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A Teacher's Guide to Using AI

Meenoo Rami

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PRAISE FOR
A Teacher's Guide to Using AI

This book is a timely call to action for educators to take the lead in shaping how AI enters our classrooms. With clarity and conviction, Meenoo affirms teachers to trust their professional knowledge and humanity in guiding this emerging field. By breaking down the lingo and history of AI, she empowers readers to engage with confidence, curiosity, and care. Each chapter reminds us of our agency as educators—that **it is the teacher, not the tool, who remains the most important force in education**.

Marina Pisto, Elementary Teacher, White Plains, NY

Generative AI arrived in our classrooms and many of us found ourselves at sea. Rami's *A Teacher's Guide to Using AI* **provides the map and the compass to find our way to safe harbor**. It centers the very human experiences of teaching and learning, holding them sacred, while providing practical tips to navigate these shifting waters.

Andrea Zellner, Learning Design Consultant, Waterford, Michigan

Drawing from her decades of experience in the classroom and as an educational technologist, Meenoo Rami offers both practical advice and numerous prompts to help educators—and their students—engage with AI. However, she is not simply an AI evangelist. Instead, **Rami's critical, creative strategies will coach her readers as they interrogate potential biases, evaluate outputs, and employ AI in measured, ethical, and appropriate ways**.

Troy Hicks, Professor of English and Education and Author, Lansing, Michigan

A must-read for educators exploring the promise of AI in the classroom. With real-world insights, tested strategies, and powerful recommendations from educators across the country, this book serves as an essential guide.

William Hite, CEO KnowledgeWorks and former Superintendent of the School District of Philadelphia

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Rami's guide takes a comprehensive approach to the complex and sometimes controversial topic of AI in the classroom. Rather than listing tricks and tips and "magic" solutions, she provides terminology, context, and cautionary considerations paired with guided inquiry. In the chapters about using AI with students, she makes the important choice of prioritizing teaching students about AI before putting it in their hands. **The balanced and thoughtful approach mixed with actionable advice and strategies is hard to find in an AI guide for educators, and it makes this one stand out.**

Mary Beth Hertz, High School Art Teacher and Author, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Rami offers teachers a clear-eyed perspective on how to approach AI in the classroom. Her **practical advice, combined with insightful research** into how teachers are currently discussing AI with students and using it in their own work, will help both novice and expert teachers navigate the uncertain, ever-changing landscape around AI in education.

Molly Montgomery, High School ELA Teacher, Albany, California

In *A Teacher's Guide to Using AI*, Meenoo Rami takes a user-friendly, human-centered stance while offering immediately useful tips, ideas, and strategies for using AI to increase efficiency as a creative teaching professional. In the same breath, **Rami carefully considers ethics, equity, and criticality while laying out frameworks, ideas, and examples that can guide students to become empowered digital citizens in the age of AI**.

Katie Burrows-Stone, High School English Teacher, Fennville, Michigan

I've known Meenoo since the early days of Minecraft Education, where her vision helped shape a global movement. In this timely guide, she brings the same clarity and courage to the evolving world of AI. This book is a warm, honest companion for educators navigating the unknown. It reminds us that **AI can empower, but only if we remain the architects of our classrooms**.

Kyriakos Koursaris, Technology Integration Specialist, Lisbon, Portugal

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Meenoo invites teachers to **see what AI could look like in schools**, highlighting their own agency to determine when and how to use AI in their own practice and to teach their students about AI. At the same time, Meenoo gently argues that teachers *must* engage—for the sake of their students.

Kristen Hawley Turner,
Professor and Director of Teacher Education,
Madison, New Jersey

In *A Teacher's Guide to Using AI*, Meenoo Rami bridges the worlds of education and technology with empathy and wisdom. She empowers teachers to see AI not as a replacement, but as a tool to reclaim time, spark creativity, and deepen connection. **Meenoo honors the soul of teaching while helping us navigate one of the most transformative shifts of our time.** Her words remind us that AI doesn't diminish our humanity but rather magnifies what's most powerful about it: our compassion, creativity, and care for students. Every educator who's ever felt both awe and anxiety about the future will find comfort and strength here.

Tanisha Lee, **Middle School Language Arts Teacher,**
Arvada, Colorado

A Teacher's Guide to Using AI stands apart in today's crowded AI landscape. Expertly blending extensive research, compelling historical context, and thoughtful exploration of law and ethics, Rami delivers a truly comprehensive guide for all educators. Featuring insights from respected educators and leaders around the world, this book is not just informative, it's transformative. **A must-read for anyone seeking to understand and responsibly lead** in the age of AI in education.

Glenn Robbins,
Superintendent and Author,
Brigantine, New Jersey

Meenoo Rami shows us how to use AI without losing our minds or our humanity. In *A Teacher's Guide to Using AI*, **Meenoo challenges the noise, cuts through the hype, and helps us build with purpose**. Her genius as a pedagogue and project-based learning designer shines through every page, offering educators clear, doable strategies to bring AI into the classroom with confidence and care. It's the kind of help teachers actually need, right now.

Samuel Reed III,
High School Reading and Writing Teacher,
Philadelphia, PA

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Nuanced, thoughtful, and very well researched, this book gives teachers the direction and guidance they need to navigate the unknown terrain of AI in education. Rami's calm and rational approach suggests helpful ways teachers can use AI in their own work and then extends to what to teach students about AI. **Filled with examples from classroom teachers**, Rami realistically balances the need to keep humans at the center of the educational process, while also preparing students for the technological future they are heading for.

Jen Roberts, National Board Certified High School English Teacher and Author, San Diego, California

***A Teacher's Guide to Using AI* nudges us to look beyond the binary of good and evil**, to the nuanced reality of this arrival technology and the opportunity we have to shape its future. We are asked to look within—to trust our intuition, challenge our lens of equity, engage with empathy and curiosity, and expand our capacity for growth. This is a well-researched and accessible journey that offers relevant steps to teaching students about AI, practical what-if scenarios with detailed guidance, and experimental prompts to enhance an inclusive learning experience.

Christina Dominique-Pierre, Middle School Library Director, Cambridge, Massachusetts

This is a book all teachers need right now. Meenoo gives specific guidance for both the teacher-facing use of AI and the student-facing use, and she doesn't ever shy away from the big ethical questions or the potential pitfalls. **What this book gives teachers is power**—power to understand what AI is and is not; power to use AI to ease the increasing demands of teaching; power to teach students how to be critical users of AI. We do not have to passively sit by as AI surges into our profession. We can have knowledge, choice, and agency; we can model for our students how to be informed leaders around AI.

Marilyn Pryle, Director of Professional Learning and Author, East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

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Dear Educator,

If you're reading this book, I'll bet that you know AI is not just another tool on a list of edtech trends. It's bigger than that. It's changing how we think, how we write, how we teach, and how we learn.

And yet, AI is still unfolding. It's still early. We still have choices. And what educators do in this moment will matter deeply not just for schools, but for our collective future.

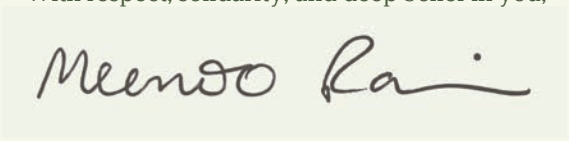
Before I worked in technology, before I knew what a large language model was, I was a teacher. I spent over a decade in classrooms in Philadelphia trying to reach students in real ways, learning how to build community, rethinking lessons that didn't land, and staying up late to figure out how to make the next day better. Teaching shaped who I am. Even now, after working in tech for years, I carry that perspective with me. I still see the world through the eyes of someone who's stood in front of thirty students, knowing the stakes of getting it right.

As I've learned to use AI in my own work and seen the impact of AI from within the tech sector, I've also talked with and learned from teachers, coaches, and administrators across the country about how AI is affecting their work. I've been amazed by the ways in which they are leveraging AI tools to reclaim some of the time the job demands of them, giving them the space to do what they do best: guiding and supporting students. At the same time, I've seen how educators are empowering themselves by learning about how AI works, what it can and can't do, and areas of potential danger.

This book is my offering for this moment. It's not a map, but a companion. I've tried to be practical without being prescriptive, reflective without being abstract, and most of all, honest. You won't find hype here. But you also won't find cynicism. What you will find is an abiding belief in you, in your students, and in the power of human connection even, and especially, in an age of machines.

I don't buy the idea that AI will make everything better. I also don't believe AI will bring only doom and gloom. I am more interested in how humans, especially teachers, can use and shape this tool. It is my hope that you trust yourself. That you trust your discernment. That you trust your ability to shape what comes next, not just react to it. And I hope this book gives you the clarity, support, and confidence to keep doing that, in whatever way is right for you and your students.

With respect, solidarity, and deep belief in you,



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Introduction

The Moment We're In

Ben Franklin didn't discover electricity.

I don't say this lightly. I live in the greater Philadelphia region, where Franklin, who chose to make our city his home, is revered. However, I'm going to be brave and insist: Ben Franklin didn't discover electricity.

Electricity was already a known phenomenon in 1752, the year Ben performed his kite experiment. He was trying to determine whether lightning was electrical, not whether electricity existed. He and his son William were probably in a covered shed during the storm, and there was no lightning bolt; instead, the line picked up some ambient electric charge from the storm. After putting his hand near the key, Franklin felt a small shock, and it confirmed for him that he had caught some electricity.

While Franklin's work advanced our understanding of electricity, it is not what unleashed the power of electricity for the world. We have a long line of innovators to thank for that. One such contributor is John Frederic Daniell who, in 1836, invented

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a new kind of battery that vastly improved the storage of energy, making electricity portable and safe.

Yet, when people think of the history of humans and electricity, they aren't thinking of John Frederic Daniell, and they probably aren't thinking of Ben Franklin as one among many inventors and innovators of the time who were brilliant, skilled, creative, and driven. They are instead thinking of something like Benjamin West's painting *Benjamin Franklin Drawing Down Electricity from the Sky* in which Franklin, attended by cherubs, reaches upward into the stormy sky, cloak whirling in the wind like an action hero's, a bright spark of electricity touching down onto his hand. In our minds he has become a kind of Prometheus: the man who gave us the power of electricity, a power that changed the world.

Why am I telling you this?

Right now, another exciting and powerful new force is poised to change every aspect of our lives. To hear some tech visionaries tell it, the few corporations and individuals who have and who are continuing to develop AI are today's Franklin, harnessing untold powers, leading us into a future that the rest of us cannot begin to imagine. It's a dramatic picture, but history teaches us that it is not a complete or accurate picture. It leaves out the John Frederic Daniells of today. It leaves out brilliant, skilled, creative, driven professionals like you.

I've spent a decade as a teacher and nearly a decade working for the leading technology company in the world, and my experience tells me that teachers, not corporations, must decide how students learn with and about AI. This book is my attempt to humbly support you in that important work.

The Brave New World of AI

We can't begin to discuss AI in schools without acknowledging the influx of AI in the world beyond school. With new headlines every day about advances in AI and potential uses for AI in the future, it can be easy to forget that AI has already shaped our day-to-day experience. Companies leverage AI to enter our lives and make us dependent on their products every time we

- **open our phones.** Every time you open your phone with your face, AI is working in the background to ensure that it is indeed you and you can literally unlock your world safely. Apple®'s own support site claims that there is a one in a million chance that Face ID® would be fooled or fail.

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- **type a sentence in Gmail™.** With the advent of large language models (LLMs), predicting the next word is what it is all about. Whether you're composing your thoughts in Google Docs™, a Word® document, or even in your own email window, the application will try to predict the next word, and all you have to do is hit the tab key to keep writing.
- **let Alexa® into our kitchens.** From setting your timer when you're cooking pasta, to reminding you to put the trash out the night before, to turning on lights on a specified schedule, the magic of Alexa is also built on the work of machine learning and specifically on being able to understand your commands as speech input.
- **get directions.** Whether you use Apple Maps® or Google Maps™, the ability to intelligently route you to your destination and avoid traffic jams and road closures depends on a lot of data being analyzed in real time to provide you the latest updates from places around you.
- **check our bank accounts.** If you have ever gotten a security check on your bank app because you tried to log into your account from a new device, it is probably their AI at work, monitoring hundreds of thousands of logins, transactions, and user actions to look for anomalies. These irregularities not only keep your account and money safe, but they save that bank millions of dollars a year.

AI is also making its way into the workplace: according to Microsoft®'s *2024 Work Trend Index Annual Report*, "use of generative AI has nearly doubled in the last six months, with 75% of global knowledge workers using it" (Microsoft and LinkedIn 2024, 2). The report further explains that these workers are not waiting for their employers or leadership teams at work to guide or support them. Instead, they are using online learning courses in record numbers to build their skills. Of respondents, 76 percent of respondents said they needed AI skills to remain competitive in the current job market, and 79 percent believed that AI skills would broaden their job opportunities.

If the possibilities of AI are breathtaking, so is the speed at which it is being developed, made available to the public, and adopted. ChatGPT®, OpenAI™'s AI assistant, reached 1 million users in only five days. It took Facebook® ten months to do that, and Netflix® 3.5 years (*Indian Express* Tech Desk 2023). Just two months after its launch, ChatGPT reached 100 million users, making it the fastest-growing consumer application in history (Hu 2023). The pace and rate of adoption is dizzying, and these are likely the worst AI tools we will ever use: they will continue to improve and evolve.

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Behind the scenes, the advances in hardware that make AI possible are unprecedented: The specialized chips that make AI and machine-learning tasks possible are faster, more energy efficient, and smaller than ever before. They can handle multiple operations simultaneously, which is crucial to training algorithms on large datasets where thousands or even millions of nodes need to be processed at once. As I am writing this book, the most important and widely used AI chips in the world have transistors that are just 7 nanometers wide. (To put that in perspective, a single human hair has the width of about 100,000 nanometers.) By the time this book goes to press, a new chip will be available with transistors that are only 4 nanometers wide.

So, what lies ahead, say, three, five, or ten years from today? While predicting the future is impossible, we can make some informed guesses about how AI will affect

- **the way we work.** We will have many more AI agents not only supporting us online but also functioning as robots who complete tasks in homes, offices, and factories. A lot of labor that is done by humans today may in the future get done by these AI-powered robots, who would not tire and not get injured. At least, this is the utopian dream that companies investing and building in this field are promising today. As Stanford University™ researcher Alexander Khazatsky puts it, "I wouldn't be surprised if we are the last generation for which those sci-fi scenes are not a reality" (Gibney 2024, 22).
- **the way we heal.** One of the most optimistic views of the impact of AI on human life will be our ability to discover new remedies. Think of diseases like cancer, Alzheimer's, and dementia that affect the lives of so many people. Now, imagine the ability to detect and treat those diseases effectively and affordably. Healthcare around the world and even in the United States has become a commodity rather than a human right, and gains in AI capabilities may allow many more people to live and to live more fully in the future.

  AI is already at work in healthcare: prestigious hospitals such as Cleveland Clinic®, Mayo Clinic®, and Johns Hopkins Hospital® are using (and sometimes developing) AI applications for clinical practice. Stroke patients' CT scans may be read by AI trained to alert doctors to blockages quickly, allowing them to provide the kind of rapid response necessary to reduce further harm to the brain (Hudson 2023). Faulty heart rhythms can be detected through AI analysis of ECG data (Mayo Clinic 2025). AI can identify very early

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symptoms of sepsis, which kills more than 250,000 people in the United States each year, improving patients' chances for survival (Cech 2022).

- **the way we learn.** "We'll have nearly free personal tutors for every child on the planet, because AI will be the AI tutor." That's what billionaire entrepreneur and venture capitalist Vinod Khosla said at the 2024 Forbes Iconoclast Summit (Konrad and Khosla 2024). Khosla is one of the ultrawealthy investors who fund companies in their early stages and then reap massive benefits when those companies succeed. Khosla's prediction is typical of those who see teaching as an inefficient process that can be improved upon. They envision AI as a nearly perfect way to bring more order to all that happens inside the walls of a school. They believe that putting an AI tutor in front of every student, for example, would reduce the inherent complexity of teaching a diverse group of children across a very large country with differences in how schools are funded, supported, and overseen. This view conveniently ignores all human aspects of teaching (relating, motivating, connecting, inspiring) while also subscribing to the banking model of education described by Paulo Freire. While edtech companies and their investors will push the idea of a personalized tutor for every child on the planet, the idea that I will try to argue in the rest of this book is that your role as an educator is more important than ever. It will be you who nurtures your students' creativity, empathy, and (dare I say) humanity in the age of AI.

- **the way we bond and love.** In the world of being constantly connected, we are more lonely than ever. In 2024 the American Psychiatric Association® reported that 30 percent of adults said they had experienced feelings of loneliness at least once a week over the past year, while 10 percent said they were lonely every day (2024). AI options like Replika® claim to offer "an AI companion who is eager to learn and would love to see the world through your eyes. It is always ready to chat when you need an empathetic friend" (Replika n.d.). Will AI be our future companions, as in the movie *Her*?

Any one of these possible futures would cause massive transformations of our daily lives, and these are only a few isolated guesses about what's to come. Now, let's try narrowing our focus to the here and now in a place we know well: schools.

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AI **TERMINOLOGY**

Before we go any further, let's clarify some of the key terms that are often part of discussions of AI.

1. **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** If you've used a computer to pick the best route home, recognize your friend in a photo, or translate a menu from a language you don't know, you've used AI. It's all about giving computers the ability to do smart things that we previously thought only humans could do.

2. **Natural Language Processing (NLP):** Ever had a chat with Siri® or Alexa? That's NLP at play. It's the tech that helps computers understand and respond to us when we use our everyday language, turning our words into something a computer can work with and even respond to!

3. **Large Language Models (LLMs):** a subfield of NLP that is all about understanding, processing, and generating human language. Current examples of LLMs include ChatGPT, Gemini®, Claude®, Llama™, and Copilot®.

4. **Machine Learning (ML):** This is like teaching your computer to become smarter over time. AI learns from the examples it has been given, and it starts spotting patterns and making educated guesses. It doesn't need to be explicitly programmed; instead, it can improve as a result of its experiences, kind of like how we learn from our mistakes and successes.

5. **Generative AI (GenAI):** AI that creates new text, audio, images, videos, and code based on content it has been pretrained on.

6. **Neural Networks:** These are the brains of AI. Just like our brain connects the dots to form thoughts, neural networks connect bits of data to find patterns. They're a maze of "if this, then that" rules that can get really good at tasks like recognizing handwritten notes or predicting what song you'll want to hear next. Deep learning uses artificial neural networks, like transformers, to mimic the human brain, enabling computers to tackle complex tasks.

7. **Computer Vision:** By looking at images and videos, computers can identify and understand what's in them, almost like they're recognizing a friend in a crowd or figuring out that a red light means stop. It's about giving computers a bit of the human skill of sight.

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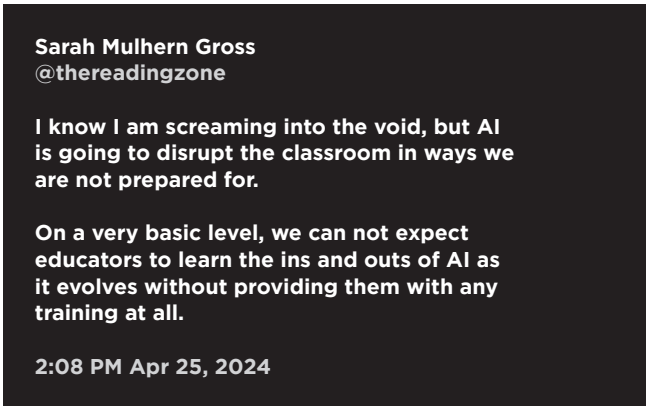
The Landscape of AI in Schools Today

The rapid changes that AI has caused demand that teachers figure out how to weave productive, safe, and engaging uses of AI into classrooms. While there are benefits as well as challenges, this is not low-lift work. Teachers are typically expected to figure this out on their own time and dime.



This post from master teacher Sarah Mulhern Gross voiced many teachers' concerns.

Challenge: Sudden, Constant Change

Up until recently, edtech was slowly introduced and adopted by school districts. Consider your own experiences in schools as a teacher and even as a student: the adoption of technologies such as learning management systems, attendance systems, and student devices is often a slow process. Typically, when a new technology emerges, school districts learn about it, do small pilots, and try to decide whether it is a good fit for their population. Budgets are allocated, and the tech is eventually put into the hands of students and teachers, ideally along with training. The process can be further slowed by the time it takes to offer viable, educafied versions of the latest technology. And, of course, it can be difficult to tell which new technologies will have staying power, as those of us who leaned forward into the technology adoption curve learned after working on platforms that became increasingly less useful over time (cough, Twitter®, cough).

AI, however, showed up seemingly overnight. Justin Reich and Jess Dukes explain this phenomenon as arrival versus adoption:

> *In contrast to adopted technologies, "arrival technologies" bypass the planning, assessment, policy-making, and professional learning that have historically (if imperfectly) accompanied previous generations of technology integration. . . . but generative AI represents a steep change in both the velocity and nature of technology arrival. In less than a year, nearly every internet-connected computing device suddenly had access*

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> *to dramatic new capacities. Moreover, generative AI is likely to arrive in schools not only on student and teacher devices, but in a wide array of existing software in schools. Student information systems, learning management systems, collaborative writing tools, plagiarism detection software, intelligent tutors, and other software have been integrated into schools through traditional adoption processes, and in the months and years ahead, new AI capacities will arrive in these systems without the same planning, intention, and oversight.* (Reich and Dukes 2024)

The upshot: educators can't wait until things are "settled" to decide how to use and address AI because things will never be "settled." We are in a new era of constant change.

Challenge: Unequal AI Opportunities

Because most school-age children and adolescents have access to the internet at home (National Center for Education Statistics 2023), AI agents are relatively easy to access. Therefore, equitable AI education is less about merely gaining access and more about ensuring that students are able to use it and interrogate its role in their lives, future workplaces, and society. Understanding the forces that shape our world is the birthright of every kid. This is a timely issue: a 2023 survey of young people ages fourteen to twenty-two showed that about half were using AI, and the most frequent task they used AI for was getting information, a chilling response in a time when AI agents that are freely available to the public are prone to biases, inaccuracies, and complete fabrications (Barshay 2024; Wu, Duan, and Ni 2024). Furthermore, the survey indicates that Black and brown students, historically the most underserved students in the American educational system, are the young people who rely on AI for information the most (Barshay 2024). Reich and Dukes (2024) raise the important consideration of differences between how well-funded schools and underresourced schools address the groundswell of AI. Too often, in the wake of major changes in society or in the world of education (the fast shift to emergency distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example), new resources flood the market, promising to meet the challenge of the moment. And too often, these unproven resources are tested on Black and brown students living in underresourced districts, whether because the district is piloting a product to help a company refine it or is using free or low-cost resources due to inadequate training or staffing. Your work to stay current on AI developments, give your students both

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skills and context relating to AI, and protect their safety in the meantime is work that promotes equity.

Challenge: Potential for Cheating

When a free chatbot can produce a somewhat passable response to any question or query given it, the question arises: Are students using AI to cheat?

The answer is undoubtedly yes. Students have always cheated. But not all students. And not all the time. In 2023, Victor Lee and Denise Pope, of Stanford's Graduate School of Education, explained that data collected through anonymous surveys showed that there had not been an increase in cheating as a result of AI. While 60 to 70 percent of student respondents reported having cheated in some way in the previous month, that figure was on par with the results from the same survey pre-AI (Spector 2023). The same researchers are now studying survey data from the 2024–2025 school year. They found that while the number of students who use AI to complete entire assignments has increased modestly, 85 percent of students who use AI for schoolwork use it to refine, not replace, their own work. In interviews with students, researchers found that, overall, students understood the difference between using AI to improve their work somewhat and plagiarizing using AI, and they avoided wholesale plagiarism (Lee 2025).

So, if AI is not leading to more widespread cheating, why are so many educators concerned about students using AI to cheat? Mostly, it seems, because AI is able to create work that can't be checked for plagiarism in the ways used in the past. Many tools that claim to be able to detect AI have been shown to be, at best, unreliable (Weber-Wulff et al. 2023) or, worse, consistently biased against students whose first language is not English (Myers 2023). As a result, educators feel as though they can never quite be sure if a student is using AI to cheat.

Concerns about AI cheating may rise to the level of a "moral panic," as Drew University® professor of English and US coordinator of the Partnership on University Plagiarism Prevention Sandra Jamieson calls it (2023). Like other moral panics our society has faced (witch hunts, the Red Scare, the Satanic Panic of the 1980s), concerns about cheating with AI feed a growing sense of distrust, which is antithetical to learning and, even more fundamentally, to community in schools. Jamieson reminds us that the fear of plagiarism is nothing new and that we can learn from history when considering how to address plagiarism today. She notes that while the academic world often turns to policing and policy to attempt to stop plagiarism, corporate responses tend to use a different approach: exploration and pedagogy

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(2023). I don't often hold business up as a model for good teaching and learning, but this is an exception: by emphasizing curiosity and possibility over the status quo and showing trust in their people, businesses are finding new ways to work that enable employees to use available tools openly.

Eric Anderman, vice provost at The Ohio State University®, studies academic motivation. Like Jamieson, he underscores the role of institutions in whether students choose to cheat, explaining that there are two strong predictors for student cheating (Anderman et al. 2024):

- Students cheat when they perceive the class to be about saving face or impressing others, not about mastering the content.
- Students cheat when they perceive the class to be focused on outcomes, not on learning.

In short, Anderman's insights indicate that when classes are focused on learning, not posturing or assessment, cheating becomes a nonissue.

It's true that the rise of AI has the potential to fuel a culture of cheating. It's also true that the choices educators make have the potential to make cheating less common. As Wharton professor Ethan Mollick says when discussing AI's impact on student writing, "This was a sudden change, right? There is a lot of good stuff that we are going to have to do differently, but I think we could solve the problems of how we teach people to write in a world with ChatGPT" (Kelly 2023).

Potential Benefit: Personalizing Content

Whether you teach in elementary, middle, or high school, you have certainly had an experience where the materials you were using to teach a concept just did not meet the needs of some students. In the past, if you wanted to personalize materials, you had to modify them by hand. With AI, right-sizing content is a breeze: you can input text into a chatbot or another edtech tool, and you can provide directions to adapt the text.

Potential Benefit: Thinking Partners for Your Students

If your classroom is built around student-centered, project-based learning, you know the moment when questions come flooding in. You've just wrapped up a whole-group discussion to review the core concept, you've clarified directions, and students are beginning to dive into the task. As you move around the room supporting

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individuals and small groups, AI can step in as another thinking partner. With the right prompt, an AI tool can help students get started, talk through an idea, revise a draft, or clarify a concept while they wait for your support. It's not replacing you; it can extend your reach and keep students moving forward.

Potential Benefit: Tools for Supporting Multilingual Students and Their Families

One of the ways you can welcome multilingual learners into your classroom community is to focus on their strengths, such as their ability to speak another language fluently. AI can help you and your multilingual students to leverage this strength to make dense curriculum content more accessible. As teacher and consultant Tan Huynh explains, "Many of my multilingual learners, who are highly fluent in another language, translate the AI-generated text. This helps them learn the content even more efficiently by using their more proficient language" (2023).

AI translations can also be a boon to teachers who are not fluent in their students' home languages, providing new options for communication with students and their families.

Potential Benefit: Saving Time

The paperwork load for teachers is real, and much of it rests on your insight, your judgment, and your deep knowledge of your students. Take individual education plans (IEPs), for example. These documents are both legally and ethically tied to the unique needs and strengths of a student. While no tool can fully take that responsibility off your plate, AI can help you get started. You might describe the student you're supporting (using anonymized data), their strengths and challenges, and the context in which you're teaching. From there, AI can draft a first version of an IEP goal or generate ideas for aligned materials. Of course, you then need to apply your expertise to shape and refine AI-generated drafts, but AI tools offer a starting point and may even suggest new angles you'd not previously considered.

Another common, time-consuming (yet difficult to delegate) task is refreshing the content, lessons, ideas, and activities you use in your classroom: as the adage goes, you can teach for thirty years or you can teach the same year thirty times. The ability to keep things fresh for yourself and your students is key in making classes relevant to and supportive of students. This, too, is a place where AI can save you time and potentially reinvigorate your practice by being a thinking partner for you.

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What AI Could Look Like in Schools

As we can see, the challenges and opportunities of AI are real. It would be understandable if teachers (who already have too much on their plates) tried to ignore AI, or maybe adopt some packaged system that promised to protect students from it, or maybe use it in their personal lives but not in the classroom.

Or, teachers could double down on their own expertise. Let's visit a classroom where one teacher is doing exactly that.

Today, in Marina Pisto's third-grade classroom in White Plains, New York, students are creating animals with the help of AI. As they watch the results of the image generation come in, they identify where the results aren't true to their vision, refine their prompts, resubmit the prompts, and repeat the process. The excitement in the room is palpable as kids squeal with delight (or make a face in disgust) as they work with the generator over many iterations to co-create with it. In short, they are revising their writing voluntarily and joyfully. Along the way, they are also learning what prompts get them what they want and what prompts don't as well as the capabilities and limitations of their AI partner.

Marina has been teaching in this small school in this bustling suburb of New York City for nearly ten years. The students in her school have families that come from 100 different countries around the world. She's the type of teacher whom students gravitate to and staff appreciate as a colleague. She designs opportunities for her students to work collaboratively. A resolute belief in her students and their ability to do incredible work propels her pedagogy. And while Marina acknowledges the challenges of assessing student work in the age of AI and believes that fears about cheating are valid, she thinks about this moment differently. Marina believes that her students should learn about AI and be prepared for what they will be expected to know and use in middle and high school. She also thinks that this technology isn't going away and her students need to know how to use it and detect AI outputs.

When I ask her about how you teach even the basics of AI to third-grade students, she says that you do it like you would any other topic. You introduce the basic concepts, teaching fundamental terms and ideas. Then you engage them in playful ways. She likens the kind of revising that her students did with their animal project to debugging a computer program, and she helps her students

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grasp complex ideas through approachable analogies. She also helps her students see ways in which AI can lend them skills that they wouldn't have otherwise. She recalls a situation in her class in which students were writing about their real-life heroes. A student had chosen to write about a Japanese baseball player. While there was abundant information available about him on Japanese-speaking websites, there was little information available on English-speaking websites, and the student did not speak or read Japanese. By using an AI chat agent, this student was able to translate the information into English and collect great personal biographical details about the baseball player he deeply admired. Marina has also found that AI has given her opportunities to discuss the validity of online sources and how to judge quality and accuracy. When asked about her drive to innovate and try new things, she simply says, "It's not about the technology but how to make learning relevant for my students."

Marina's focus on her students and their out-of-the-box thinking, their agency, and their curiosity is good teaching.

It also aligns with the qualities that today's leaders in technology prize most. Here's how a few of them have described the skills they think will be essential in the not-so-far-off future:

- "Resilience, adaptability, high rate of learning, creativity, certain familiarity with the tools, . . . and learning how to code would be great."—Sam Altman, OpenAI CEO (Bloomberg Originals 2023)
- "If the lower half of cognitive work gets taken over by GenAI, it implies that you've got to learn critical thinking. That means critical thinking, regardless of which domain you're in, becomes the skill that is far, far more needed."—Arvind Krishna, IBM® chairman and CEO (World Economic Forum 2024)
- "We ask one question to every person, regardless of whether you're a coder or you're a strategist or you're a doctor or you're working in HR. We ask one interview question to everyone. We say: what have you learned in the last six months?"—Julie Sweet, Accenture® chair and CEO (World Economic Forum 2024)

As Marina shows us, it's possible to incorporate AI into teaching and learning to give students the skills they'll need in the future while also staying true to the values that have always been at the heart of good teaching: strong relationships with students, learning that is meaningful to students, and a constant focus on students' development as human beings.

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Your Agency

When we think about innovation, we often think of it taking place in large corporations, or small and swift startups, or cutting-edge research labs. We don't often think of public schools as places of innovation. But when we think this way, we are wrong. Just as Ben Franklin didn't discover electricity or create the electrical grid, the corporations that are making AI available to consumers are not the people who will instruct and protect your students when it comes to AI.

You are.

It is *you*, the teacher, who is solving problems in creative ways, often without ample resources or adequate support. It will be you and your colleagues who figure out best practices as they suit your learning environment. Just as every student in an art class produces a unique work even when they're all working with the same supplies, how you leverage and use AI in your classroom will depend on your unique take and touch.

As with any new endeavor, the way you will incorporate and make sense of AI's role in your classroom will also depend on your ability to see hope as a way of thinking; a cognitive process rather than a fluffy feeling. If we view AI as an intruder or as a threat, our work will be based in fear, resentment, and cynicism. However, if we let ourselves be hopeful about our students, about ourselves, and about the future, we can find energy and purpose in this work. In her book *Daring Greatly* (2015), Brené Brown writes about this phenomenon and acclaims the work of C. R. "Rick" Snyder, a positive psychologist. The gist is that hope is a thinking process with three main parts:

- **Goals:** We have the ability to set realistic goals and know where we want to go.
- **Pathways:** We can figure out multiple ways to achieve those goals: when plan A doesn't work, we still have plans B, C, and D. We recognize that a roadblock isn't the end of the road.
- **Agency:** We have the belief in ourselves to achieve these goals and overcome challenges along the way.

By trusting your own ability to have multiple pathways to your goal, you can be sure that you'll do what you have always done in your practice: try new ideas, test them, and use what you learn to decide what to keep and what to put aside.

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Here are the AI issues that we will discuss in the upcoming chapters and why they matter:

Chapter 2: Using AI in Your Work

AI can be a powerful assistant or collaborator. This chapter discusses how you can leverage AI to be a source of support and gain precious time and energy back. Chapter 2 includes considerations for deciding when and how to use AI, as well as guidance for writing prompts that will help you to get useful responses from generative AI agents.

Chapter 3: Teaching Your Students About AI

Your students are already exploring AI on their own with curiosity, creativity, and sometimes confusion. Chapter 3 makes the case for why they need your guidance and offers language and examples to help you introduce foundational ideas about AI across grade levels while reinforcing your role in protecting your students' well-being, creativity, and agency in a rapidly changing world.

Chapter 4: Teaching Your Students to Use AI

No matter how AI evolves, your classroom is still the best place for your students to practice creativity, collaboration, and critical-thinking skills. Chapter 4 includes an invitation to consider how and when to use AI with your students as well as how to ensure that your students' learning, not the technology, is the focus of this work.

Chapter 5: What Kind of Story Are We Writing?

The world your students are growing up in is shifting fast. Entry-level jobs are disappearing, algorithms are shaping what they see and believe, and AI tools are becoming more present in every part of life. In Chapter 5, you'll find a clear-eyed look at what your students are walking into and how your teaching can help them meet that future with strength, discernment, and integrity. You are not just responding to change. You are shaping it.

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My hope in writing this book is to help you to make decisions about what you will change in your classroom as AI becomes interwoven into our lives as well as what you will *not* change. As I write this, there are many voices telling teachers that the only way to keep up with the changes that AI will bring (and has already brought) is to chase shiny ideas and trends. Don't let these forces bully you. Trust yourself. Trust your values. Trust your gut.

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Experiment with This Idea

Try this prompt to see how AI could help you create content that students can read easily.

Please take this article about the three branches of the US government and rewrite it at three different reading levels for my fifth-grade class: one for students reading below grade level, one for students reading at grade level, and one for students reading above grade level. Make sure all versions still explain the roles of each branch clearly and with enough detail for students to meet Pennsylvania Social Studies Standard 5.3.5 (Civics and Government: How Government Works).

standards. Then, she prompts it to create texts at different grade levels that provide the content necessary to meet the standards. Liesl reviews and adjusts the output as necessary, but it is AI that has done the heavy lifting.

To create content that your students can work with, you might use AI to

- **rewrite a complex article or passage** at an easier or more advanced reading level for a variety of reading abilities in your classroom. (This would have been a dream for me when I was teaching my ninth-grade students English.) Allow students to select the version that feels right for them.
- **generate summaries of texts** that maintain key ideas while simplifying sentence structure and vocabulary for students who need this type of support.
- **revise a text to include built-in definitions** or explanations of challenging terms.
- **create discussion questions** for each version of the text, ensuring that all the questions connect to the same essential ideas.
- **translate material into students' home languages** to ensure they can access the content. Let students know the translation is provided by AI and that it may contain errors.

Tanisha Lee, seventh-grade ELA teacher

Use AI to Cowrite Lesson Plans

You don't need me to tell you that lesson planning can be one of the most time-consuming parts of a teacher's week. AI can be a helpful starting point when you're feeling stuck or short on time. Seventh-grade teacher Tanisha Lee notes that

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it can also help when you need to format your lessons a particular way or when you need sub plans on short notice. Stay in the driver's seat, letting AI serve *your* vision without replacing your thoughtfulness and expertise.

To get help with your lesson planning, you might use AI to

- **generate a rough outline for a lesson** based on your objectives and standards.
- **plan a lesson that meets your students' specific needs** (while providing the AI tool with only anonymized student data).
- **format your existing lesson plan** to comply with a required structure.
- **identify the required standards your lesson meets** and the standards that are still to be met.
- **create a list of possible learning activities** tied to your goals.
- **generate anticipatory questions**, exit tickets, and reflection prompts for your lesson.
- **try out different approaches** by asking for multiple lesson plans on the same topic and then comparing them: Do you want students to have more autonomy and choice or less? Have more experiential learning elements or fewer?
- **revise a lesson plan for a different grade level**, class duration, or student need.
- **create a lesson summary for students who miss a lesson** or for parent/guardian updates.
- **build a sequence of lessons** across several days or a full unit arc.
- **draft sub plans** instead of going to work sick because it's too much work to write sub plans from scratch.
- **write and design student-facing tools** such as manipulatives, graphic organizers, and rubrics to accompany the lesson.

Experiment with This Idea

Try this prompt to see how AI might help you with your lesson planning.

I'm planning a forty-five-minute eighth-grade math lesson on slope and rate of change. Help me generate a rough lesson plan that includes a warm-up activity, direct instruction, guided practice, and an exit ticket. Make sure it aligns with the Common Core math standard 8.F.B.4 and includes opportunities for student collaboration.

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Dianne and the other members of her AI workgroup are simultaneously leaders and learners, a good model for all of us as AI continues to evolve and be refined.

To collaborate with colleagues as you learn about AI, you might

- **focus on accessing knowledge, creating knowledge, sharing knowledge, and building professional relationships**, not on trying to work in isolation.
- **ask your colleagues what they are already doing with AI** and what they'd like to learn more about. Do you see any opportunities to work with them to learn together?
- **start an AI-focused book group or inquiry group**: choose a book (maybe *this* book?) about AI in education to read and discuss or a specific AI tool to experiment with; you might start by sharing a single article for discussion.
- **go to conferences that focus on AI**, such as state and national edtech conferences and university-hosted conferences. If funds are limited, look for recorded sessions of recent conferences that are freely accessible online.
- **create a repository for your learning** and invite others to use it and add to it.
- **look for other educators who are doing work like yours** with the help of AI, even if they don't work in your school, district, state, or country. Follow the content they put into the world in social media feeds, blogs, and podcasts. If you have ideas for collaboration, try reaching out to them. They may welcome a chance to connect with like-minded educators. Many of the educators mentioned in this book blog, present at conferences, and share their work publicly in other ways.

What It Looks Like When a Teacher Uses AI in Their Work

Jennifer Lawson has been a middle school teacher in Northville, Michigan, for over thirty years. Before she was a teacher, she was a childcare provider and so has a solid

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foundation in understanding the developmental needs of children. Now, as she transitions from teaching to coaching teachers, Jennifer brings a wealth of experience and a keen interest in integrating technology into education.

Throughout her career, Jennifer has been intrigued by technology. When the pandemic hit, she embraced the challenge of adapting to remote learning environments, recognizing the urgent need for educators to leverage digital tools. Jennifer's proactive approach to technology is also evident in her early adoption of AI tools such as ChatGPT. She views AI not as a threat but as a partner that helps to refine her classroom practices. Jennifer sees AI as being in its infancy, with immense potential to reshape education.

Jennifer Lawson, middle school teacher

Safety and ethical considerations are at the forefront of Jennifer's approach to AI. She emphasizes the importance of keeping students safe in the digital realm and teaching them to fact-check and critically evaluate AI-generated content. Jennifer actively engages with her students in discussions about the ethical implications of AI such as biases in AI-generated images and the importance of diverse representation.

Jennifer believes that AI has made her a better teacher, allowing her to spend more time on meaningful interactions with students and less on mundane tasks. For example, AI has streamlined her lesson planning, allowing her to create differentiated activities in minutes rather than hours and freeing up more time for direct student interaction. Using AI to provide personalized feedback and support, she has created tailored interventions that have improved student outcomes.

As Jennifer transitions to a teacher coach role, she is excited to share her insights and experiences with other educators. She advocates for learning how to effectively communicate with AI to harness its full potential, continually refining prompts to get the desired outcomes. She collaborates with her colleagues, helping them use AI tools to enhance their teaching strategies. For instance, with her guidance, the math department recently utilized chatbots to generate strong, higher-level questions for students. Her journey with AI is ever-evolving, and she is committed to helping other teachers navigate this new landscape.

In Jennifer's words, "Technology will not replace teachers, but tech in the hands of great teachers can be transformational." Her dedication to using AI thoughtfully in the classroom exemplifies her commitment to improving her craft and making a lasting impact on her students and colleagues.

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Then, ask students to work with a peer or small group to categorize the statements as true or false. After this sorting, students can discuss each statement with a peer, in a small group, or in a class discussion. Encourage your students to ask questions and provide their own examples of how AI is used in their daily lives.

Once you and your students have established a shared working understanding of AI, you can go deeper on AI-related issues that can directly affect students. Let's take a closer look at a few of the most pressing issues.

Teach Your Students AI Can Help You Learn

Let's begin with the good news: AI can be a genuine help to you and your students. Artificial intelligence is emerging as a transformative partner in education. With your pedagogical expertise and your guidance, AI can offer students new ways to engage with learning, create beyond their current skill level, and solve problems. By thoughtfully integrating AI into your classroom, you can open up new opportunities for your students to excel in, both academically and personally.

We'll discuss options for teaching students *how* to use AI in the next chapter. **For now, you can help students envision the ways in which AI can assist them as**

- **a brainstorming partner for big ideas.** Whether a student is stuck on a writing prompt, planning a science project, or preparing for a debate, AI tools can spark inspiration and provide suggestions that guide them in productive directions. This collaboration encourages creativity, builds confidence, and fosters a sense of autonomy as students learn to articulate and evaluate their own ideas.
- **a learning assistant.** By adapting to each student's pace and style, AI-driven tools can help reinforce concepts, explain difficult topics in accessible language (or in students' home languages), and provide tailored feedback. For students who struggle with subjects, AI can offer extra practice and support, while advanced learners can explore more challenging material.
- **a partner in creation.** Students can use AI to visualize a historical event, create a digital artwork inspired by a novel, and compose music for a presentation. This partnership enables students to create

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beyond their own skill level, experiment with tools professionals use, and make interdisciplinary connections. This is also valuable preparation for students' lives after school: co-creation with AI is increasingly becoming an expectation in workplaces.

- **a problem-solving companion.** AI shines as a tool for helping students decipher complex problems. Whether tackling advanced math equations, analyzing datasets, or breaking down scientific phenomena, AI can guide students through the problem-solving process.
- **a translator.** Whether students are learning to speak another language for its own sake, becoming proficient in a new language after moving to a new country, or looking to communicate ideas in a language that they are not (yet) fully proficient in, AI agents can provide usable translations of their work, of the texts they are learning from, and of conversations as they happen.
- **a coding aid.** Students can use AI to help them write, understand, and debug code across languages they are learning. AI can offer examples, explain syntax, and support students in developing their own projects.

Finally, ask yourself: Are your students already doing something interesting with AI? You know better than anyone that your students' curiosity and ingenuity are boundless. Are they already leveraging AI to write poems, design games, make music, build apps, or explore concepts like machine learning? Encouraging these pursuits and offering students guidance in using AI tools (we'll discuss that guidance in the next chapter) help your students see authentic applications of their education.

Teach Your Students AI Can Generate Output That Isn't True

One of the most significant challenges with AI is its tendency to **"hallucinate," or provide information that is factually incorrect or entirely fabricated**. For instance, an AI might confidently state that a fictional historical figure existed in real

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life. This happens because AI doesn't "know" things; it generates responses based on patterns in the data it was trained on.

As AI researcher Nir Diamant puts it, "AI learns through a sophisticated prediction game" (2024). It tries to predict which word should come next, initially at random. Over time, with feedback and unimaginable amounts of trial and error, AI hones its responses. Along the way, it learns about context, relationships between concepts, and cause and effect, enabling its guesses to be increasingly more accurate, or at least plausible (Diamant 2024).

If this explanation of how AI works seems maddeningly imprecise, it is. It's also, essentially, all we know. As Caltech® professor Yaser Abu-Mostafa explained, "Scientifically, we don't know why the neural networks are working as well as they are. If you look at the math, the data that the neural network is exposed to, from which it learns, is insufficient for the level of performance that it attains" (Caltech Science Exchange n.d.). Scary, right?

AI models are only as unbiased as the data they are trained on. AI's outputs can **perpetuate or amplify biases** it learned from its training data. For example, if an AI is trained primarily on English-language sources, it may present a Western-centric perspective on global issues. In my work in the tech sector, I've seen how conversations about fairness, ethics, and impact are often shaped by a narrow set of voices. When the people building and guiding these systems are overwhelmingly white and male, critical perspectives are missing, especially those informed by lived experience and historically marginalized communities. Without a diverse range of voices in the industry and in AI's training data, these tools will continue to reflect the gaps and blind spots of those who create them.

Finally, it's worth mentioning that these explanations assume that errors and biases in AI output are accidental. Bad actors could also develop AI models trained on intentionally biased data, misinformation, and disinformation.

To help your students understand that AI isn't infallible, consider these strategies:

- **Be clear that AI output is not infallible.** At the earliest grade levels, you might simply explain this as "AI sometimes guesses wrong." In intermediate grades through high school, you might utilize the free curriculum available from Day of AI® (formerly of MIT, now its own nonprofit) or the AI Pedagogy Project (from metaLAB at

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Harvard) to teach students about how generative AI works. A basic understanding of how AI predicts rather than thinks will help students understand that AI's output is not the product of a wide and grand understanding of the world.

- **Give students opportunities to see how AI trains and when it makes mistakes.** Special education teacher and tech coach Sara Peralta introduces her students to Google's Teachable Machine and Quick, Draw!™ to give them a window into how machines learn and make mistakes. Bonus: as her students work with these tools, they also learn how poor data quality affects output (Peralta 2025). You might also share examples of mistakes you've seen in AI-generated content and encourage students to share examples of AI mistakes as they encounter them. Trying different prompts in front of your students can show how easily an AI tool can be influenced or manipulated.
- **Teach students to fact-check.** Teach students to cross-reference AI-generated information with trusted sources. Younger students can practice this by comparing AI outputs with books and websites you've read together or preselected for them. Older students can take on more independence by finding their own reliable sources with which to fact-check AI. To help students recognize bias, ensure that they are using sources that provide perspectives from a diverse range of experts. This will help them see how different sources frame the same issue and where AI responses fall short or are outright incorrect.
- **Model how you choose when to use AI.** Talk through your own in-the-moment decisions about when and how to use AI so that they can see the decisions you are making. For example, you might decide to use AI when brainstorming ideas for the theme of an upcoming school event, but you might not rely on it to answer detailed historical questions or to give medical advice.
- **Give students opportunities to see the effects of biased AI-driven outcomes.** Older students may be interested in researching real-life situations in which bias in AI output harms people. (Typing the phrases *AI bias in hiring*, *AI bias mortgage*, or *AI bias facial recognition* into a search engine will provide many sources to start research in this area.) Ask students these questions: "Should AI be involved in making these decisions?" "In what situations is human oversight needed for AI-generated output?" "What criteria should humans apply to AI use in situations that can have negative effects on humans?" You might also ask students to role-play a debate on this topic.

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interest them. You do not need to be the lone expert. Instead, when students become more knowledgeable about a topic than you are, it can be a great moment to model humility and openness to learning and new discoveries. AI can also help you give students opportunities to build on the very specific interests and funds of knowledge that they bring to school with them each day.

None of this means that students can sit in front of a screen and independently execute against their own learning plan. Research has shown that students cannot match the depth of engagement that comes from human relationships (Anderson 2024). Students need your guidance, your support, and your attention. They need you to teach them how to go beyond bite-sized output from AI agents and really understand how they can apply the ideas and concepts in your curriculum to their own lives. They need more back-and-forth chats with you than ever to offset the "conversations" they're likely having with AI agents outside the classroom.

What remains steadfast is your relationship with your students and their relationship with you. Your respect for one another. The craft of learning and applying what you're learning. The sacredness of it. More than ever, **trust is going to be the most sought-after currency in this world**. Where anything can be produced by AI, unique human output will be prized. You, as a teacher, can help your students understand why their creation and their work matters.

Teach Your Students Make Informed Decisions About When and How to Use AI

Ultimately, teaching students how to decide when to use AI is not about enforcing rules. It's about helping them develop a mental habit of discernment. "Is this a moment where my own thinking is needed?" "Could AI help me get unstuck or explore more possibilities?" "Will using it help me learn, or will it shortcut the very thing I need to understand?" These are the kinds of questions that responsible AI use demands. And your role as educators is not just to help students learn to answer them, but to model how to ask them in the first place.

Maintaining a culture of trust, clarity, and support is foundational to ethical AI use. Students are far more likely to misuse AI when they feel overwhelmed, under pressure, or unsure of what to do next. When students know they can ask questions,

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when they understand the reasoning behind AI guidelines, and when they feel seen and supported even when they're behind, they're much more likely to make thoughtful, responsible choices. In the age of AI, the safety you create in your classroom will ultimately help your students become more ethical users of AI tools.

One of the most striking moments in my conversation with Jen Roberts on my podcast was when she described a student who turned down the help of AI tools while doing his math homework because, as he put it, "I already failed this class once. I have to learn this." Jen, an author and national board–certified teacher who teaches her students English in California, explained that AI tools were readily available, but he knew that leaning on AI as a shortcut wouldn't get him where he needed to go (Rami 2025c). That moment speaks volumes. Students *aren't* unaware. They know when they're bypassing the work, and many of them want to do better. What they need isn't more surveillance. They need teachers like you and Jen, who will help them recognize when a tool is helpful and when it's just a way to avoid struggle.

This is why giving students authentic opportunities to reflect on their use of AI is so important. Jen shared how her students began to notice that AI sometimes gave weak thesis statements. Sometimes it summarized texts incorrectly. These were teachable moments. Students began to read more critically, to question more, and to think more carefully about the difference between using AI and learning from it. That awareness is the foundation of digital literacy and academic integrity. And it doesn't come from banning AI. It comes from using it together, out loud, with curiosity and clarity.

In a conversation with Laura Hollis, a librarian and video storytelling teacher at Saddle River Day School in Saddle River, New Jersey, one thing became clear: she sees AI as a support, not a substitute. As she told me, "I want them to dig into their prior knowledge and stretch their brain, but if they're stuck, it can be the next half step for help." Her students use tools like Brisk Teaching and Gemini to check mechanics or format ideas into scripts or storyboards, but she draws a firm line when it comes to creative authorship. The heart of her teaching is helping students find their own story and learn how to tell it well. When students rely too heavily on AI, she gently reminds them, "If it's not your story, it won't connect." For Laura, storytelling is a personal, human process. AI might format a screenplay, but it can't feel the moment or frame the shot.

Laura's approach is rooted in ethical transparency and trust. She helped develop her school's AI policy with students at the center, making space for them to ask real questions about fairness: If teachers use AI to write comments, why can't students? These conversations led to clear shared expectations that value both support and accountability. In her classroom, she is also honest about what the tools are useful for,

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such as saving time on lesson planning, generating rubrics, or aligning with International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE®) standards. At the same time, she makes sure students know when it is important to push through blocks on their own. "You can't let AI take the place of collaboration. You have to be in the work." What defines her practice is this thoughtful balance between innovation and integrity and between efficiency and genuine effort. More importantly, she helps make these distinctions clear for her students through conversations, coaching, and support.

To help your students make thoughtful decisions about when and how to use AI, you might use these approaches:

- **Teach students to ask, "Will using AI for this task help me learn and create, or will it do the thinking and creating for me?"** You might also ask students to check in with themselves as they're working with AI by asking, "Am I learning or creating right now, or am I just getting the assignment completed?" Students typically know the difference between using AI to supercharge learning and using AI to avoid work.
- **Consistently convey to students that their voices and ideas matter.** Use student examples with strong voice as exemplars. Let students know when you see them thinking creatively and critically. They'll be less likely to let AI take the place of their voices when they know their voices matter.
- **Ask students to explain why they might want to use (or not use) AI for a particular project.** Having these discussions before students begin work may help you adjust your AI policy for the project, and they give you an opportunity to underscore the importance of your students' thinking and voices in the project. It will also help to ensure that you and your students are on the same page regarding how AI can be used.