# Giving School Communications an AI Edge

## Modern technologies drive better experiences in K-12 and higher education

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# Introduction

Schools are hubs of communication — educators sending assignment information to students, parents calling the front office with questions, staff hashing out issues in a text chain and so much more.

That's why schools are a natural fit for artificial intelligence technologies that integrate and enhance communications.

"In K-12 and higher education, AI improves how schools connect with families, staff and the broader community," says Michael Fiocca, regional vice president with RingCentral. "That may be through automated outreach like attendance alerts or closures, or something like our AI receptionist, which can answer common questions 24/7 and intelligently route calls. That frees up the admin staff to focus on other important tasks."

Adding an AI layer to your office phone system, videoconferencing platforms and contact center management helps you meet some of today's most pressing communications challenges.

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— **Michael Fiocca,** Regional Vice President, RingCentral

# 3 Use Cases for AI-Enhanced Communications

## 1. Automated reception assistant

The receptionist's desk is an excellent starting point for K-12 leaders who want to prove a basic AI use case before digging deeper into the technology.

AI doesn't replace a human receptionist; some calls from parents or students will always require a human's innate empathy and intuition.

But an AI-powered automated agent brings significant efficiencies to call handling in multiple ways. RingCentral, for instance, developed its AI Receptionist app to help organizations provide answers to common questions around the clock. The AI assistant also reduces hold times and eases the workload for front-office employees.

## 2. Conversation intelligence

AI apps can learn why people call into a school, detect when they are upset and suggest ways to make conversations more productive. This kind of data helps school leaders identify the sources of common problems and develop more nuanced understanding of callers' mindsets. Conversation intel can be tracked across multiple channels like email, text and social media.

For a large university with a sophisticated contact center operation, conversation intelligence can help managers motivate their staff, identify their best call agents and improve skills for their entire team. For smaller colleges and K-12 school districts that lack contact centers, a standard office-phone system with built-in AI can still provide a wealth of conversation intelligence.

## 3. Enhancing events

AI can help schools plan events and create promotional materials. Recorded events like webinars or club meetings can be automatically transcribed, with a summary of discussions, decisions and votes. GenAI tools can generate social media posts and Q&A documents summarizing what happened during the event.

# AI is Crucial in School Communications

### Enhanced productivity.
Teachers can use AI to summarize and document calls with parents. Administrators can configure AI to route calls to the right staff. Higher education researchers can enhance collaboration with partners around the world with instant language translation. In a contact center or front desk, AI helps agents answer questions faster and handle more calls every day.

### True self-service.
Chatbots and other AI agents can provide information regarding school hours, sporting event times and other types of static data to students, parents and community members at any time. Connecting a communications platform to knowledge bases containing courses, prerequisites, graduation requirements and other details better prepares students for meetings with counselors and advisors.

### Low friction.
An admissions officer talking to a parent could access bursar's office data to make sure financial aid payments have gone through without having to place a separate call to that office. A student considering changing their major could query a chatbot and easily walk through the pros and cons. These kinds of automations improve user satisfaction and build trust.

### Omnichannel engagement.
AI tools in an office communications platform let everyone use the communication methods they prefer, whether that's voice calls, text messages, emails or videoconferences. A parent can start a conversation via email and follow up by text or voice, maintaining a continuous communication thread and a history of the engagement.

### Decision-making insights.
Conversations produce real-world (and real-time) data that can inform school strategies and policies. With AI-powered predictive analytics, leaders can study communication patterns and behaviors to prepare for looming challenges. Because AI understands language patterns, it can run sentiment analyses on conversations at scale to understand concerns from students, parents and other stakeholders. Supervisors can map out future staffing needs with far greater precision to avoid hiring too few, or too many, people.

# 5 Principles of AI Governance

Sound data governance helps schools implement new technologies without sacrificing their commitment to protecting students. Schools considering AI vendors should focus on these five governance principles.

## 1. Transparency

AI's large language models (LLMs) occasionally produce inaccurate outputs. Transparency helps prevent misunderstandings and build trust.

- ☐ AI tools that summarize academic committee meetings, for instance, must be able to explain the source of their outputs.

- ☐ If parents encounter incorrect information from a school chatbot, your communication platform must show how the bot analyzed the prompt and generated a response.

## 2. Fairness

LLMs sometimes generate outputs that reinforce bias. Your AI governance strategy must account for that and include ways to ensure fair access.

- ☐ A speech-to-text AI tool used during a multilingual parent-teacher conference must be able to accurately interpret a range of voices and accents — not misrepresent or exclude them.

- ☐ A chatbot should be carefully fine-tuned to avoid culturally insensitive language or misinformation that could arise from inadequately curated training data.

## 3. Accountability

Taking ownership and establishing a chain of command are crucial. If and when something goes awry, you can't just blame the bots.

- ☐ Your AI communication platform must have audit trails, fallback mechanisms and feedback loops to ensure staff can scrutinize transcripts and override AI suggestions.

## 4. Privacy

Protecting personal data is paramount.

- ☐ If your school records and transcribes calls to parents, there should be options to automatically delete or anonymize recordings that include sensitive information.

- ☐ Integrations with student information systems (SIS) or learning management systems (LMS) should have precise controls on what data is accessible to AI.

## 5. Safety

AI in communication platforms can make schools safer. A real-time transcription tool that provides sentiment analysis, for instance, could flag escalating tension in conversations with students or parents.

- ☐ However, schools must also look for false positives that trigger panic or violate privacy.

- ☐ AI vendors must help their clients anticipate and mitigate safety issues like these.

# Optimize Your AI-Enhanced Communications Strategy

### Plan: Align with your mission
The most effective AI solutions directly support your institution's mission — delivering real value without introducing undue risk or operational disruption.

If you adopt a fantastic AI solution that nobody needs and that doesn't align with your mission, it will fail.

Begin by piloting low-risk, high-impact tools. Your administrative office might use AI to transcribe voicemails and route them to the appropriate staff. Or your IT help desk could deploy an AI-powered chatbot to automate routine requests like password resets.

### Engage: Get everyone on board
Broad support begins with inclusive engagement. If you're considering an AI-powered receptionist, be sure your existing receptionist understands and supports the change. If teachers will be sending automated messages to parents, make sure you collect feedback from families.

You'll also need a dedicated team to evaluate how tools will operate day to day. This team should include leaders from IT, legal and instructional technology,

along with top administrators. Their primary responsibilities are to set guidelines for ethical AI use, assess AI progress, guide policy compliance, and establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

### Train: Build skills to encourage adoption
A one-time AI training session won't suffice. Instead, offer continuous support that begins well before rollout and extends into day-to-day use. Make sure staff understand not only how the tools work but also why they're being implemented — and where to turn for help.

### Understand: Keep humans in the loop
Human review remains essential. Designate staff to regularly audit AI outputs — from chatbot responses to voice-to-text transcripts — and empower them to make adjustments or escalate concerns as needed.

### Measure: Quantify AI impact
Define clear performance metrics to track both technical performance and operational outcomes. Key indicators may include response accuracy, error rates, time saved, user satisfaction scores or the number of inquiries resolved without escalation.

## Iterate: Change for the better

The value of AI grows with each implementation. Use lessons learned from early pilots to refine future efforts. Attend industry conferences, connect with peers, and ask vendors about innovative use cases in other districts or institutions.

Remember that missteps are often your richest source of insight. If a chatbot is misreading calendar data and escalating routine questions, for instance, that may signal a need to retrain your model or update the source data.

## Monitor: Stay on top of changing regulations

Your school is subject to shifting federal. state and local AI regulations. It's your responsibility to know about these changes.

Perhaps a college starts offering AI-enhanced call recordings as part of its mental health services. That could have compliance ramifications under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Similarly, legislation like the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) will likely be updated as AI technology evolves.

# Conclusion: Better Outcomes with AI-Powered Communication

Updating your office communications technology can be a practical, low-risk path to high-impact AI.

- Families get information when they want it, not only when school is in session.

- Instructors can brief students and parents via text or social media in multiple languages.

- Administrators and staff glean crucial insights from call analytics.

- Automated assistants help school receptionists answer common, repetitive questions.

- School clubs, parent groups and other organizations can automatically receive transcripts of online events.

"AI isn't here to replace people — it's here to help them," Fiocca says. "Whether it's note-taking, answering common questions or finding information faster, the goal is to ease the burden on staff and create better experiences for students and families." These benefits only materialize when districts take the time to align technology with mission goals, train users effectively and continuously evaluate impact.

Work with vendors that offer clear guidance, proven integrations and a commitment to ethical, explainable AI. With the right foundation, your district can use these tools not just to communicate more — but to connect better. That's the real promise of AI in education.

*This piece was written and produced by the Center for Digital Education Content Studio, with information and input from RingCentral.*

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