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K-12 EdTech Quality Action Toolkit

*Empowering Leaders to Further Leverage the
Five EdTech Quality Indicators*



Photo by Allison Shelley for EDUimages

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Why This Toolkit?

Education leaders today face a fast-moving marketplace. Districts access thousands of digital tools and applications per year, and the pace of product development, accelerated by artificial intelligence (AI), can make it hard to tell which technologies actually support learning and which add burden to teachers, carry risks to students, or cause staff confusion. Therefore, the [Five EdTech Quality Indicators](#) (FEQI) were developed in 2024 by members of the EdTech Quality Collaborative, including [1EdTech](#), [CAST](#), [CoSN](#), [Digital Promise](#), [InnovateEDU](#), [ISTE+ASCD](#), and [SETDA](#), to provide a common framework for evaluating classroom-level digital tools, such as those supporting instruction, assessment, and student well-being.

The FEQI are as follows:

- ▶ **Safe:** Edtech products must follow robust data privacy and security measures to protect student and educator data and safeguard against unauthorized access or data breaches.
- ▶ **Evidence-based:** Edtech product design, implementation, and claims of effectiveness need to be grounded in rigorous research and evidence-based practices.
- ▶ **Inclusive:** Edtech products must prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and equitable design to ensure they are acceptable to learners from all backgrounds.
- ▶ **Usable:** Edtech products must be designed for educators and students to easily use them to ensure a seamless digital experience.
- ▶ **Interoperable:** Edtech products must seamlessly and securely connect to other technologies within a school's digital ecosystem.

As a first step to promoting broad use of the FEQI by state and local education leaders, SETDA developed the [K-12 EdTech Procurement Guide](#), providing adaptable model questions that can be incorporated into procurement policies and processes. Since its publication in February 2025, several thousand users have downloaded the guide, and they continue to spark ideas in [various states](#) about improving relationships with solution providers.

This toolkit picks up where SETDA's guide left off by encouraging use of the FEQI in various contexts outside of the detect procurement processes, including communication strategy, professional learning, and product marketing. Specifically, the toolkit consists of the following adaptable components:

- ▶ A “Dear Vendor” letter template that state and local education leaders can use to clearly inform solution providers about what they expect in edtech products and services.
- ▶ A training agenda template that educators, nonprofits, and other professional organizations can use to build familiarity and fluency with the FEQI among current and upcoming leaders.
- ▶ An alignment template that companies can use to publicly communicate how they are meeting or working towards elements of the FEQI.
- ▶ A “how-to” guide for the [EdTech Index](#), showing how different audiences can get the most out of this central platform that showcases products’ alignment with the FEQI.

As mentioned in SETDA’s [2025 K-12 EdTech Procurement Guide](#), not every element of the FEQI may be applicable in all contexts. Users are encouraged to adapt the templates in a way that emphasizes the key indicators that are most relevant to their unique circumstances.

We want this toolkit to be practical and used—tell us what’s working, what needs sharpening, and share examples of how you’ve leveraged the FEQI or items in this toolkit. Please reach out to info@setda.org with your ideas and stories.



Photo courtesy of FullScale

Template: “Dear Vendor” Letter from States

Dear Educational Technology Partner,

Thank you for your continued commitment to supporting [State]’s educators, students, and families through innovative digital learning solutions. As the landscape of educational technology continues to evolve, [organization/agency] is aligning its procurement and evaluation practices with nationally recognized standards to ensure that all tools used in our schools are safe, effective, equitable, and sustainable.

To that end, we are adopting the [EdTech Quality Indicators](#) developed by the [EdTech Quality Collaborative](#), a national consortium led by SETDA and other leading organizations. This letter outlines how your organization can align with these indicators and comply with applicable [State] and federal regulations.

Overview of the EdTech Quality Indicators

The EdTech Quality Indicators provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating educational technology products across five critical dimensions:

- ▶ **Safe:** Edtech products must follow robust data privacy and security measures to protect student and educator data and safeguard against unauthorized access or data breaches.
- ▶ **Evidence-based:** Edtech product design, implementation, and claims of effectiveness need to be grounded in rigorous research and evidence-based practices.
- ▶ **Inclusive:** Edtech products must prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and equitable design to ensure they are acceptable to learners from all backgrounds.
- ▶ **Usable:** Edtech products must be designed for educators and students to easily use them to ensure a seamless digital experience.
- ▶ **Interoperable:** Edtech products must seamlessly and securely connect to other technologies within a school’s digital ecosystem.

[State]-Specific Legal and Policy Requirements

Vendors must ensure compliance with the following laws and policies of the state of [State]:

[Insert State-Specific laws and policies as applicable.]

Examples of State-Specific laws and policies may include:

- ▶ Illinois - [Student Online Personal Protection Act](#) (SOPPA) restricts the use and sharing of student personally identifiable data (PII) and outlines specific duties on vendors with regards to handling of PII.
- ▶ New York - [New York State](#) prohibits the unauthorized release of personally identifiable student, teacher, or administrator data (PII).

Federal Compliance Expectations

All vendors must comply with the following federal laws and regulations:

- ▶ [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA): Protects student education records, granting parents rights to access, request corrections, and control the disclosure of their children's records.
- ▶ [Children's Online Privacy Protection Act](#) (COPPA): Gives parents control over personal information websites and online services collect from children under 13.
- ▶ [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment](#) (PPRA): Gives parents rights over their children's participation in U.S. Department of Education-funded surveys and activities, focusing on protecting sensitive personal information.
- ▶ [Americans with Disabilities Act Title II \(2024 Rule Update\)](#): Requires digital content and applications to meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standards.

Recommended Actions for Vendors

To support alignment with [State's] expectations, vendors are encouraged to review SETDA's [EdTech Quality Indicators Guide](#) and be prepared to respond to model questions aligned with each indicator during procurement and evaluation processes. Some sample questions for each indicator include:

Safe

- ▶ What data privacy standards and regulations does your product comply with and how?
- ▶ How is student data stored, encrypted, and protected from unauthorized access?
- ▶ Do you conduct regular security audits or vulnerability assessments?
- ▶ Can you provide a copy of your data privacy policy and incident response plan?
- ▶ What is your protocol for identifying, responding to, and notifying stakeholders of a data breach?
- ▶ What is your policy regarding data retention and deletion of data no longer needed?
- ▶ Do you hold Data Privacy Agreements (DPAs) with school districts (e.g., [National Data Privacy Agreement](#) from the Student Data Privacy Consortium at Access 4 Learning)?

Evidence-based

- ▶ What research or evidence supports the effectiveness of your product in improving learning outcomes?
- ▶ Have any third-party evaluations or peer-reviewed studies been conducted on your product?
- ▶ Can you share case studies or success stories from schools or districts using your solution?
- ▶ How do you measure and report on the impact of your product in real-world educational settings?
- ▶ How does your product align with established educational standards (e.g., state, Common Core, ISTE Standards), and can you provide a crosswalk or mapping document?

Inclusive

- ▶ How does your product support all learners, including those with disabilities, English Language Learners, and neurodiverse students?
- ▶ Is your product compliant with web accessibility standards such as WCAG 2.1?
- ▶ Do you have a completed [Annual Conformance Report \(ACR\) using the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template \(VPAT\)](#) referencing WCAG 2.1 for your product?
- ▶ What languages and cultural contexts does your product support?
- ▶ How do you ensure equitable access and representation in your content and design?
- ▶ What steps have been taken to ensure the content and any embedded algorithms or AI features do not contain or promote cultural or algorithmic bias?
- ▶ Is your product compatible with common assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, voice controls, magnification tools)?

Usable

- ▶ What steps have you taken to ensure the product is intuitive and easy to use for students and educators?
- ▶ Do you offer onboarding, training, or ongoing support for users?
- ▶ How do you gather and incorporate user feedback into product updates?
- ▶ Can you demonstrate how your interface minimizes cognitive load and supports instructional flow?
- ▶ What is your commitment to system uptime and reliability, and what is the typical response time for critical bug fixes?

Interoperable

- ▶ Does your product integrate with common LMSs, SISs, or SSO platforms?
- ▶ What data standards (e.g., LTI, OneRoster, Ed-Fi) does your product support?
- ▶ Can you provide documentation or examples of successful integrations with other edtech tools?
- ▶ How do you ensure smooth data exchange and minimize manual data entry for educators and IT teams?
- ▶ Do you provide a robust and well-documented Application Programming Interface (API) for custom integrations, and what is the process for reviewing and approving those connections?
- ▶ How are updates to your product managed to ensure they do not break existing interoperable connections with our other essential technology tools?

Finally, we strongly encourage vendors to adopt privacy-by-design principles, maintain transparent privacy policies, and pursue third-party validations and certifications aligned to the above indicators. We also recommend vendors to register their products and keep information up-to-date on the [EdTech Index](#), a searchable repository of product profiles and third-party validations designed to cut the time it takes to compare classroom-level tools.

Closing

We value your partnership in advancing high-quality, secure, and inclusive digital learning across the state. Should you have any questions or require additional guidance, please contact our office at [Insert Contact Email].

Template: Training Agenda for Nonprofits and Professional Organizations

To assist understanding the FiveEd Tech Quality Indicators (FEQI) we have developed a sample training agenda template that schools, education nonprofits and other professional organizations can use to build familiarity with the FEQI, This training aims to help vendors understand the quality criteria school districts may use to evaluate and procure edtech products, including:

- ▶ **Safe:** Edtech products must follow robust data privacy and security measures to protect student and educator data and safeguard against unauthorized access or data breaches.
- ▶ **Evidence-based:** Edtech product design, implementation, and claims of effectiveness need to be grounded in rigorous research and evidence-based practices.
- ▶ **Inclusive:** Edtech products must prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and equitable design to ensure they are acceptable to learners from all backgrounds.
- ▶ **Usable:** Edtech products must be designed for educators and students to easily use them to ensure a seamless digital experience.
- ▶ **Interoperable:** Edtech products must seamlessly and securely connect to other technologies within a school's digital ecosystem.

Aligning EdTech Solutions with The Five EdTech Quality Indicators

- ▶ **Audience:** Product managers, sales teams, software developers, company executives
- ▶ **Format:** Half-day virtual or in-person workshop (approximately 4 hours with breaks)
- ▶ **Goal:** Equip vendors to better understand the FEQI and design/support products that better meet the indicators



Photo courtesy of FullScale

Training Agenda Overview

Time	Session Title	Objectives
15 minutes	Welcome & Introductions	Set expectations, review objectives, introduce facilitators and participants
30 minutes	Understanding the Framework	Overview of collaborative approach, why these indicators matter, and how they shape district purchasing decisions
45 minutes	Deep Dive: The 5 EdTech Quality Indicators	Explore each indicator, real-world school perspectives, and vendor implications
10 minutes	Break	
40 minutes	Interactive Workshop: Aligning Your Product	Small group activity: Map your product(s) to the five indicators
30 minutes	District Panel / Case Study	Hear directly from district leaders on how they evaluate vendor solutions using these indicators
30 minutes	Vendor Action Planning	Individual reflection and planning: What changes will you make? How will you communicate alignment to districts?
20 minutes	Q&A + Closing	Open discussion, resources for continued learning, feedback survey

Sample Training Materials

- ▶ [Partnership for Quality: The 5 EdTech Quality Indicators \(Slide Deck\)](#)
- ▶ [EdTech Product Quality Checklist \(Checklist\)](#)

Template: Demonstrating Your Commitment to the Five EdTech Quality Indicators

The FEQI are quickly becoming a shared language among K-12 education leaders as they evaluate various classroom technologies. By aligning your company's story, documentation, and product design to the FEQI, you can make it easier for education leaders to understand your value and make confident, informed choices about your tools. This section helps companies demonstrate their understanding and intentional use of the FEQI in ways that build trust and open doors to collaboration. This process may be particularly valuable for smaller or newer companies seeking to build relationships with education leaders, but cannot yet pursue paid certifications or badges offered by various organizations.

Showcase Your FEQI Alignment

- ▶ **Identify your strongest indicators:** Review the FEQI below and select those that most clearly connect to your product's design and purpose. For example, an adaptive literacy tool might emphasize Evidence-based and Inclusive, while a platform that integrates with multiple learning management systems might lead with Interoperable and Safe.
- ▶ **Gather supporting evidence:** Compile documentation, case studies, and third-party reviews that substantiate your claims. Organize this evidence in a short, plain-language summary. Sample statements are provided below.
- ▶ **Tell your story clearly:** Feature the FEQI statements prominently on your website and emphasize them in RFP responses and product briefs. This helps your product be competitive by allowing states and districts to instantly see your intentional alignment.
- ▶ **Keep it updated:** Update your FEQI alignment summary annually or when major product updates occur. If you later earn a third-party badge or certification, include that evidence under the relevant indicator to show continuous improvement.

Additional Tips for Smaller Companies

- ▶ **Start with transparency:** If your company is early in its journey on certain indicators, describe your roadmap and planned improvements. Districts and states value honesty and growth plans.
- ▶ **Leverage free visibility:** Submit or update your profile on the [EdTech Index](#) to share your FEQI-aligned information in one central place.
- ▶ **Collaborate and learn:** Join networks like SETDA or CoSN to stay informed about evolving state and local priorities and best practices for each indicator.
- ▶ **Make it a conversation starter:** Use your FEQI alignment brief to open discussions with states or districts about pilots, partnerships, or co-design opportunities.

Alignment Template

Safe: Edtech products must follow robust data privacy and security measures to protect student and educator data and safeguard against unauthorized access or data breaches. This includes adhering to industry standards and applicable laws to create a secure learning environment and adopting principles of data minimization (only collecting necessary data) and data transparency (users understand which data are collected for what purpose). It is important to note that many states have specific privacy and security laws for the use of K-12 edtech and data.

Sample Alignment Statement

Our platform is designed with student data privacy and security at the core. We maintain strict safeguards to protect all personally identifiable information from unauthorized access, disclosure, or modification.

Data Security & Access Controls

We use AES-256 encryption for data at rest and TLS 1.3 for data in transit. Access to production systems is restricted to authorized personnel through role-based permissions and multifactor authentication (MFA). All third-party service providers undergo annual security and privacy reviews, and data is never sold or shared for marketing purposes.

Regulatory Compliance

We comply with FERPA, COPPA, and PPRA, and maintain signed Data Privacy Agreements (DPAs) with all partner districts. We also align to applicable student data privacy laws, in states such as Illinois and Washington.

Incident Response & Breach Protocol

Our incident response plan outlines a four-step process—detection, containment, notification, and remediation—led by our security and legal teams. For example, in 2024 we conducted a simulated data-breach exercise with district partners to test our 72-hour notification workflow and documentation procedures.

User Choice & Transparency

End users and administrators can opt out of data sharing with third-party integrations at any time through the platform's privacy settings. We publish a plain-language Privacy Notice and annual Data Protection Impact Assessment on our website.

**Example: See how [Clever](#) talks about its privacy safeguards.*

Evidence-based: Edtech product design, implementation, and claims of effectiveness need to be grounded in rigorous research and evidence-based practices as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Tiers of Evidence specifies. Providers should engage in research-driven design, empirical validation, demonstrated effectiveness, and alignment with established educational standards.

Sample Alignment Statement

We prioritize independent evaluation and continuous measurement of the outcomes our product is designed to impact. Attached are two independent evaluations of our product: a peer-reviewed quasi-experimental study showing improved reading comprehension in Grades 3–5 and a longitudinal district pilot (2019–2022) demonstrating consistent gains in formative assessment growth measures.

Our logic model links product inputs (i.e., teacher professional learning and embedded adaptive content) to short-term outputs (i.e., increased instructional minutes on targeted skills), to medium-term outcomes (i.e., skill mastery on formative measures), and to long-term outcomes (i.e., improved course-level proficiency and retention). We routinely disaggregate outcomes by subgroup (e.g., English learners, students with Individualized Education Programs) to evaluate differential impact and to refine instructional sequences.

To balance measurement with privacy, we use de-identified, aggregated reporting for vendor-led analyses and we require signed DPAs that permit only the minimal data required for evaluation. We support mutual accountability through pre-pilot agreements that document baseline expectations, success metrics, and data access rules. Post-pilot, we provide a joint findings report and a follow-up improvement plan.

**Example: See how [PowerSchool](#) talks about the evidence behind their product.*

Inclusive: Edtech products must prioritize accessibility, inclusivity, and equitable design to ensure they are acceptable to learners from all backgrounds and with a broad range of learner variability. This includes ensuring edtech products are accessible for all learners, do not promote existing stereotypes, do not create new stereotypes, and do not prevent students from acquiring accurate information because of biased algorithms.

Sample Alignment Statement

Our product is intentionally designed to serve all learners, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In the last three years we have served 20,000 students across 5 districts; 34% of those students were eligible for free/reduced lunch and 18% were identified as English learners. We include case snapshots demonstrating measurable progress for students with Individualized Education Program (IEP) accommodations.

With our AI-powered products, we implement bias-mitigation practices including input-validation, regular fairness testing on representative datasets, transparent model cards describing training data and limitations, and a human-in-the-loop review for high-stakes recommendations. We document these safeguards in our AI use policy.

We are committed to the Department of Justice's updated Title II guidance and WCAG expectations. Our public-facing web and mobile interfaces are tested for WCAG 2.1 AA conformance (or note exceptions with remediation plans where required), and we maintain an accessibility roadmap for continued compliance and improvement.

For students with IEPs and 504 plans, our platform supports individualized accommodations (e.g., text-to-speech, captioning, adjustable font/spacing, alternative assessments) and exports required evidence for IEP teams. We document compatibility with major assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, switch access) and provide a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) alignment brief that maps core UX and content features to UDL principles.

**Example: See how [Seesaw](#) talks about its alignment with the UDL principles.*

Usable: Edtech products must be designed for educators and students to easily use them to ensure a seamless digital experience. If the product is not easy to use, it creates an unnecessary barrier, and educators and students will struggle to use the tool.

Sample Alignment Statement

Teachers tell us the product's primary value is how quickly it enables targeted instruction and feedback. Key usability features include easy assignment creation from grade-level standards, real-time formative dashboards that highlight actionable next steps, and teacher authoring tools to tailor content in under 10 minutes. Students and families access content and feedback via a single secure portal (mobile and web) with role-based access and plain-language progress reports.

Our platform supports co-teaching workflows (e.g., shared rosters, teacher roles, co-planning spaces) so multiple instructors can view and manage shared students. Formative and summative assessments are embedded and export actionable reports (e.g., teacher prompts, intervention group suggestions). We align our digital skills prompts and rubrics to the ISTE Standards for Students and provide scaffolds to boost learner agency and motivation.

User feedback is captured in-app and via regular educator advisory panels. Product teams triage issues with a public-facing roadmap and a quarterly release cadence. For evaluative trials, we offer four-week full-feature trial accounts that support live-environment testing with sample data. Trial accounts include a security checklist and guidance on data retention and DPA terms so districts can evaluate functionality while protecting student data.

**Example: See how [BrainPop](#) demonstrates its usability and alignment to the ISTE Standards.*

Interoperable: Edtech products must seamlessly and securely connect to other technologies within a school’s digital ecosystem. This is accomplished by adhering to established interoperability standards that ensure secure data exchange and allow for the beneficial aggregation of data to inform instruction and personalize learning.

Sample Alignment Statement

Our system uniquely identifies students using district-provided student identifiers (SIDs) and supports secure import/export of roster data via CSV, OneRoster, and automated rostering APIs. We support single sign-on via SAML and OAuth2 and recommend MFA for all administrator accounts. We also support LTI for LMS integrations to launch content securely and report grades back to the LMS gradebook.

Data exchange formats include CSV, OneRoster, and JSON over HTTPS APIs. Where applicable, we support Ed-Fi (data model) and IMS standards (LTI, OneRoster). Export and import limits (if any) are documented in our technical integration guide. Large historical imports may require an initial off-line transfer for performance and integrity checks. We document API endpoints, field mappings, throttling policies, and example payloads in our developer portal and provide sandbox API keys for technical pilots.

We publish expected one-time onboarding costs and annual operational fees, including any charges for custom API development or heavy-usage data exports, so districts can model total cost of ownership before purchase. Our technical support team offers integration support (e.g., email, ticketing, optional paid integration services), and we provide an interoperability checklist to assist district IT teams during pilots.

**Example: See how [Lightspeed Systems](#) talks about interoperability across its different tools.*

Next Steps to Consider

As you reflect on your company’s alignment with the FEQI, consider how to make that commitment visible and memorable across every touchpoint. Could your alignment summary become a concise, shareable asset—something you bring to district meetings, post on your website, or display at conferences and exhibit halls? How might you communicate your understanding creatively through short videos, educator testimonials, or case studies that show the indicators in action? Finally, think about partnership—which organizations that convene states, districts, and education leaders could help you strengthen trust, expand visibility, and amplify your story? Turning your FEQI alignment into an authentic, ongoing conversation—not just a document—will demonstrate that quality, safety, and inclusivity are built into how you operate, not just what you sell.

Getting the Most Out of the EdTech Index

The [EdTech Index](#) is a fast, searchable repository of edtech product profiles and third-party validations designed to cut the time it takes to compare classroom-level tools. Education leaders are encouraged to use the Index as their first stop in the “fact-finding” phase of exploring a new product, so they can dedicate time and resources on more in depth feedback gathering or pilot strategizing.

Quick Start Tips

- ▶ Use the search bar and enter specific, relevant key words (e.g., elementary reading comprehension, dyslexia supports). Results will highlight your search terms.
- ▶ Use filters to narrow results based on factors like audience, academic discipline, product category, as well as [FEQI-aligned validations](#). Add promising products to “My List.”
- ▶ Use the Index’s comparison view to see features, price, and validations next to one another.
- ▶ Export products and data from “My List” to facilitate collaborative discussions and ensure that the selected tools meet the school or district’s specific needs.

Additional Considerations

- ▶ Use the validations as signposts, rather than definitive verdicts. A badge or certification is a helpful signal, but additional evidence directly from the vendor will be helpful in reviewing products. Consider asking vendors questions from SETDA’s [K-12 EdTech Procurement Guide](#).
- ▶ Document what you searched and why. Save search terms and the products you compared, so the rationale for vendor selection is auditable and repeatable.
- ▶ Always test products in your own environment through a trial account before signing anything. Compatibility fields in the Index’s product profiles are useful but not a substitute for a live test.
- ▶ If fields important to your context are missing or old, follow up directly with the vendor to request documentation, rather than assuming the product is non-compliant.

Recommendations for Specific Users

Local Education Agencies

- ▶ Include a scan of the Index as an obligatory part of the fact-finding process to collect evidence of FEQI alignment and create a short list of products for hands-on trials.
- ▶ Share “My List” exports with school boards, district leadership, or purchasing committees to make the case for pilot choices.

State Education Agencies

- ▶ Point districts to the Index as a neutral starting place and incorporate Index searches into state procurement guidance.
- ▶ Maintain a statewide library of suggested tools and applications that link to Index pages to facilitate districts' product "fact-finding" phase.
- ▶ Encourage vendors to keep their Index profiles current so statewide libraries are up to date with the latest product details.

EdTech Vendors

- ▶ Keep information current and clearly mark FEQI-aligned validations on product pages.
- ▶ Reach out to ISTE+ASCD for profile elevation opportunities.
- ▶ Edtech management companies can incorporate the FEQI into their platforms by working with ISTE+ASCD to license EdTech Index data (e.g., [see Clever's announcement](#)).

Education Nonprofits

- ▶ Use the Index as part of workshops to show participants how to search products, interpret data against local needs, and move from Index findings to pilot design (e.g., see "Template: FEQI Training Agenda" section).



Photo courtesy of FullScale

Acknowledgements

The SETDA State Action Committee supports the broader membership community by advancing education through technology policy, advocacy, and state-level edtech initiatives. By fostering collaboration among members; aligning SETDA's projects with member priorities; and addressing critical challenges, relevant issues, and national needs, the committee empowers states to improve learning outcomes through the effective use of technology.

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