

Spring 2026 Impact

DC AI Collaborative: A Project by Washington Leadership Academy

In November 2025, Washington Leadership Academy set out to share its emerging model for **responsible, human-centered AI implementation** with education stakeholders across Washington, DC. That vision led to the launch of *Pathways to Progress: AI & Tech @ WLA*, a school-based convening designed to bring educators, policymakers, and partners into real classrooms to see AI integration in practice. Through these conversations, it became clear that while interest in AI was rapidly growing, many schools were navigating the work in isolation and without clear guidance, shared frameworks, or coordinated support.

In response, WLA launched the **DC AI Collaborative**, a cross-sector initiative focused on helping schools learn from one another, align around best practices, and build more equitable approaches to AI implementation together. Since officially launching in January 2026, the Collaborative has grown into a citywide network supporting AI literacy, policy development, instructional innovation, and cross-school collaboration.

1.

Building the DC AI Collaborative

Since launch, the DC AI Collaborative has engaged **over 100 stakeholders** across Washington, DC, including educators, school leaders, policymakers, researchers, funders, and community organizations.

Key milestones include:

- Launch of the [DC AI Collaborative website](#) to publicly share resources, frameworks, and opportunities for collaboration
- Development of a growing network of school and organizational partners across DC
- Establishment of WLA as a demonstration site for responsible, equity-centered AI implementation

The Collaborative was created to ensure that schools across DC are not forced to navigate AI implementation alone, but instead can build shared approaches together.

2.

Convenings & Cross-Sector Collaboration

The DC AI Collaborative has hosted multiple convenings designed to move stakeholders from isolated experimentation toward coordinated action.

Pathways to Progress: AI & Tech @ WLA

The inaugural convening in November 2025 brought educators, policymakers, and partners into WLA classrooms to observe AI-supported instruction and engage directly with teachers and students.

Pathways to Progress: From Vision to Action

The second convening in March 2026 focused on building a shared understanding of school needs related to AI implementation and launched the collaborative process that led to the DC AI Needs Assessment.

Expert School Visit: Staff Use of AI

Hosted in partnership with the DC Charter School Alliance, this event gave school leaders the opportunity to engage with classroom teachers, students, and cross-sector panelists about the successes and challenges of implementing AI responsibly.

Together, these convenings reinforced a core belief of the Collaborative: meaningful AI implementation requires collaboration, transparency, and the breaking down of traditional silos between schools and sectors.

3.

Shared Policy & Instructional Frameworks

To help schools move from conversation to implementation, the DC AI Collaborative and WLA developed several publicly shared frameworks and resources.

DC AI Needs Assessment

- *A citywide needs assessment was developed using cross-sector stakeholder input to identify key barriers, opportunities, and priorities related to AI implementation across DC schools.*

Define. Design. Demonstrate.

- *An instructional framework guiding teachers to:*
 - *Design AI-supported lessons intentionally*
 - *Define clear boundaries for AI use*
 - *Demonstrate effective and responsible use for students*

Three-Strand AI Framework

- *A framework supporting:*
 - *AI literacy*
 - *AI implementation in instruction*
 - *Student creation and innovation with AI*

These resources are designed to be practical, adaptable, and scalable for schools across DC.

4.

Building Teacher & School Capacity

Washington Leadership Academy has prioritized building internal capacity before scaling externally.

Staff Professional Learning

- WLA hosted three Playlab professional development sessions that focused on helping teachers:
 - Build AI literacy
 - Create classroom-based AI applications
 - Design more purposeful instructional experiences using AI

AI Coaching & Instructional Support

- WLA developed a schoolwide AI coaching approach focused on helping teachers move from tool exploration to purposeful instructional integration. This focused on:
 - coaching cycles
 - modeling, and
 - collaborative planning.

Lab Classroom Program

- Building on the success of the initial pilot, WLA expanded its Lab Classroom Program to allow educators and school leaders to observe AI-enabled instruction in authentic classroom settings.

These efforts have helped move AI implementation from isolated experimentation toward more consistent, schoolwide practice.

5.

Student Agency & Innovation

Student voice and agency remain central to the work.

Student Hackathon (March 2026)

- In partnership with Playlab, WLA hosted a schoolwide AI Hackathon where juniors designed AI-powered solutions to real problems in their communities.
- Projects included:
 - A student government app that helps students turn concerns into solution-oriented emails
 - An AI-skeptical student project that encouraged users to engage in offline, hands-on activities instead of defaulting to technology

Students also participated directly in convenings and panel discussions, helping policymakers and educators understand how AI is already shaping student learning.

6.

Instructional Impact & Outcomes

The work has already demonstrated promising outcomes for both teachers and students.

Student Outcomes

- 64% of students report understanding strategies for effective AI use
- 70% of students report understanding both the benefits and risks of AI
- AP Psychology FRQ scores increased from approximately 2.2/7 to 5.6/7 through the integration of Playlab-generated prompts and Class Companion feedback cycles

Staff Outcomes

- 86% of staff report openly discussing AI's benefits and challenges
- 89% of staff report AI tools improve their effectiveness

These early indicators suggest that thoughtful, human-centered AI implementation can strengthen both student learning and teacher practice.

7.

National Recognition & Looking Ahead

The work of WLA and the DC AI Collaborative has received growing national recognition.

Highlights include:

- Recipient of the **2026 AI K-12 Student Agency Award**
- Featured in FutureEd Profile, [*Digital Trailblazers: Lessons from a School on the Frontier of Artificial Intelligence*](#)
- Selection as part of the **Inaugural Playlab AI Lab Schools Cohort**
- Participation in national AI conversations through the **National Academy of Sciences, Oxford University, Georgetown University, Microsoft, EdSAFE AI, and YouthBuild Global.**

Looking ahead, the DC AI Collaborative will continue working to:

- Launch Communities of Practice for school leaders and educators
- Support coordinated, scalable AI policy development across DC
- Expand family and community engagement around AI
- Define what strong pedagogy looks like in the age of AI

The goal remains the same: ensuring that all students across Washington, DC have access to equitable, responsible, and future-ready learning experiences in an AI-driven world.

This work is still in its early stages, but one thing is already clear: the future of AI in education will be shaped not just by technology, but by the choices schools, communities, and leaders make together. The DC AI Collaborative is committed to ensuring those choices center equity, agency, and opportunity for all students.