



TO: CFT
FROM: EMC Research, Inc.
RE: Results from Survey of CFT Members
DATE: August 2026

Background and National Context

As the capabilities of artificial intelligence models continue to expand, industries across the country and California are grappling with critical questions around the effectiveness, adoption, and broader effects of these AI tools. Despite the growing availability of powerful AI services, workers in California are skeptical of AI entering the workplace and adoption is not widespread. A recent PPIC surveyⁱ reports that half of California workers think that AI will reduce the number of jobs in their workplace, while 1 in 10 (14%) use AI for work at least a couple times a week. These numbers mirror national trends in AI usage. Gallup reportsⁱⁱ that as of May 2026, 1 in 10 (15%) of U.S. employees use AI daily. Worker skepticism and lack of adoption converge from a variety of rationales: as Gallup reportsⁱⁱⁱ, infrequent users or non-users of AI most frequently cite opposition to changing workflows, ethical opposition, data privacy concerns, and skepticism of the utility of AI.

Education has not been immune from confronting these questions. Faculty and staff are faced with both the question of using AI in their own work as well as how best to prepare students to enter a world where AI feels like an inevitability. Student use of AI is complex, as educators attempt to navigate the effects of AI on students' critical thinking, cheating, and communication, while simultaneously teaching students to use the technology responsibly and effectively. A recent episode^{iv} involving a Brown University economics professor who suspected nearly all of his students to have cheated on a midterm exam using AI illustrates many of the anxieties and concerns felt by educators in the current landscape.

This memo highlights findings from a recent survey completed by EMC Research among CFT members dealing with many of these same questions. The survey was conducted among 900 CFT members, including oversamples of CCE and UC members with results weighted proportionally to overall membership¹. Interviews were collected via telephone, text-to-web, and email-to-web methodologies from April 30 – May 10, 2026.

Most members report familiarity and comfort with using AI, but are not enthusiastic adopters of the technology.

More than 4 in 5 members say they are familiar with “generative artificial intelligence tools that create unique text or images in response to user prompts”, including a third who say they are very familiar. A majority (59%) say they personally feel comfortable using AI tools. Those members who report higher familiarity are also more likely to be more comfortable: 95% of UC members report being familiar, and 67% report being comfortable using the technology, similarly 75% of CCE Higher Ed members report familiarity, and 65% report being comfortable using AI tools. These metrics also track closely with how often members report broadly using AI services like ChatGPT, Claude, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, or other similar AI tools. A majority (55%) say they use these services at least several times per month or almost every day, as compared to nearly three-quarters of UC members and 60% of CCE Higher Ed members that say the same. However, when asked about specific uses of AI, many members report less frequent use. Majorities say they never use AI for supporting students directly (61% never use), writing

¹ CFT members are classified into four divisions: PreK-12, Classified (CCE), Community College (CCC), and University (UC). Weighted results reflect the proportion of each division to overall CFT membership.

emails of communicating with parents or students (55%), or presenting instructional material (49%). The most common applications include researching subject matter (40% use at least somewhat often) and for personal use outside of work (36% use at least somewhat often).

Members are skeptical about the effects of AI on their job, in the classroom, and in California, and are especially concerned about the use of AI to monitor or evaluate educators or classified professionals.

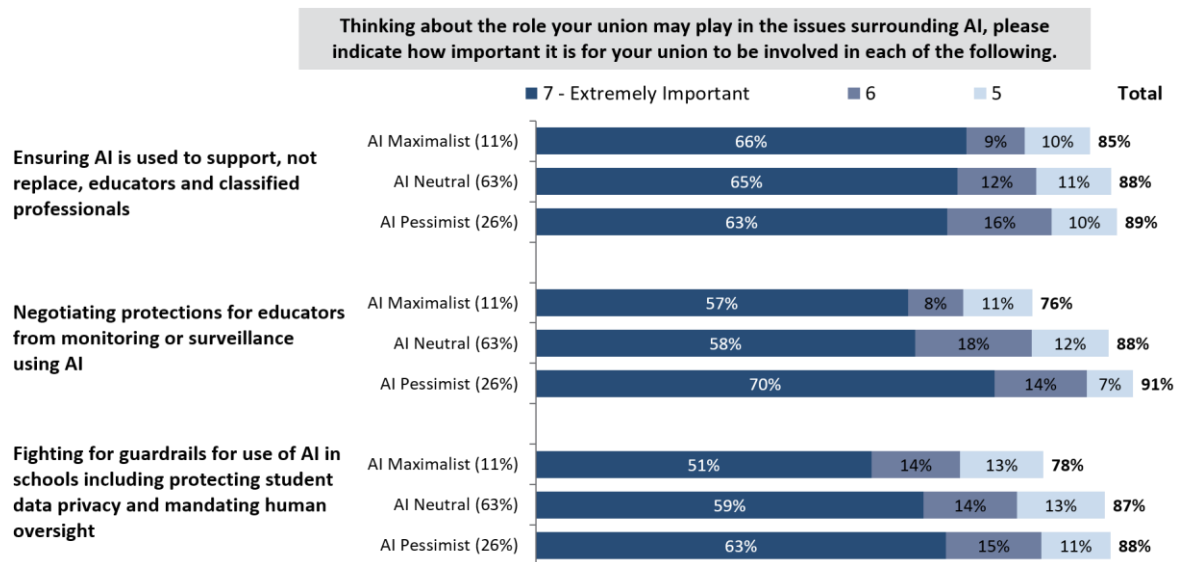
Similar shares of members say that AI is making their job easier (35%) or harder (31%), while a quarter (24%) say that it is not much different. While members are split over whether AI has had a positive or negative effect in their experience (46% mostly positive as compared to 52% mostly negative), there is broad agreement that AI has negative consequences for students. Strong majorities, especially among PreK-12 educators and classified professionals, agree that AI makes it easier for students to cheat (65% strongly agree, 67% among PreK-12), is harmful to students' critical thinking skills (55% strongly agree, 56% among PreK-12), and is harmful to students' mental health (75% total agree, 76% among PreK-12). Few agree that AI helps students learn more effectively (28% total agree). Similarly, there is strong consensus among members that AI will have negative effects on broader systems in California, including the environment (71% negative impact), democracy (76% negative impact), and the education system (68% negative impact). Members also share strong concerns around the use of AI for monitoring and evaluating educators and classified professionals, including 70% of PreK-12 members that say they are concerned about that issue. However, despite these broad concerns, there is also strong agreement that "it is important to prepare students to effectively use AI." Three-quarters (75%) of members overall agree with the statement, including majorities across all divisions.

Regardless of general attitudes toward AI, members support union involvement in creating guardrails and protections for the use of AI in schools and classrooms.

Members across divisions agree that it is important for the union to be involved in setting policy in schools and the classroom regarding AI. Nearly all members, including 9 in 10 PreK-12 members, say that it is important for the union to be involved in protecting educators' ability to decide when and how to use technology in their classrooms (89% total important among all members), and similar portions share the same sentiment for guardrails on AI use in schools including student data privacy and human oversight (86% total important, 90% among PreK-12 members).

These sentiments also hold regardless of other attitudes toward AI, either positive or negative. Based on responses to questions on how often members use AI for particular applications, whether it makes their job easier or harder, and whether AI has had a mostly positive or negative effect, CFT members fall broadly into three attitudinal segments: AI Maximalists, AI Neutral, and AI Pessimists. Maximalists make up 11% of members and are the most positive toward AI. These members frequently use the technology for a wide variety of applications, do not believe it is making their job harder, and believe it has had a mostly positive effect. Conversely, Pessimists make up 26% of members and are much more negative toward AI. They rarely if ever use AI for any applications, believe it does make their job harder, and believe it has had mostly negative effects in their experience. In the middle are the 63% of members who are Neutral: they have a mix of attitudes on the effects of AI, but may use it for some specific applications from time to time.

Importantly, despite differences in views toward AI's effects, there is broad and strong consensus across attitudinal segments that it is important for the union to be involved in creating protections and guardrails for AI in schools and the classroom.



ⁱ Baldassare, M., Bonner, D., Mora, L., & Thomas, D. (2025). PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and their economic well-being. PPIC. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/ppic-statewide-survey-californians-and-their-economic-well-being-november-2025/>

ⁱⁱ Gallup (2026). What Percentage of Employees Use AI at Work?. <https://www.gallup.com/699797/indicator-artificial-intelligence.aspx#jumpToIndustry>

ⁱⁱⁱ Kemp, Andy (2026). AI in the Workplace: What Separates Adopters and Holdouts. Gallup. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/704252/workplace-separates-adopters-holdouts.aspx>

^{iv} Whitford, Emma (2026). Brown Professor Suspects Majority of His Class Used AI to Cheat. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty/learning-assessment/2026/07/08/brown-professor-suspects-most-his-class-used-ai-cheat>