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Is it the End of the World or the End of Mediocrity?

From “modern English classes are ruined” to “the world is going to end”, the claims on AI have become exaggerated and flat-out lies. Since the integration of AI chatbots into the mainstream of the internet, people have become very concerned about their effects on education. However, the decisions regarding the extent to which students are educated on AI literacy are not up to a random Joe debating his friends in Montana; they are up to us as a society to determine if educating students on AI literacy will yield results that will improve our innovation and creativity. To maintain a progressive society, we need to educate students on how to use AI effectively to assist in the workforce, mitigate time-consuming tasks, and use AI transparently, all while maintaining self-sufficiency.

Whether AI is taught in schools or not, “it will soon transform many occupations” (Source A); therefore, we should teach students to prepare for it, thereby boosting productivity and innovation. Rather than avoiding the usage of AI entirely, “[t]he right approach when faced with transformative technologies is to figure out how to use them for the betterment of humanity” (Source B). Alex Baron, a school administrator, “consider[s] the widely used math apps a form of cheating” (Source B) despite “[finding] some compelling uses of A.I. in his own work” (Source B). Thus, proving the double standard that students cannot use AI but teachers can. Countless teachers share this belief with Mr. Baron, associating the way he teaches with the

norm of a teacher. But even in the midst of being identified as irregular, some schools are breaking the mold and changing the way classes are taught by integrating AI into their classrooms to further the limits of teaching. One such example is Stephanie Elizalde, a Dallas superintendent, who believes “[i]t’s irresponsible to not teach it” (Source B) because teaching AI literacy “prepar[es] kids for their future” (Source B). When it comes down to it, teaching AI is becoming essential in the modern day due to the real-world applications after high school. Allowing students to use AI to a moderate extent on assignments prepares them for when they are required to use it in the workforce. However, AI should never undermine the imperative skills of self-sufficiency taught in school; no student should do something with AI that they are unable to do themselves. Although AI “will never replace the human touch that is so vital to education” (Source G), as AI begins to join the workforce, schools need to keep up and teach students to be properly equipped to use it.

An example of AI being used in and out of the workforce is to mitigate repetitive, time-consuming tasks, achieving a desired outcome, such as research or generating reports and emails, in a matter of seconds. For example, two tasks John Gold, a middle school teacher, cuts down on are “lesson planning...[and] dummy essays” (Source B). By relying on AI to complete these repetitive and time-consuming duties, Mr. Gold has the opportunity to allocate more time towards engaging with students and assisting with personalized instruction. Building off of these strong ideals, Mr. Gold also educates his students on leveraging AI to be utilized in “summariz[ing] notes into a study guide” (Source B), allowing his students to save time while still retaining self-sufficiency on essays and research. By integrating AI in a way that allows students to grow while still learning about AI literacy, Mr. Gold, along with many other educators, has shown that AI can be introduced to education without diminishing the critical

thinking skills of students. However, many schools argue that encouraging to use AI in specific scenarios opens up opportunities for students to use AI in a multitude of other ways. Students start by using AI to summarize notes or generate study guides, but quickly escalate to having AI write whole essays and answer full math pages; as Olivia Han, a student, put it, “slowly, [AI’s] voice started to replace my own” (Source C). Olivia Han’s argument shows the dangers of overreliance on AI, but as long as schools set strong standards and restrictions on the usage of AI, they can maintain the aspect of self-reliance during schoolwork. If used responsibly and properly, AI can be utilized as a tool to enhance both learning and efficiency in a school environment.

But what is the point of using AI if it breaks the trust between students and teachers? Despite all its benefits, students must be educated to use AI transparently and ethically because, without proper ethical usage, students are prone to accidental plagiarism from content generation and missing content from summaries. However, despite the importance of using AI transparently and ethically for students, it is even more important for teachers to use AI transparently and ethically, because they set the standard for their students to follow. Teachers have the opportunity to demonstrate the practicality and applicability of AI, like Mr. Brown, who “explains to [his] students exactly how he has used A.I., in part to model ethical use” (Source B), but also to show the applications of AI. Doing this, Mr. Brown can demonstrate to his students how they should be utilizing AI and set the standard for remaining transparent on AI usage in the classroom. However, many teachers do not publicize where they’ve used AI due to the pushback they expect to receive, as many students view it as “[un]fair to use A.I. to grade student essays, if you’ve prohibited students from using A.I. to write them” (Source B). This ideology expands beyond just essays, as teachers using AI cannot develop any trust between themselves and their students.

This lack of transparency creates a wedge in the relationship between students and teachers, however, driving the usage of AI into further secrecy, causing AI to be used in more unethical ways. Therefore, fostering an environment of transparency and ethical use in the classroom is imperative for AI literacy to be taught effectively.

In the end, the application of AI in education will not “ruin modern English classes”, much less “end the world”. The integration may change how subjects are taught, but it will ultimately progress our society toward innovation and creativity. As AI continues to develop, students should learn to utilize it effectively and responsibly while maintaining self-sufficiency and the ability to complete work without it.

Work Cited