

# POLK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## K-12 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE EDUCATION PROPOSAL

*Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders Today*

Submitted to the Polk County School Board | April 2026

Prepared by John Scherer, CEO & Founder -- Scherer Tech  
25+ Years in Information Technology

**CONFIDENTIAL**



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# ABOUT SCHERER TECH

25+ Years IT Excellence | Vendor-Neutral | District-First | Compliance-First



*"We understand both the technology deeply and the unique responsibilities that come with serving children and public institutions."*

## 25+ Years IT Experience

Deep expertise in infrastructure, cybersecurity, cloud, and AI/ML across public sector and enterprise clients.

## K-12 Education Expertise

Partnered with school districts on technology strategy, curriculum alignment, vendor evaluation, and student data privacy compliance.

## Security & Compliance First

Every recommendation built around FERPA, COPPA, and Florida statute compliance. Student safety is non-negotiable.

## Vendor-Neutral Guidance

No financial relationship with any AI vendor or publisher. Every recommendation serves Polk County students and taxpayers exclusively.

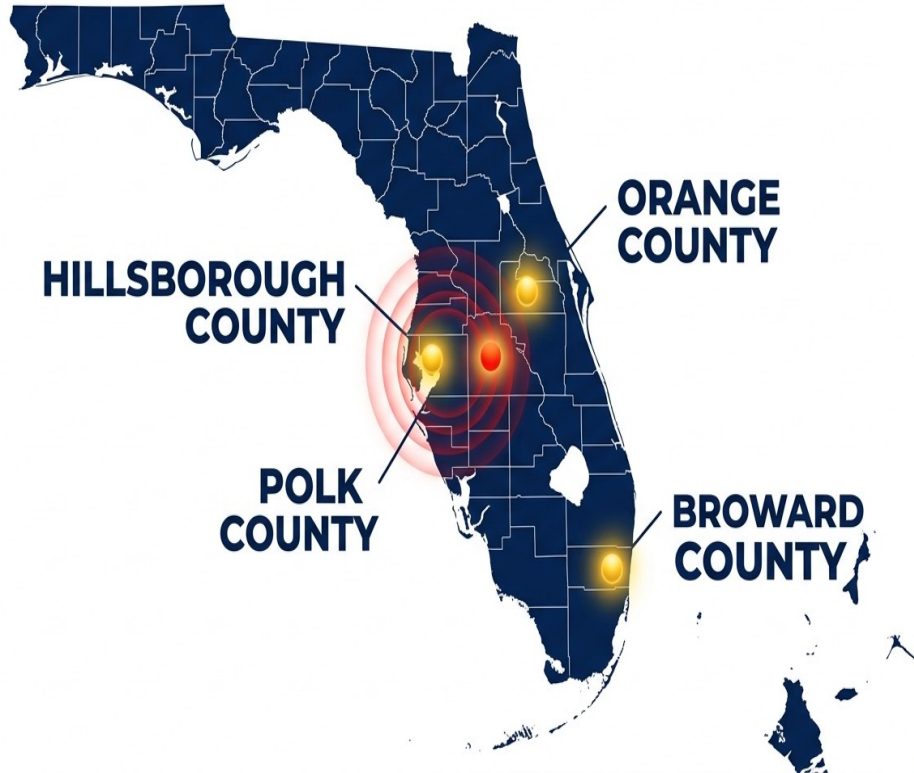
## Transparent Benchmark Reporting

Every initiative measured against pre-established metrics and reported to the Board in plain language on schedule.

# WHERE POLK COUNTY STANDS TODAY

Florida's 8th Largest District -- One of the Last Major Districts to Act on AI Education

## FLORIDA COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS: KEY AREAS & ALERT



### WARNING: THE GAP IS WIDENING

*Every semester of inaction is a semester 116,000 Polk students fall further behind.*

**116,000**

Students

**167**

Schools

**8th**

Largest FL

**ZERO**

AI Curriculum

### FLORIDA PEER DISTRICT STATUS

<b>Orange County</b>	3-4 years ahead
<b>Hillsborough County</b>	1-2 years ahead
<b>Broward County</b>	2-3 years ahead
<b>Polk County</b>	Starting NOW -- 0 years ahead

# WHY NOW? THE URGENCY FOR POLK COUNTY

Six Concrete Realities That Already Exist Today -- Not Speculation About a Distant Future

## FL DOE Standards Already in Effect

Updated K-12 CS standards, effective July 2024, embed AI content at every grade band. Polk is behind on curriculum alignment while peer districts move forward.

## Students Using AI Now -- Unguided

Students at ALL grade levels use ChatGPT, Gemini, and AI tools for schoolwork with NO district guidance on accuracy, bias, ethics, or safety.

## Equity Demands Immediate Action

With 41.8% Hispanic and 20.9% Black students, AI literacy gaps create compounding, multi-generational disadvantage for our most vulnerable families.

## Polk State Already Ahead of K-12

Polk State integrates responsible AI use into higher ed programs. Our K-12 graduates arrive unprepared for what Polk State now expects.

## Central Florida Economy Transformed

Technology, healthcare, logistics, and manufacturing employers rapidly adopt AI. Graduates without AI fluency face a growing competitive disadvantage.

## FL K-12 AI Task Force Awaits Action

The Task Force hosted the 2025 Classroom of the Future summit. Continued Polk inaction is an active choice to fall behind the state roadmap.

# HOW ADVANCED DISTRICTS GOT THERE

The Path That's Already Been Cleared -- Polk County Drives on It Faster

## ORANGE COUNTY (OCPS) The Florida Pioneer

2022-23: Early CS standards alignment

Formal partnership with University of Florida

Brought in Nvidia for industry credentials

Built 4-course FL DOE-approved HS pathway

Trained ALL teachers BEFORE student launch

Result: 3-4 years ahead of Polk today

## BROWARD COUNTY The Large-District Scaler

Active FL K-12 AI Task Force member

ADOPTED OCPS pathway -- no re-development

Phased rollout: HS then Middle then Elementary

Aggressively pursued grant funding

Proactive bilingual family communication

Result: 2-3 years ahead of Polk today

## UF / OCPS / NVIDIA The Curriculum Engine

UF: Academic depth & research rigor

Nvidia: Industry credentials & real-world tools

OCPS: Real-world pilot, testing & refinement

FL DOE 4-course approval: GRANTED

Any FL district can adopt immediately

Polk skips 3-4 years of development time

**KEY INSIGHT: The UF/OCPS/Nvidia collaboration spent 3-4 years building and getting this pathway approved. Polk County can adopt it on Day 1 of Year 2 -- skipping the development timeline that held every early-mover district back.**

# THE POLK COUNTY LEAPFROG ADVANTAGE

Why Polk Can Achieve in 3 Years What Took Peer Districts 5-7 Years to Approach

<b>CH</b> <b>EC</b>	<b>Proven Curriculum Ready to Deploy</b>	<b>CH</b> <b>EC</b>	<b>Peer District Blueprint Available</b>	<b>CH</b> <b>EC</b>	<b>Grant Funding Landscape Mapped</b>	<b>CH</b> <b>EC</b>	<b>Florida AI Task Force Road Built</b>	<b>CH</b> <b>EC</b>	<b>Scherer Tech 25+ Years IT</b>
<p>The UF/OCPS/Nvidia 4-course pathway is FL DOE-approved and battle-tested. Polk can license and launch in Year 2 with zero development time needed.</p>		<p>Broward's large-district implementation blueprint is documented and available. Polk does not replicate their process -- it improves on it.</p>		<p>ESSER III, Title IV-A, E-Rate, FL DOE CS, and NSF STEM grants are all identified. Polk enters the grant process already knowing exactly what to file.</p>		<p>The state roadmap is published. Polk does not build the road -- it drives on it, faster than any district that came before.</p>		<p>An experienced implementation partner eliminates the learning curve that cost early-mover districts significant time, money, and costly rework.</p>	

DISTRICT COMPARISON SNAPSHOT			
Milestone	Orange Co.	Broward Co.	POLK COUNTY
Teachers AI Certified	Partial	Partial	100% -- Year 1
Safety Policy Pre-Launch	No	No	Yes -- Year 1
HS AI Pathway Live	2023	2024	Year 2 (2027)
Full K-12 All Schools	Partial	Partial	Year 3 -- COMPLETE

# K-12 AI CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Progressive AI Literacy from Kindergarten Through Senior Year -- Every Student, Every Grade



## CURRICULUM SOURCES

AI4K12 | MIT RAISE

Khan Academy AI

UF / OCPS / Nvidia Pathway (FL DOE Approved)

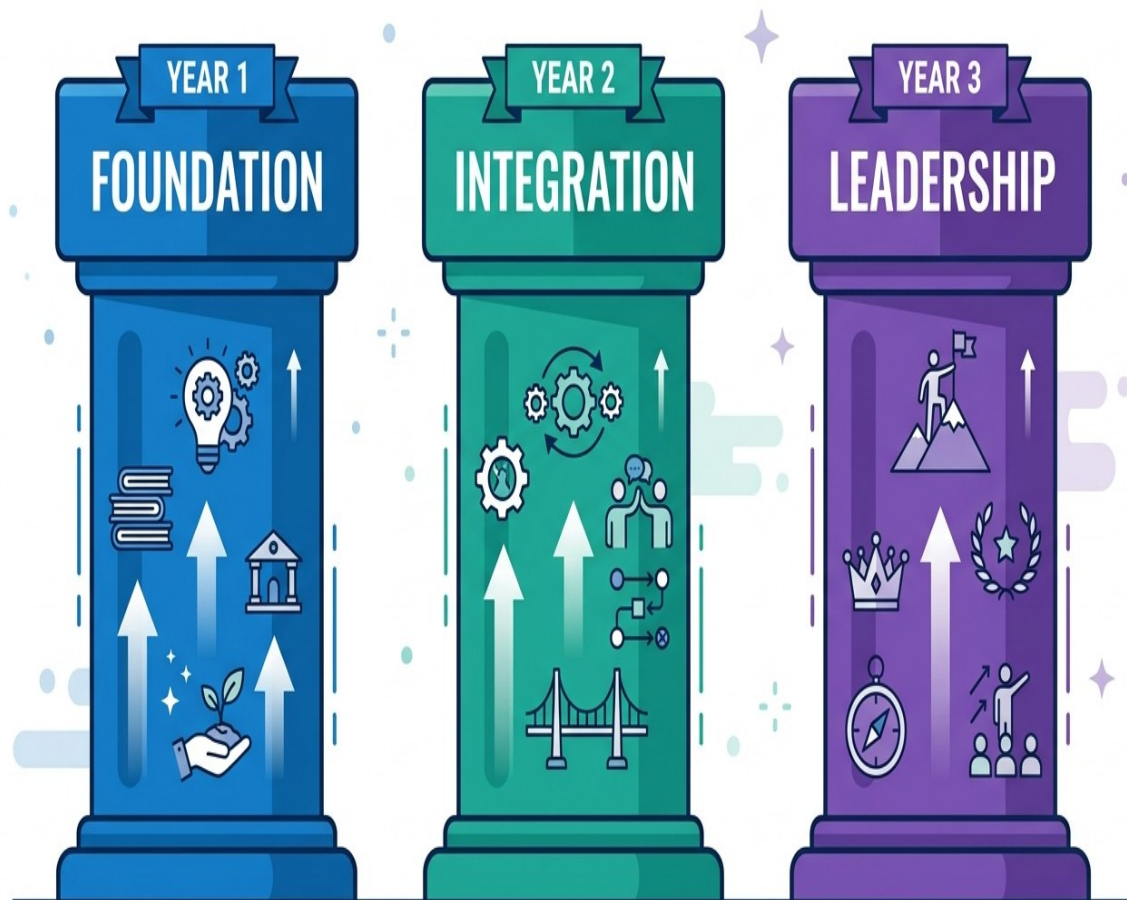
Florida K-12 AI Task Force Framework

<b>K-2</b> <b>Ages 5-8</b>	<b>3-5</b> <b>Ages 8-11</b>	<b>6-8</b> <b>Ages 11-14</b>	<b>9-12</b> <b>Ages 14-18</b>
AI as a helper concept	What is AI? How does it learn?	AI debate & critical thinking	UF/OCPS/Nvidia 4-course pathway
Voice-interactive tools	AI writing coaches (not generators)	STEM virtual lab simulations	AI for college & career planning
Pattern recognition games	Curated safe research tools	Cyberbullying & AI ethics	Controlled generative AI access
No PII -- closed environment	Bias identification basics	Personalized learning pathways	AI for Good senior Capstone

All content reviewed for safety compliance, Florida DOE 2024 CS standards alignment, and age-appropriateness before any classroom licensing or deployment.

# THE 3-YEAR ACTION PLAN

From Last to First -- Florida's Most Advanced K-12 AI District in 36 Months



YEAR 1 2026-2027	YEAR 2 2027-2028	YEAR 3 2028-2029
FOUNDATION	INTEGRATION	LEADERSHIP
AI Readiness Assessment	All 167 Schools -- Full K-12	Full K-12 Equity Achieved
100% Teacher Certification	UF/Nvidia HS Pathway Live	UF + USF + UCF Partnerships
Safety & AUP Policy Adopted	Polk State Dual-Enrollment	AI for Good Capstone Required
K-8 Pilot Launched	AI Clubs & Competitions	Innovation Hub Opens
Grants Filed -- 30-60% offset	Quarterly Board Dashboards	FL DOE Showcase Status
\$169K gross / ~\$90K net		

# YEAR 1 -- FOUNDATION (2026-2027)

Assessment | Policy | Teacher Certification | K-8 Pilot | Grants Filed



## YEAR 1 INVESTMENT

\$169,000 gross | Est. \$68K-\$118K net  
Grants: ESSER III, Title IV-A, E-Rate  
FL DOE CS Grant, NSF STEM Education

### Q1 Months 1-3

#### Assessment & Policy Architecture

District-wide AI readiness assessment (all 167 schools)

Curriculum sourcing, vetting & licensing for all grade bands

AI Safety & Acceptable Use Policy development begins

PCPS AI Education Task Force formed & chartered

### Q2 Months 4-6

#### Certification & Community Engagement

100% educator AI literacy certification -- ALL PCPS teachers

Bilingual (EN+ES) community engagement sessions district-wide

Active grant funding pursuit begins -- all identified sources

### Q3-Q4 Months 7-12

#### Pilot Launch & Year 1 Review

K-8 pilot launched -- Lakeland, Winter Haven, Haines City

Quarterly Board outcome dashboard reports begin

Year 1 formal Board review & Phase 2 authorization decision

**YEAR 1 GOAL: Enter Year 2 with trained teachers, adopted safety policy, pilot data, and licensed curriculum -- advantages that took Orange County and Broward 2-3 years to accumulate.**

# YEAR 2 -- INTEGRATION (2027-2028)

Full K-12 Curriculum | UF/Nvidia HS Pathway | Polk State Partnership | AI Clubs

## Core Subject AI Integration -- All 167 Schools, All Grades

Embed AI literacy into Math, Science, ELA, and Social Studies across all K-12 grade levels at all 167 schools, fully aligned to Florida DOE 2024 CS standards. Every Polk County student receives structured AI literacy instruction in Year 2.

## High School AI Pathway Launch -- UF/OCPS/Nvidia 4-Course Sequence

The FL DOE-approved four-course HS AI pathway launches at ALL Polk County high schools -- the same credentialed sequence in Orange and Broward counties. Polk launches it stronger: certified teachers, adopted safety policy, and a year of pilot data.

## Polk State Dual-Enrollment Partnership Formalized

Qualifying PCPS students earn simultaneous high school and college credit in AI and CS courses through Polk State College -- a K-12-to-college pipeline that Orange County and Broward do not have with their local college systems.

## PCPS AI Clubs & National Competitions Sponsored

After-school AI clubs at every middle and high school. Sponsored student participation in state and national AI competitions and science fair AI categories. Polk County students compete on the national stage for the first time.

# YEAR 3 -- LEADERSHIP (2028-2029)

Statewide Recognition | Innovation Hub | University Partnerships | Florida's #1 AI District



## YEAR 3 MILESTONE

Polk County is Florida's most advanced K-12 AI education district. Other districts study Polk. Our graduates are the most AI-literate, career-ready, college-prepared students in the state.

## Full K-12 Rollout -- All 167 Schools

Every Polk County student regardless of school, zip code, or family income has access to the same quality AI education. The equity milestone no other large FL district has fully achieved.

## UF + USF + UCF University Network

Scherer Tech brokers agreements with USF, UCF, and UF -- the most comprehensive K-12-to-university AI pipeline in Florida. Orange County has UF only. Polk has all three.

## AI for Good Senior Capstone

Every graduating Polk senior applies AI to a real Polk County community challenge -- from rural healthcare to agricultural technology. Original published work no other FL district requires.

## Polk County AI Innovation Hub

Permanent hub for educator development, student project incubation, community literacy events, and school-industry research partnerships. The destination FL education leaders visit.

# STUDENT SAFETY & ETHICAL AI USE

Six Non-Negotiable Principles -- Mandatory for Every AI Tool in Every Polk County School



**Six Mandatory Safety Principles Govern Every Polk County AI Tool**

**Mandatory -- Not Optional Enrichment**

## Student Data Privacy -- Zero Tolerance

No student data may be used to train or test any external AI model. Every tool passes full FERPA, COPPA, and FL Student Data Privacy statute audit before authorization.

## Grade-Level Access Controls

Strict controls enforced at the DISTRICT NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE level -- not just software. Students only access tools reviewed for their developmental stage.

## AI Bias & Misinformation Literacy

At EVERY grade band K-12, students receive explicit instruction in identifying AI bias, recognizing hallucination, and critically evaluating AI content. Mandatory core outcome.

## Collaboratively Developed AUP

A Board-approved district-wide Acceptable Use Policy -- developed with teachers, students, parents, and administrators -- defining permitted uses, prohibited uses, and consequences.

## Transparent Bilingual Communication

Every Polk County family receives clear communication in English AND Spanish about every AI tool in use, what data is collected, and how student privacy is protected.

## Mandatory Continuous PD

Ongoing professional development throughout the initiative. All educators maintain current knowledge of AI capabilities, risks, ethical considerations, and instructional strategies.

# BUDGET & GRANT FUNDING STRATEGY

Fiscally Responsible Implementation -- Every Taxpayer Dollar Multiplied Through Available Grants

## YEAR 1 BUDGET BREAKDOWN

District-Wide AI Readiness Assessment	\$22,000
Educator AI Literacy Certification	\$38,000
Curriculum Licensing -- Pilot Phase	\$28,000
AI Education Coordinator (Year 1)	\$55,000
Safety, Ethics & AUP Policy Development	\$14,000
Bilingual Community Engagement Sessions	\$12,000
<b>TOTAL GROSS INVESTMENT</b>	<b>\$169,000</b>

**Estimated NET after grants: \$68,000-\$118,000 (30-60% offset)**

## GRANT FUNDING SOURCES

<b>ESSER III</b>	Emergency relief -- technology and learning recovery initiatives
<b>Title IV-A</b>	Student Support & Academic Enrichment -- STEM and technology programs
<b>E-Rate</b>	Federal program for school technology infrastructure funding
<b>Florida DOE CS Grant</b>	Florida Dept. of Education Computer Science grant program
<b>NSF STEM Education</b>	National Science Foundation STEM education grants
<b>Local &amp; Corporate Partners</b>	Central Florida foundation and corporate partnership opportunities

# KEY BENEFITS FOR POLK COUNTY

Tangible, Measurable, and Lasting Benefits Across Every Stakeholder Group in the Community



*"Every Polk County student -- regardless of school, zip code, or family income -- deserves a high-quality AI education. This initiative delivers it."*

## FOR STUDENTS

Future-ready AI fluency & credentials

Equity for Hispanic, Black & economically disadvantaged

Student agency as AI creators, not consumers

Safe, policy-governed learning environment

## FOR TEACHERS & STAFF

Sustainable reduction in admin burden

Scherer Tech AI Literacy Certification earned

More personalized instruction with AI analytics

Career-enhancing professional development

## FOR POLK COUNTY & THE REGION

Recognized statewide educational leadership

Central Florida AI-ready talent pipeline

Strengthened community trust with all families

Fiscally responsible -- 30-60% grant offset

# FIVE ACTIONS REQUESTED OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

Specific, Actionable Steps at the Next Regularly Scheduled Board Meeting

## 1 Form the PCPS AI Task Force

Establish a Polk County AI Education Task Force with a Board-level charter. Include classroom teachers, administrators, parent representatives, high school student voices, and Scherer Tech as designated external AI education consultant and IT compliance advisor.

## 2 Authorize Feasibility Study

Commission Scherer Tech for a comprehensive district-wide AI curriculum audit and implementation roadmap across all 167 PCPS schools. Full study delivered within 90 calendar days of Board authorization.

## 3 Allocate Year 1 Funding

Approve Year 1 budget of \$169,000 gross (est. \$68K-\$118K net after grants). Covers: AI Readiness Assessment, Educator Certification, Curriculum Licensing, AI Education Coordinator, Safety Policy Development, Community Engagement Sessions.

## 4 Schedule Community Engagement

Direct Scherer Tech and district leadership to execute bilingual (English + Spanish) community sessions at accessible sites across Polk County before any student-facing AI deployment begins.

## 5 Commit to Year 1 Board Review

Schedule a formal Year 1 Board review session. Scherer Tech presents: student outcomes, teacher confidence metrics, community survey results, complete budget performance, grants secured, and a detailed Phase 2 proposal.

*"The goal of education is not to fill a bucket,  
but to light a fire."*

*-- William Butler Yeats*

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## **AI can help us light it for every single child in Polk County.**

The question before this Board is not whether  
Polk County can lead on AI education.

It is whether Polk County will choose to.

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**We are ready. We hope the Board is too.**

**John Scherer**  
**CEO & Founder, Scherer Tech**