



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on August 10, 2026

## N.Y. School Nixes Robot as Parents, Teachers Push Back

A school district in rural western New York has [hit pause](#) on plans to place a humanoid, AI-powered robot in a high-school classroom. Parents, teachers, and state regulators raised alarms that moved faster than the district's rollout plan.

The Salamanca City Central School District had [approved](#) a \$60,000 stationary humanoid robot from the company Realbotix. The robot, nicknamed "Sally" by students, has long dark hair and functioning arms and hands, though no legs. Superintendent Mark Beehler pitched the purchase as a way to close the opportunity gap for students in an isolated community, telling reporters that "[Sally](#)" could walk students through basic technical problems, such as programming a circuit board, and give them hands-on exposure to robotics and AI careers they'd otherwise have to travel hours to encounter.



AP Images  
Realbotix humanoid robot demo

### Parents Worry

The plan unraveled once word spread beyond the district. New York Focus, a nonprofit outlet covering state government, first reported on the pilot in late July, and the story quickly drew criticism from parents in the small community — located on the Seneca Nation of Indians reservation — who worried about how their children's data would be collected and used by a private technology vendor.

The parents' fears are not without merit. Big Tech is aggressively colonizing America's classrooms to harvest data on developing minds. Companies such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple (via Woz ED) push AI tools, robots, and "personalized learning" platforms into schools. Channels such as Khan Academy pass kids' data back up to Big Tech firms. Every interaction feeds profiles on students' habits, knowledge gaps, and behaviors. Privacy safeguards often prove illusory as data flows to private vendors. This turns public schools into surveillance hubs.

### Officials Object

The backlash intensified once it became public that Realbotix also manufactures hyper-realistic sex robots under a related product line. Melinda Person, president of the state teachers union, argued that "a robot built by a company associated with sex dolls has no business in our classrooms." District officials and the company both maintained that the two product lines are operated separately, but the association proved difficult to overcome in the court of public opinion.

State Education Commissioner Betty Rosa added her own concerns in a letter to the district, writing



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that, even after meeting with district officials, her department remained uneasy about a humanoid robot's role in a classroom. The district has since confirmed, in a statement posted to Facebook, that the pilot is on hold while it works out "enhanced student data privacy agreements."

## Parents Must Remain Vigilant

The takeaway: A school board approved a \$60,000 technology contract with a private vendor before parents, teachers, or the public had any real opportunity to weigh in. It took an independent news outlet, not the district itself, to reveal this news to the community it affects.

Local school boards remain the most direct point of leverage parents have over what enters their children's classrooms. Salamanca's pause shows that that leverage still works — when parents and teachers use it.

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