

CASE STUDY

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION

Insight, a global Solutions Integrator, partners with the South Australian Department for Education to deliver EdChat, an innovative chatbot that uses generative AI to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.



Insight 



Government
of South Australia

Department for Education

South Australia's Department for Education aims to ensure South Australia's public education system can unlock every child's potential now and in the future. It supports children and young people to learn and thrive as they prepare for their futures beyond the classroom. One of the key skills that the Department identified as essential for the 21st century is digital literacy, which includes the ability to understand, use and create with digital technologies.

To foster this skill, the South Australian Department for Education partnered with Insight Enterprises and Microsoft to scale and trial EdChat, an AI-powered chatbot application built on Azure OpenAI Services that leverages GPT-4. The 8-week pilot involved eight schools across South Australia, covering both metropolitan and regional areas, and involving more than 1500 students and 400 educators.

EdChat is the first chatbot of its kind in Australia and one of the first in the world to be introduced in an educational setting. It encourages student and teacher engagement in natural language conversations by generating realistic and coherent text-based responses on user inputs. The platform was designed to provide a safe and controlled environment for students and teachers to explore the potential of AI, understand its limits and constraints, and to develop critical thinking, creativity and ethical awareness.

"When ChatGPT was released to the public, we knew immediately that it would change everything. We know that young people are going to go out into a world where generative AI and other forms of AI will be embedded in every industry, and they need to be able to navigate that world with confidence. The question was not whether or not we introduce AI to schools, but how."

Martin Westwell
Chief Executive,
Department for Education



Beyond the hype - Innovating with AI responsibly

Insight and South Australian Department for Education approached EdChat with a focus on responsible AI to ensure that the platform remains transparent, accountable and fair. A key metric for success was demonstrating that EdChat can equip students with the skills and dispositions required to engage with it critically and creatively in a safe environment that respects values, diversity and privacy.



“We wanted to understand what generative AI could do and what its limitations are, as well as how we can embed it into students’ learning so that they use it as part of their process rather than just to get results. We needed a version of ChatGPT that we had full control over and one that we could ensure was safe and appropriate for student use,” said Martin Westwell.



EdChat is built with a range of fault tolerant backend Azure services which log chat history and balance workloads. Its conversation content safety monitoring capabilities escalate inappropriate or concerning (at risk) prompts for action.

By using the Azure AI Content Safety service to build controls into the system, the Department has full control over how EdChat is trained to detect, moderate and block potentially harmful content. The platform gives school staff full visibility over how students are using EdChat as all interactions are comprehensively logged and securely stored in the Department’s private tenancy.



Empowering the next generation to shape Australia's future.

To fully maximise EdChat, the South Australian Department for Education decided to rely on participating schools to provide feedback on how EdChat was being used and where the tool was adding value to students and teachers. This approach proved to be effective, as the Department was able to gather many ambitious and innovative use cases of the tool, giving them unique ideas on how to expand the use of generative AI in education.



As students and teachers became familiar with the tool and discovered how it integrates into their teaching and learning practices, the Department saw a rapid increase in EdChat user adoption.

The Department has also observed increased usage of the tool outside of school hours, demonstrating that the 24/7 access to learning support is a key benefit for the unique ways that students learn. Following the successful trial, the South Australian Department for Education is confident in the solution's infrastructure and safety measures. The Department is planning to continue rolling out EdChat in different schools across the state with a view of learning how generative AI can support students in both digitally advanced schools and those in rural areas.

"Edchat is a truly inspiring example of how the education sector can embrace generative AI to enhance the delivery and experience for its most important and valuable stakeholders - students. This breakthrough technology empowers students to take control of their own learning, improve their academic performance, and develop essential skills for their future careers. With EdChat's intelligent assistant, teachers and students can access a personalised learning experience that is both fun and effective. Imagine a future where learning is intuitive and tailored to individual needs - thanks to EdChat, that future is closer than ever".

Veli Matti Vanamo, Chief Technology Officer, Insight, APAC