AI is…Pretty Great

AI, more specifically Large Language Models (LLMs), has shown its capabilities to both enhance and destroy student ability and progress. Over the last decade, significant jumps in technological innovation have been made in the world of education, AI being the most impactful. This technology has been a significant source of controversy, its role in the classroom between learners and educators a popular topic of debate. While some students welcome the use of AI, others and their teachers despise it. Despite the impact AI has on cheating and student behavior, AI can support learning the same way it uplifts educators: easing busy work, accelerating progress, and providing individual support.

AI has been an invaluable tool in the workplace, and this should extend to high schools and universities, where teachers can co-manage their workloads with capable AI tools and agents to improve their educational capabilities. Yet, despite its potential in the classroom, a number of students raise concerns over the hypocrisy of its use: if students cannot use AI to do their work, why are their teachers doing so? At Northeastern University, senior Ella Stapleton was mortified by her teacher's AI-usage, demanding $8,000 in refund for the class. She complained that "[h]e's telling us not to use it, and then he's using it himself" (Hill). Her complaint stems from the limitations many students experience with AI in university, such as the Academic Integrity Policy at NYU, which condemns all use of material not produced by the individual as if it were their own (NYU). Not only are these limitations problematic in themselves, but students and teachers live in completely different worlds. Teachers have many different uses for AI, and those benefits translate into their student's success. In an overview of AI usage in the classroom, Goldstein summarizes how "teachers are increasingly using AI tools themselves, both to save time on rote tasks and to outsource some of their most meaningful work", where they hope to

"'transform', 'personalize', and 'accelerate' learning" (Goldstein). Other authors echo similar messages, Agarwal imagining how "A.I. will help teachers create lesson plans, find illustrative examples and generate quizzes tailored to each student" (Agarwal). By adopting the usage of AI, teachers can ignore the busy work and focus on what really matters: consistently spending quality time with their students. Often, teachers are too busy to do just that. As a student myself, I have experienced this; I had an old teacher so busy she would play a video of herself teaching to the class while she finished working on her computer. Through the use of AI in the classroom, however, teachers like the one I experienced no longer have to make sacrifices in their teaching to keep up with responsibilities. This must extend to students as well–If AI can vastly benefit teachers, how could it aid students directly?

Students should be using AI in their education, though not to a blatantly detrimental and obnoxious extent. Currently, teachers primarily use AI to ease their workload and get rid of their busy work. A familiar sentiment for many high schoolers as students will reasonably use AI to ease busy work as well. College admissions in the 21st century demand a lot from their students: compelling extracurriculars, high grades, fantastic test scores, and individuality. Any student could attempt any of these, but the vast majority lack the time and flexibility to pursue all four. Artificial Intelligence can change this! Kwaramba, a business professor at VCU, describes AI as a "Calculator on steroids" and that is exactly the truth (Hill). Just as students use calculators to get past basic number-crunching, enabling themselves "to focus on higher-level reasoning," AI allows students to move beyond the endless trek of sourcing and citing, for example, and write their own legitimate paper (Agarwal). Beyond its implications in busy work, students can also use AI to learn and develop new strategies. At Grafton High School, our AP-Statistics teacher encouraged the use of AI when studying and filling out notes, as AI could individually aid each

student in understanding the many topics in statistics. Without letting AI become a crutch, we worked hard, and many of us, including myself, aced the final exam. That being said, students inexperienced with AI will use it to take them through the school year rather than taking advantage of its powerful educational benefits and doing work for themselves. Without AI, students will still cheat–AI is not the problem. The lack of flexibility and adaptation in the educational administration, however, is. As cheating does become a problem, new assignments and standards may be developed to cope with the change in student ability (Greene). Currently, grading standards are based on a linear scale, comparing content with criteria. What if instead, grading compared unique, individual responses to complex prompts, allowing teachers to measure the growth in a student's capability? Moreover, stronger AI tools are developed to find AI-generated literature in student submission, and in some districts, "an older form of [AI]...not generative [without] access to the open internet" is used in the classroom as an AI alternative (Goldstein). Calculators, for example, may have initially come across as a dangerous tool for cheating and mathematics but are now used across the world in controlled educational environments, just as AI should be.

No matter the vast and incredible uses of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom, individuals will still dissent. As with any new technology, a level of fear is associated with a greater technological capability, threatening many to "fight back" and push it down. For example, when defending her personal argument to separate from ChatGPT, high school student Han cites how "A study… found that frequent reliance on AI tools negatively affects critical thinking skills." Similar to the baseless argument against the alphabet made by Plato and the arguments made against classroom use of the calculator in the mid to late 20th century, any evaluation of "critical thinking skills" is strongly biased towards the standards of its time

(Tufekci, G). Before writing, memorization was key. So at that time, the invention of the alphabet may have seemed like a crutch, but now, literature is an entire skill in and of itself. AI will be no different! A certain level of skill and expertise has already been found to be needed when manipulating and properly using engines like ChatGPT, and these are skills students can reliably learn to develop. Technological progression has never been linear, and with each new tool, big jumps are achieved or will be achieved in the world of science. It took only five days for ChatGPT to reach one million users (Industry4), and at that time few students recognized its ability to cheat and cut corners. Rather, professionals saw its potential as an advanced machine learning program to take strides in their work and technological fields.

Ultimately, through the adoption of AI tools in the classroom, academia will reach newer, greater heights. In fifty years the students and teachers who pushed away AI will look back and, like the men today who once rejected the calculator, recognize their ignorance and instead push for the next great invention. If all it took after years of effort was a calculator to reach the moon, how far can we go with AI?

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