and producing professional-quality work. They also begin to understand the economic and ethical dimensions of AI: what it means for employment, intellectual property, and the distribution of creative value.

Core Skills

- Select appropriate AI tools for a defined project goal and justify the choice
- Write a prompt engineering brief — a documented strategy for getting the output they need
- Produce a portfolio-quality project that demonstrates their own creative or analytical voice alongside documented AI contributions
- Write a reflective ethics statement: what does it mean to use AI fairly, honestly, and responsibly

Sample Projects

- Design a product or service concept using AI for market research, branding, and visual identity — then pitch it to the class
- Produce a long-form researched essay or journalism piece using AI for research assistance, with a complete source and methodology disclosure

- Create a multi-format creative project (music, visual art, writing, or video) with a documented AI collaboration log

Grades 11–12: The Student as Leader

Senior students are preparing for employment, entrepreneurship, or advanced education. At this level, the curriculum shifts to professional application: using AI at the level that employers and institutions will expect, understanding the legal and ethical obligations that come with AI-assisted work, and mentoring younger students in the skills they have developed.

Core Skills

- Use AI to complete a project at professional quality — something that could be submitted to an employer, published, or sold
- Produce a complete AI disclosure statement appropriate for the intended audience (employer, client, academic institution)
- Present their work publicly at the District AI Showcase to an audience including parents, community members, publishers, and business representatives
- Mentor a younger student in AI tool use as a service requirement

Sample Projects

- Launch a real or simulation business using AI tools across every function: marketing, product development, customer communication, and financial modeling
- Produce an original creative work (music, game, novel chapter, short film) with a complete intellectual property and AI authorship disclosure
- Conduct and publish an original research project using AI analytical tools with full methodology disclosure

Appendix B: Teacher Training Structure

No curriculum succeeds if teachers are not prepared to deliver it. The AI preparedness curriculum requires a specific kind of teacher readiness — not a mastery of every AI tool, but a fluency in the framework: students as directors, AI as assistant, and critical evaluation as the core discipline.

This training program is designed to build that fluency without placing an unreasonable burden on teachers who are already expert in their subject areas. The goal is not to make every teacher an AI technologist. It is to equip every teacher to facilitate the habits of mind this curriculum requires.

Phase 1: Foundation Training (Summer Before Year 1)

All teachers in grades K through four receive a three-day summer institute before the first year of the curriculum launches. This institute is designed and facilitated by a combination of district technology staff, outside AI curriculum specialists, and — critically — the teachers themselves, who bring knowledge of their students that no outside trainer possesses.

Day 1: Understanding the Framework

- The organizing principle: students as directors, not consumers
- Why cognitive scaffolding matters: review of research on AI-assisted learning and independent thinking
- The AI Self-Report mechanism: purpose, implementation, and age-appropriate expectations
- What assessment looks like in an AI-integrated classroom

Day 2: Tool Fluency

- Hands-on practice with the AI tools approved for district use — including voice-based interaction and picture book creation tools
- Prompt engineering basics: how to construct prompts that produce educationally useful outputs, and how to teach students to do the same
- Recognizing and explaining AI errors, hallucinations, and bias to elementary-age students
- Classroom management considerations for AI tool use on school computers

Day 3: Curriculum Design

- Grade-level project design workshop: teachers draft their first AI-integrated unit, including a picture book project appropriate for their grade
- Peer review: teachers present their draft units to colleagues for feedback

- Assessment rubric development: what does excellent AI-directed student work look like at each grade level
- Q&A and resource distribution

Phase 2: Ongoing Professional Development (Year-Round)

One-time summer training is insufficient. AI tools evolve rapidly, and teachers need sustained support as they implement the curriculum and encounter real classroom situations the training did not anticipate.

Monthly AI Curriculum Collaborative

A standing monthly meeting — one hour, during existing professional development time — where teachers across grade levels share what is working, what is not, and what adaptations they have made. This meeting has a rotating facilitator chosen from among the participating teachers.

Showcase Review Session

In the spring, before the District AI Showcase, all teachers participate in a review session where student showcase candidates present a dry run of their projects. This serves two purposes: quality control for the showcase, and professional development for the teachers, who see the full range of what students have produced.

Annual Summer Refresh

Each summer, one day of paid professional development is dedicated to reviewing the year's curriculum results, updating the approved tool list, and incorporating lessons learned into the next year's implementation. As the curriculum expands to new grade bands in years two and three, this session also orients newly enrolled teachers.

Phase 3: Teacher Compensation and Incentive Structure

Teachers who go beyond baseline participation — who design outstanding AI-integrated units, who mentor colleagues, who agree to present their classroom practice at the annual showcase — should be recognized and compensated.

- Summer institute participation is compensated at the district's standard professional development rate
- Teachers who design units that are adopted district-wide receive a curriculum development stipend
- Teachers who present at the District AI Showcase receive recognition in district communications and at the board level
- A Teacher AI Innovator designation is established — a formal recognition for teachers who demonstrate sustained leadership in AI curriculum development

Assessment of Teacher Readiness

Teacher readiness is assessed informally and without punitive intent. The goal is to identify teachers who need additional support and provide it — not to evaluate or rank teachers against each other. The primary assessment tools are:

- Self-assessment survey administered at the beginning and end of each school year
- Classroom observation (one per year per teacher, non-evaluative) focused on the AI-integration framework
- Review of student AI Self-Reports, which indirectly reflects teacher implementation quality

Appendix C: Four-Year Rollout Timeline and Showcase Structure

The curriculum rolls out over four years as a structured pilot program. Each phase requires a separate board decision to proceed. No year automatically follows from the previous one — the program earns its expansion by demonstrating results. This structure gives the board full visibility and control at every stage, and gives the community the evidence it needs to support continued investment.

The pilot school for Year 1 — a single elementary school implementing the K through 4 curriculum — will be selected by the superintendent in consultation with the board. No specific school is designated in this framework. That selection belongs to the district's administrative leadership, who know the readiness, staffing, and community context of each building better than any outside proposal can.

Year 1 (2026–2027): Single Elementary School Pilot

The first year is a contained pilot at one volunteer elementary school. The purpose is to prove the concept, train a small group of teachers, produce the first annual showcase, and generate the evidence the board needs to decide whether to expand.

Timeline	Activity
May–June 2026	Board approves pilot framework; superintendent selects pilot school in consultation with the board
June–July 2026	AI Curriculum Coordinator stipend established; tool selection finalized
July–August 2026	Teacher foundation training: 3-day summer institute for pilot school K–4 teachers (~20–30 teachers)
August 2026	Parent information distributed at pilot school; approved tool list published
September 2026	Curriculum launches at pilot school, grades K–4
October–March	Monthly AI Curriculum Collaborative meetings at pilot school; ongoing teacher support
January 2027	Mid-year review: assess implementation, identify needs, adjust as required
March 2027	Board receives mid-year progress report; discussion of Year 2 expansion begins
April 2027	Showcase project selection: teachers nominate student work from pilot school
May 2027	First Annual District AI Showcase (pilot school projects; community open event)

Timeline	Activity
June 2027	Year 1 outcomes report presented to board; board votes on Year 2 expansion to all elementary schools

Year 2 (2027–2028): All Elementary Schools (K–4)

If the board approves expansion following the Year 1 outcomes report, the curriculum rolls out to all SFSD elementary schools in Year 2. Teachers at the pilot school who have completed Year 1 serve as mentors and co-facilitators for the district-wide summer institute.

Timeline	Activity
July–August 2027	District-wide teacher training for all K–4 teachers; pilot school teachers serve as co-facilitators
September 2027	Curriculum launches at all elementary schools, grades K–4
October–March	Monthly AI Curriculum Collaborative (district-wide, K–4)
January 2028	Mid-year review across all elementary schools
March 2028	Board receives mid-year progress report; discussion of Year 3 expansion begins
May 2028	Second Annual District AI Showcase (all elementary schools; expanded venue)
June 2028	Year 2 outcomes report presented to board; board votes on Year 3 expansion to grades 5–8

Year 3 (2028–2029): Grades 5–8 Expansion

If the board approves expansion following the Year 2 outcomes report, the curriculum extends to all SFSD middle schools. Elementary students who completed Year 1 or Year 2 of the curriculum arrive at fifth grade already fluent in the AI Self-Report and the director framework.

Timeline	Activity
July–August 2028	Teacher training for all grades 5–8 teachers; annual refresh for K–4 teachers
September 2028	Curriculum expands to grades 5–8 at all middle schools
October–March	Monthly AI Curriculum Collaborative (now K–8)
January 2029	Mid-year review across all grade bands
March 2029	Board receives mid-year progress report; discussion of Year 4 expansion begins
May 2029	Third Annual District AI Showcase (K–8 projects; business and publisher guests invited)

Timeline	Activity
June 2029	Year 3 outcomes report presented to board; board votes on Year 4 expansion to grades 9–12

Year 4 (2029–2030): Grades 9–12 Full Implementation

If the board approves expansion following the Year 3 outcomes report, the curriculum reaches all SFSD high schools. Students entering ninth grade in Year 4 will have completed three years of the director curriculum. The high school phase builds on that foundation rather than introducing it.

Timeline	Activity
July–August 2029	Teacher training for all grades 9–12 teachers; annual refresh for K–8 teachers
September 2029	Full K–12 implementation begins
January 2030	Comprehensive district review: four-year outcomes assessment
May 2030	Fourth Annual District AI Showcase (full K–12; open to publishers, business partners, investors, press)
June 2030	District publishes four-year outcomes report; curriculum enters steady-state operation

The District AI Showcase: Structure and Purpose

The annual showcase is not a science fair. It is a public demonstration of student mastery — and a statement to the community, to employers, to higher education institutions, and to the press that Sioux Falls is producing graduates who can think, direct, evaluate, and lead in the AI era.

Audience

- Parents and family members
- Community members and taxpayers
- Local employers and business leaders
- Publishers, record labels, and creative industry representatives (invited specifically for student entrepreneurial work)
- Press and media
- School board members and district administration
- Higher education representatives

Format

- Student projects are displayed and presented by the students themselves

- Each presenter gives a 3–5 minute presentation that includes a live AI Self-Report: what they directed AI to do, what they changed, and what they contributed that AI could not
- A panel of judges — including at least one teacher, one employer, and one community member — reviews presentations in each grade band
- Recognition is given for excellence in direction (best use of AI as a tool), excellence in originality (strongest human creative contribution), and excellence in presentation (clearest AI methodology disclosure)

Selection

Teachers at each grade level nominate up to three student projects per class. Nominees present a short dry run for peer and teacher review before the showcase. Final selections are made by the grade-level team. Every student who presents at the showcase receives a formal certificate of recognition.

The Showcase Program Booklet

Each annual showcase produces a printed program booklet distributed to all attendees. The booklet serves three purposes simultaneously: it documents the program's growth year over year, it gives every participating student visible recognition, and it generates revenue that offsets showcase costs.

The booklet format is as follows:

- Front section: a brief description of the AI preparedness curriculum and its organizing principles, accessible to community members who are encountering the program for the first time
- Middle section: profiles of all participating students and their projects, with finalist projects highlighted and accompanied by a brief description of each student's AI Self-Report
- Back section: advertisements from local businesses and community organizations, sold in advance of the event

Booklets are sold at the door for printing cost. The advertising revenue offsets or eliminates the net cost of showcase production. Typical community program advertising rates — $75–$150 for a half-page, $150–$300 for a full page — mean that 15 to 20 ad placements generate $1,500–$4,000, sufficient to cover printing, signage, certificates, and venue setup for events of this scale.

Natural advertising partners include local technology employers, law firms, pediatric and family healthcare providers, real estate professionals, financial advisors, tutoring centers, and any business that wishes to be publicly associated with student achievement and AI preparedness. The Chamber of Commerce is a natural founding sponsor. The booklet becomes a year-over-year record of the program's growth — by Year 4, four booklets on a board member's desk tell the story of what this curriculum has built more clearly than any report.

Appendix D: Legal and Ethical Framework for Student Creative Work

As students produce AI-assisted creative work of genuine quality — music, stories, games, artwork, research — questions of intellectual property, authorship, and commercial rights will arise. The district has a responsibility to address these questions before they become disputes, and to prepare students to navigate them independently as they enter adulthood.

> *NOTE: This appendix provides general legal orientation, not legal advice. The district should consult qualified legal counsel before adopting policies based on this framework. Statutory citations should be verified for current language.*

Current Legal Landscape

Copyright and AI-Assisted Work

The U.S. Copyright Office has issued guidance establishing that AI-generated content without sufficient human authorship is not eligible for copyright protection.[9] The human creative contribution in directed AI work remains potentially copyrightable, but the boundaries are still being defined through ongoing Copyright Office rulemaking and emerging case law.

The practical implication for student work is this: a student who directs AI to produce an image, then uses that image without modification, may have limited copyright protection for the result. A student who uses AI as a tool — directing, selecting, revising, combining, and building upon AI outputs — has a stronger claim to copyright in the resulting work, proportional to the human creative contribution.

This is precisely why the AI Self-Report mechanism matters legally as well as pedagogically. A documented record of the student's creative decisions — what they directed, what they changed, what they rejected — is also a record of the human authorship that supports copyright protection.

Minor Contracts and Commercial Rights

Under South Dakota law, minors (individuals under eighteen) generally lack the legal capacity to enter into binding contracts. Contracts with minors are typically voidable at the minor's election.[10] This creates complexity when student work reaches commercial value. The district's role is to:

- Ensure students and families understand the issue before it arises
- Connect students with resources — school counselors, community legal aid, the State Bar's volunteer programs — who can help them understand their options
- Decline to serve as a party to commercial agreements involving student work

The district does not represent students in commercial negotiations and does not take any ownership interest in student creative work produced under this curriculum.

Required Board Policies

Policy Question	Suggested Position
Who owns student work produced using district resources?	Students retain full ownership. The district retains no ownership interest.
May the district display student work publicly?	Yes, with written parental consent. Students retain all other rights.
May the district use student work in promotional materials beyond the showcase?	Only with separate, specific written consent identifying the intended use.
What disclosure is required for academic credit?	The AI Self-Report is the standard mechanism. Teachers may not penalize documented and disclosed AI use.
What disclosure is required for external submissions?	Students are responsible for meeting the requirements of the external submission. The district provides guidance but cannot ensure compliance.
What happens when a student's work generates revenue?	The district has no claim. Commercial agreements require parental involvement for minors.

Ethical Framework for Students

Honesty

Disclose AI's role in your work accurately and completely. The AI Self-Report is the habit that makes honesty automatic.

Fairness

Consider how your AI use affects others. Developing ethical judgment means thinking beyond what is allowed to what is right.

Originality

The goal is producing work that reflects your own genuine creative contribution — work that could not have been made without you specifically. Originality is not threatened by AI; it is what distinguishes work that matters from work that is merely competent.

Responsibility

You are responsible for the work you submit, publish, or sell — regardless of how much AI contributed to it. AI does not reduce your accountability. It makes your judgment more important, not less.

Appendix E: Entrepreneurship Curriculum by Grade Level

The AI preparedness curriculum has an unexpected and powerful upside that goes beyond academic readiness: it creates the conditions for genuine student entrepreneurship. A student who knows how to direct AI tools to produce professional-quality creative and commercial work — and who understands the legal framework that governs that work — is a student who can build something real.

Entrepreneurship in this curriculum is not a separate course. It is woven into the existing AI curriculum as a natural extension of the core principle: students are directors. A student who knows how to direct AI to serve a creative vision is a student who knows how to build a product.

Grades K–4: The Idea Habit

Entrepreneurship at this level is about building the habit of noticing problems and imagining solutions.

- Classroom 'invention show': students use AI image tools to visualize a product they would invent
- 'Make it better' exercises: take an existing object and use AI to design an improvement
- Early vocabulary: need, solution, customer (the person who would use your invention)

Grades 5–6: The Value Proposition

Students are introduced to the concept of value: what makes something worth paying for?

- 'Who is this for?' exercises: every creative project includes a written statement of the intended audience and what they would get from it
- Simple market research: ask classmates what they would want, then build something that responds to that need
- Introduction to the concept of a portfolio: collecting your best work because it represents your capability

Grades 7–8: The Business Concept

Students are introduced to the basic elements of a business concept — the problem, the solution, the customer, the revenue model.

- One-page business concept: students select a creative project and write a structured summary of who would buy it, what they would pay, and how the creator would reach them
- Guest speakers: local entrepreneurs and business owners speak about how they identified a market need and built something to meet it
- Introduction to intellectual property: what it means to own an idea, and why it matters

Grades 9–10: The Pitch

Students practice presenting their business concepts and responding to questions from a live panel.

- Pitch practice: students present a 3-minute pitch for a creative project with commercial potential to a panel of teachers and community members
- Industry research: students research the commercial landscape for their creative format and build a simple financial model
- Legal literacy: introduction to contracts, licensing, and the questions a creator should ask before signing anything

Grades 11–12: The Launch

Senior year culminates in the business launch project — a serious attempt to bring a student's AI-assisted creative work to market.

- Complete a professional-quality creative work using AI tools
- Research and select an appropriate pathway to market (self-publishing, app store submission, music distribution, competition submission, or direct outreach to a publisher or buyer)
- Prepare a complete professional submission package: the work itself, a cover letter or pitch, and a commercial rights summary
- Present at the District AI Showcase to an audience that includes publishers, business representatives, and community leaders
- Write a post-project reflection: what did you learn about the commercial landscape, what would you do differently, and what is your plan for next steps

The Showcase as Economic Development

The District AI Showcase, once it reaches full K–12 implementation in Year 3, is also an economic development event. Publishers, record labels, game studios, and technology investors who attend are not there as a courtesy. They are there because the showcase is a pipeline — an early look at creative talent that the district has cultivated and that the community has the opportunity to retain.

Local chambers of commerce, economic development organizations, and employer groups are natural partners for the showcase. Their involvement as co-sponsors, judges, and mentors connects the curriculum to the broader economic life of the community in a way that strengthens both.

The school board that approves this curriculum will be able to point to these outcomes — the students, the businesses, the talent retained — for as long as those students are building in this city. That is a legacy worth creating.

Appendix F: Budget Framework and Cost Estimates

Fiscal responsibility requires that any curriculum proposal be accompanied by an honest accounting of what it costs. This appendix provides that accounting. The four-year pilot structure of this curriculum is designed specifically to keep costs low and manageable at each stage, with the board making a fresh funding decision at each phase transition. No year commits the district to the next.

The estimates below are organized by year. Year 1 — a single elementary school pilot — is the most controlled and least expensive phase. Each subsequent year adds cost as the program expands, but each year also adds the evidence that justifies that cost.

Year 1: Single Elementary School Pilot

AI Tool Access

The tools required for the K–4 pilot are inexpensive — and in many cases already paid for. For voice interaction, picture book creation, and AI image generation, the district has three strong options:

- Google Gemini — included in Google Workspace for Education, which most districts including SFSD already license. Voice interaction and image generation are available. Marginal cost: near zero if the district is on Google Workspace.
- Adobe Express for Education — free for K–12 schools. Includes AI image generation and design tools well-suited for picture book projects.
- Book Creator — a dedicated picture book platform widely used in elementary schools. Approximately $3.50 per student per year at district licensing rates.

A single pilot elementary school has approximately 300–500 students in grades K–4. Tool licensing cost: $1,000–$2,000 annually, and potentially near zero if the district leverages existing Google Workspace access.

Summer Institute: Pilot School Teachers Only

A single elementary school has approximately 20–30 teachers in grades K–4. Three days of professional development at the district's standard rate (approximately $150–$200 per day):

25 teachers × $175/day × 3 days = approximately $13,000

This is the critical budget advantage of the pilot school model. Training 25 teachers instead of 275 reduces the summer institute cost by approximately 90% compared to a district-wide Year 1 launch. Those trained teachers then serve as co-facilitators and mentors when the program expands in Year 2 — reducing Year 2 training costs as well.

AI Curriculum Coordinator

For a single-school pilot, a full-time coordinator position is not warranted. A stipend for an existing district technology or curriculum staff member who takes on coordination as an addition to their current role: approximately $5,000–$8,000 for Year 1.

Annual Showcase — Funded by Sponsorships

The Year 1 showcase, held at a district-owned facility, is designed to be self-funding through a combination of business advertising in the showcase program booklet and door sales of the booklet at printing cost.

The booklet carries advertisements from local businesses — technology employers, law firms, healthcare providers, real estate professionals, financial advisors, and others who wish to be publicly associated with student achievement. Typical community program advertising rates of $75–$150 per half-page and $150–$300 per full page mean that 15 to 20 placements generate $1,500–$4,000. Gross showcase costs for a single-school event (printing, certificates, signage, and logistics) run $1,500–$3,000. The showcase can be fully self-funding from Year 1.

Materials and Contingency

Rubric development, classroom handouts, parent communication, and a contingency reserve: $2,000–$4,000.

Year 1 Cost Summary (Single Pilot School)

Budget Item	Low Estimate	High Estimate	Notes
AI tool licensing (~400 students)	$0	$2,000	May be $0 with Google Workspace
Teacher summer institute (~25 teachers)	$11,000	$15,000	One-time cost; these teachers mentor Year 2
AI Curriculum Coordinator stipend	$5,000	$8,000	Existing staff member; not a new FTE
Annual District AI Showcase	$0	$3,000	Self-funded via booklet ad sponsorships
Materials, rubrics, and contingency	$2,000	$4,000	
TOTAL — Year 1 Pilot	$18,000	$32,000	

Year 2 Cost Estimate (All Elementary Schools)

Year 2 training is less expensive than it would have been without the pilot, because Year 1 teachers serve as co-facilitators. Approximately 250 additional K–4 teachers district-wide need the three-day summer institute, offset by the reduced need for outside facilitators.

Budget Item	Low Estimate	High Estimate
AI tool licensing (all K–4, ~4,000 students)	$0	$20,000
Teacher summer institute (~250 additional teachers)	$100,000	$130,000
AI Curriculum Coordinator (expanded role)	$10,000	$15,000
District AI Showcase (expanded venue)	$0	$5,000
Materials and contingency	$5,000	$8,000
TOTAL — Year 2	$115,000	$178,000

Year 2 is the largest single-year investment. It is justified by the Year 1 pilot results that the board will have reviewed before approving it.

Years 3 and 4 Cost Estimates

Years 3 and 4 add middle school and high school teachers respectively. Training costs are similar to Year 2 for the newly added grade band, offset by the fact that K–4 and 5–8 teachers need only the annual one-day refresh rather than the full three-day institute.

Estimated additional cost per expansion year: $80,000–$130,000, declining toward $40,000–60,000 in steady-state once the full K–12 curriculum is running and teacher training is primarily refresh rather than initial onboarding.

Per-Pupil Context

Year 1 at a single pilot school costs approximately $45–$80 per pilot school student — a meaningful investment in a small number of students producing outsized evidence. Across all four years at full K–12 implementation, the cumulative per-pupil cost averages well below $50 per student per year. SFSD's current per-pupil expenditure is approximately $11,000–$12,000. The fully implemented curriculum represents less than 0.5% of per-pupil cost.

Funding the Program Within the Existing Budget

This curriculum can be funded without a new budget line and without an opt-out.

Showcase Self-Funding via Business Sponsorships

As described in Appendix C, the annual showcase program booklet carries business advertising that covers showcase production costs. The showcase does not require district funding. By Year 3, as the showcase grows in scale and prestige, it may attract co-sponsors — the Chamber of Commerce, local employers, economic development organizations — who contribute directly to program costs in exchange for showcase recognition.

The Innovation Grant Pool

The Innovation Grant Pool concept — redirecting a portion of unspent annual reserves into competitive classroom grants — is detailed in the executive summary. Coordinator stipends, teacher recognition awards, and materials costs are natural candidates for Grant Pool funding sourced from reserves the district already holds.

Reallocation from Existing Technology and Professional Development Budgets

The AI tools required for Year 1 overlap significantly with platforms the district may already be licensing. The summer institute replaces, rather than adds to, professional development days teachers already attend. A line-by-line review of the existing technology and PD budget — the kind of review this candidate has committed to conducting — is likely to reveal that the Year 1 pilot can be funded largely through reallocation rather than new spending.

The honest fiscal case for this curriculum is straightforward. Year 1 costs approximately $18,000–$32,000 — less than the cost of a single administrative position — and produces a trained teacher cohort, a documented pilot, a public showcase, and the evidence the board needs to make an informed decision about Year 2. The community impact of that investment is addressed in the Community Impact and Fiscal Sustainability section of this document. That is a responsible use of public funds. And the students who eventually graduate from this curriculum — who can direct AI, evaluate its output, and stand behind the result with their own name — are worth far more to this city than what it costs to build them.