

Students' perspectives on AI in education

By Siya Verma and Estella Joanna Ciesla / September 2024

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- ▶ Survey results on students' perspectives about artificial intelligence (AI) in education
- ▶ Key takeaways on AI policy considerations for governance teams, including that students favor:
 - » Using AI in schools and dislike prohibitions, with some caveats
 - » Schools providing guidelines and resources about teaching students responsible use
 - » Permitting AI use in schools and believe it will prepare students for the job market
 - » Corrective penalties for misuse over punitive penalties such as suspension
- ▶ Resources on AI in education

"The way our educational institutions choose to develop AI policy will have ramifications for years to come. We hope to start a movement where teachers, administrators, and students are working side-by-side in regulating AI in schools." These are the words of a group of high school students from the San Francisco Bay Area that decided, in the wake of the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution, to ask fellow high school students their opinions on AI use in schools.

In a meeting with CSBA's AI Taskforce: Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, Stanford University's [Deliberative Democracy Lab](#) and student researchers agreed to publish their findings in a pair of fact sheets on student and educator perspectives on AI in education. The resources aim to provide governance teams with the perspectives of those affected most by this technology — students and educators. This first fact sheet covers students' perspectives on this expanding technology.

In the fall of 2023, student researchers and the Deliberative Democracy Lab organized a Deliberative Poll, a democratic exercise aimed at showing what a sample of the public thinks when it is well-informed about an issue. The research team convened with 115 high school students from around the country to discuss 14 policy proposals regarding the use of AI in high schools. Participants discussed the following questions:

- ▶ Should AI tools be used in schools, and if so, when and how?
- ▶ How can we ensure that students do not use AI tools to cheat or plagiarize?
- ▶ Could AI tools negatively impact students' critical-thinking skills?
- ▶ How can schools leverage AI tools for the benefit of students' education?
- ▶ Can students and educators use AI tools responsibly?

A diverse group of students self-selected to participate in the Deliberative Polling; detailed information about the sample can be found in the [full report](#). Deliberative Polling is a method designed to foster discussions on important public policy issues. Its methodology consists of small group deliberations and plenary sessions with policy experts. All participants are provided with resources and materials before the deliberations. While the results are not necessarily representative, they offer insight into what students think about the use of AI in education.

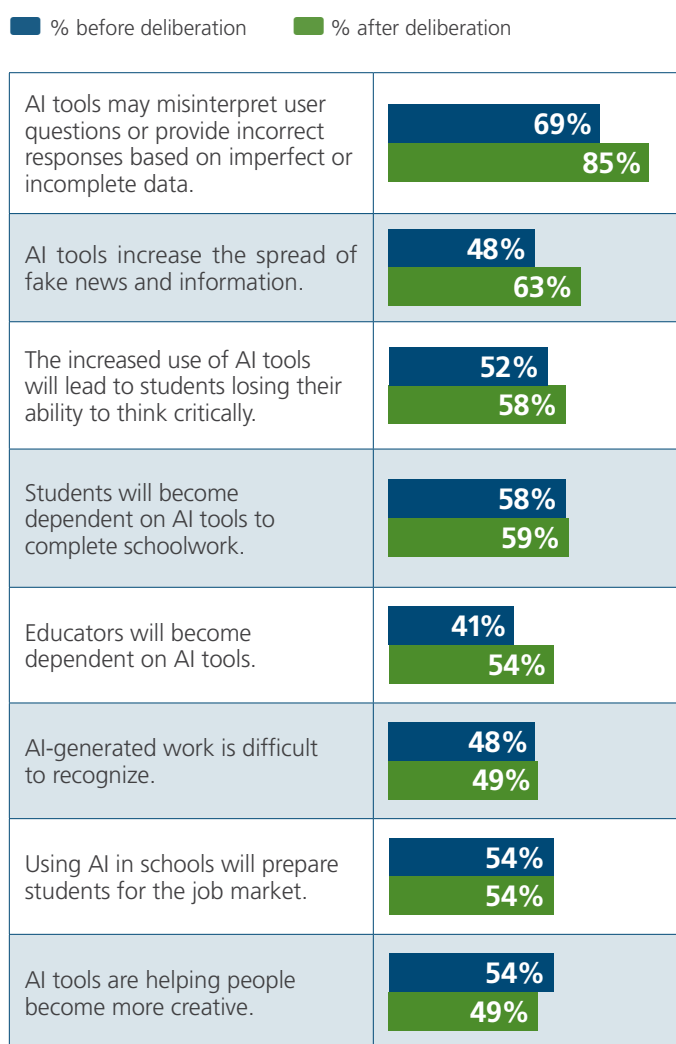
The results

The students' opinions on AI were gathered in two surveys, taken before and after the deliberations. The purpose of two surveys was to measure differences in opinions that occur because of the discussions. An increase in support for a proposal after the deliberations suggests that the participants found the proposal more compelling or persuasive because of the deliberations, while a decrease in support indicates the opposite. Out of 115 students who participated in the deliberations, 71 completed both the pre- and post-surveys. These results are therefore only indicative of the opinions of those 71.

A large majority of participants were experienced with AI, interested in it, and felt it had a positive impact on their lives. More than 90 percent of participants said they have used ChatGPT or similar chatbots, and nearly 80 percent showed interest in spending time with AI tools.

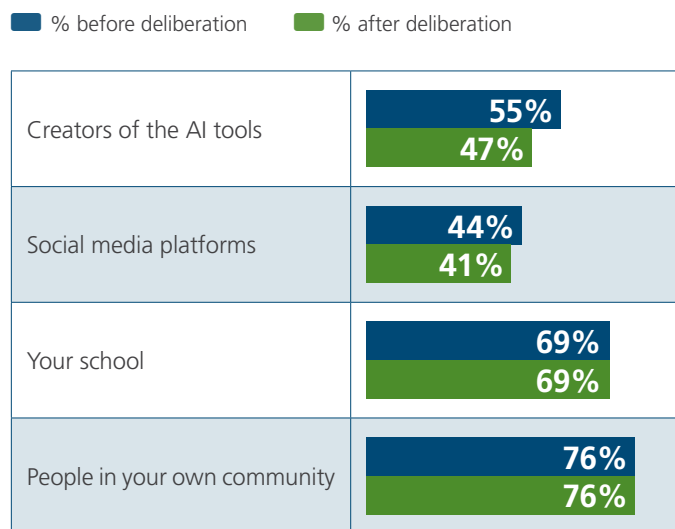
Despite their interest in and familiarity with AI, students expressed concerns regarding its use. The most cited concern was that “AI tools may misinterpret user questions or provide incorrect responses based on imperfect or incomplete data,” followed by “AI tools increase the spread of fake news and (mis)information.” These concerns were even stronger after deliberation than before, signifying that participants became more aware of the potential flaws of AI as a result of their discussions.

Table 1: Participants view on AI



Students’ levels of trust in the creators of AI tools, social media platforms, their schools, and people in their communities was also assessed. Students expressed significantly less trust in creators of AI tools (55 percent before and 47 percent after deliberations), and social media platforms (44 percent before the deliberations, 41 percent after) than their trust in their schools (69 percent both before and after deliberations) and in their communities (76 percent both before and after deliberations). This result shows that while students may be users of AI tools and social media, many harbor some skepticism about these tools.

Table 2: Measures of Participants’ Trust



In a finding particularly relevant to governance teams, the most supported policy proposal was that “schools should provide guidelines and resources to teach students how to use AI responsibly,” with 83 percent in agreement. While most students opposed banning AI on school devices and school internet, results show that the discussions led students to be less enthusiastic about AI use in the classroom, particularly as a resource for schoolwork, coding, or writing. However, opposition to these proposals did not grow; instead, students became more indecisive about their opinions in the post-survey, voting neither in favor nor against these proposals.

When discussing the proposal that “schools should provide guidelines and resources to teach students and teachers how to use AI responsibly,” one participant shared, “I think people are going to use AI in the future, and AI is going to be a big part of our lives. So, if the education system doesn’t teach people how to properly use these tools, we’re not going to be equipped to use these tools properly in the future.” This is further emphasized with 54 percent of participants agreeing with the statement, “Using AI in schools will prepare students for the job market,” both before and after discussions.

Table 3: Percentage of participants in favor of the proposals in the category of AI usage in high schools

■ % before deliberation ■ % after deliberation

AI tools should be banned on school devices and school internet.	32% 28%
All schoolwork and exams should be strictly in-person and without devices.	32% 45%
Students should be allowed to use AI tools as a resource for schoolwork.	66% 62%
Students should be allowed to use AI tools for schoolwork only if they cite it as a source.	66% 68%
Students should be allowed to use AI tools for coding-based schoolwork.	66% 62%
Students should be allowed to use AI-based writing revision tools to receive feedback on their essays and other assignments in writing-based classes.	76% 72%
Schools should provide guidelines and resources to teach students how to use AI responsibly.	86% 83%

Table 4: Percentage of participants who supported penalties for violating school policies on AI usage

■ % before deliberation ■ % after deliberation

Students who violate their school's AI policy should be subject to a warning and/or a grade deduction.	72% 78%
Students who repeatedly violate their school's AI policy should be subject to a grade deduction and/or suspension or expulsion.	61% 55%
Students who violate their school's AI policy should be considered for suspension, regardless of whether it is their first offense.	24% 28%

Table 5: Should teachers be using AI?

■ % before deliberation ■ % after deliberation

Teachers should NOT use AI detection tools to verify the authenticity of student work.	35% 45%
Teachers should NOT use AI tools to assist in grading student work.	47% 41%
Teachers should NOT use AI tools to create teaching materials (e.g., curriculum, worksheets, and essay prompts).	35% 41%

Students also discussed the penalties that should be applied for unauthorized use of AI in high schools. A vast majority of the participants were opposed to the proposal of suspending or expelling students who violate their school's AI policy. This indicates that students preferred corrective penalties, rather than punitive ones. The most supported penalty for unauthorized use of AI in U.S. high schools was a warning and/or grade deduction, support for which grew from 72 percent to 78 percent after the deliberations.

Regarding teachers' use of AI, students were broadly opposed to regulating their use. Most students approved of teachers using AI for detecting plagiarism, grading assistance, and creating teaching materials. The students' stance on teachers' AI use aligned with their views on student AI use, favoring AI integration in schools for both groups and opposing blanket restrictions. This attitude may stem from students' reluctance to regulate their teachers' practices or a belief that such decisions fall outside their purview. Still, as one participant shared, "In my opinion [...] no type of AI tool can really substitute for a teacher or for a human being."

Key takeaways

Considerations when designing policies related to AI usage in schools:

- ▶ Whether used by students or teachers, participants were in favor of the use of AI and opposed proposals that limited or prohibited the use of AI in the classroom.
- ▶ The most supported policy proposal was "schools should provide guidelines and resources to teach students how to use AI responsibly," with four out of five students favoring it before and after the deliberation.

- ▶ A majority agreed that “using AI in schools will prepare students for the job market” and that generative AI tools should be permitted to aid with schoolwork, particularly for writing and coding.
- ▶ Participants were in favor of corrective penalties, such as a warning or a grade deduction, and opposed punitive penalties such as a suspension.

Overall, the results of this exercise indicate that high school students hold the belief that AI can be beneficial in high schools, but also have a negative impact if not responsibly regulated.

Resources

The briefing materials and resources with the pros and cons of each proposal provided to students before the deliberation, can be found [here](#). CSBA highly encourages students and educators to use the briefing materials from this deliberative event for discussions in classrooms and to continue Deliberative Polling exercises regarding the use of AI in education, in high schools, and beyond. The full report, with data analysis for each proposal, can be found [here](#).

AI implementation resources:

California School Boards Association

CSBA’s AI Taskforce aims to equip boards of education with the necessary knowledge and tools to navigate the complexities of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into the work of public school districts and county offices of education. Information on the taskforce and resources curated for governing board members can be found on the Taskforce’s landing page. csba.pub/3yc2Lsp

California Department of Education

Learning With AI, Learning About AI: Information and resources regarding the role of AI in California K-12 education from CDE. bit.ly/46rGyTH

Lynwood Unified School District

Lynwood Unified’s AI Taskforce aims to provide guidance for integrating AI technologies into the classroom. The taskforce consists of district leaders, teachers, parents, students, and subject matter experts. This cross-functional team will collaborate to develop policies, curriculum, and best practices around the use of AI in education. ai.mylusd.org

Council of the Great City Schools

K-12 Generative AI Readiness Checklist: A questionnaire designed to guide K-12 school districts in understanding key factors to consider before implementing generative AI technologies. The checklist serves as a preliminary tool for district leaders — including superintendents, board members, and technology experts — to evaluate the safety, privacy, security, and ethical implications of using generative AI. The goal is to help districts prepare adequately, ensuring data privacy and security, and avoiding bias or algorithmic discrimination, while gaining a foundational understanding of the related tactical considerations. cgcs.org/genaichcklist

Teach AI

AI Guidance for Schools Toolkit: A toolkit designed to help education authorities, school leaders, and teachers create thoughtful guidance to help their communities realize the potential benefits of incorporating AI in primary and secondary education while understanding and mitigating the potential risks. teachai.org/toolkit

Digital Promise

Strategies to Promote AI Literacy in K-12: The AI Literacy Framework provides guidance on how leaders can design AI literacy programs so that users can safely and effectively understand, evaluate, and use AI tools in their contexts. It identifies five strategies to promote AI literacy in K-12 education and provides examples and guidance for implementing each strategy. bit.ly/4c7GYjd

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