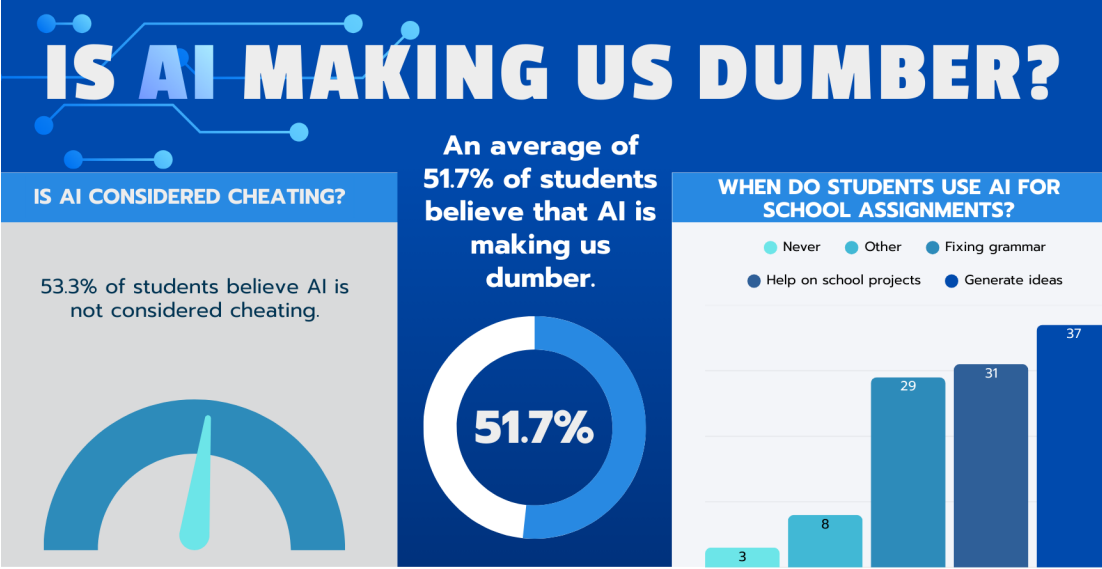
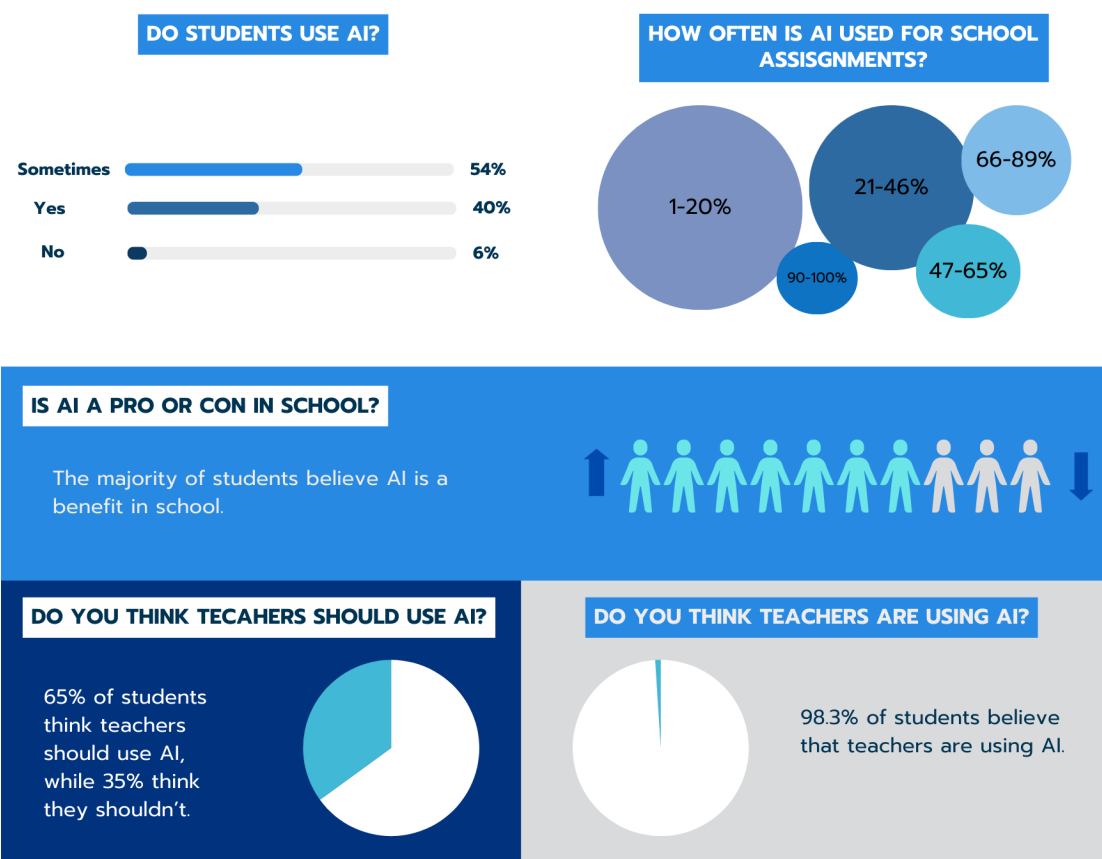




By: Khloe Wheeler

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become increasingly present in U.S. schools, raising questions about how it affects student learning. Tools shaped by code can help students research faster, organize ideas, and complete assignments more efficiently. At the same time, some educators and students question whether frequent reliance on AI may affect critical thinking and independent problem-solving.

Some critics argue that easy access to platforms like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini may encourage students to seek quick answers rather than work through challenges themselves. Teachers who share this concern suggest that consistent practice and effort are important parts of the learning process.

“AI is instant gratification. The answers are given within seconds. Students must learn to research information, take that information, and process what data is being given to them,” said high school

secretary Mrs. Katie Lilienthal. “AI, in my opinion, is diminishing the ability for a student to be a critical thinker, to be able to solve a problem all on their own. Nowadays, these answers are just at their fingertips.”

In classrooms, educators report noticing differences in how some students approach assignments. While completed work may appear polished, teachers sometimes question whether students fully understand the material. When asked to explain their reasoning, some students struggle to describe the thinking behind their answers. This has led to discussion about how AI should be used in academic settings.

At DT, AI use among students is widespread; 93.3% of DT students polled admit to using AI. While some could interpret this statistic as evidence that AI use is a problem, the number alone does not measure how students are using AI or whether they are learning less as a result. For some students, AI may serve as a

study aid, while for others it may replace parts of the thinking process.

“I use it to study, it helps me feel prepared for upcoming tests, and it's quick and easy,” sophomore Marissa Schwab comments.

Educators have also pointed out that AI is not always accurate, and when students take AI's answers as gospel, paste them on a page, and submit them without checking them over, they could be in for a rude awakening.

“I don't know how much I trust AI! I used AI to figure a scale for an assignment. I freely disclosed this to the class, and I put AI's work on the board. The equation was correct, but we all discovered when we worked the equation that AI's answer was wrong! AI makes it easier to be lazy, but laziness is a choice. Part of the magic of reading or learning is what you discover along the way,” claims veteran English teacher, Mrs. Joy Utecht. “As with any source--AI, social media, the news media--you need to consume carefully.

Check the facts, question the bias, and look for verification. AI doesn't negate or eradicate our responsibility to question the information presented to us.”

This perspective highlights a broader point: AI tools can produce helpful information quickly, but they still require users to verify accuracy and think critically about results. Students themselves express mixed views, and determining the 'right' and 'wrong' way to use AI is challenging.

“I believe that if used correctly, AI can be beneficial, but most students abuse AI and rely on it heavily,” sophomore Addison Bishop points out.

Supporters of AI in education argue that it can reduce stress, provide tutoring support, and offer explanations tailored to individual needs. Others worry that overuse could reduce persistence and limit opportunities to develop a deeper understanding. Research on learning consistently shows that productive struggle, working through difficult

material, strengthens retention and comprehension. If AI replaces that effort entirely, growth could be limited. However, if AI is used as a supplement rather than a substitute, it may enhance learning.

“I feel like we should be using AI responsibly because I think a lot of people are misusing it. If everyone used it correctly, I feel like it could be a good tool,” states sophomore Kilah Pfeifer.

So to answer the question “Is AI making us dumber?” the evidence suggests that AI itself is not inherently making students “dumber.” Instead, its impact depends largely on how it is used. When students rely on AI to replace thinking, research, or problem-solving, learning may suffer. Studies, including those from MIT, show that using AI to complete tasks and assignments, like writing, results in lower brain activity and reduced information retention. But when it is used responsibly, to check work, generate study aids, or clarify difficult concepts, AI can support

understanding.

The debate centers less on the existence of AI and more on balance. Artificial intelligence is a tool. Like other technologies introduced into classrooms over time, it can either strengthen or weaken learning habits depending on how it is integrated. The question is not simply whether AI is making us dumber, but whether we are using it in ways that promote growth rather than replace it.

Rise of AI: Smarter Tech, Bigger Questions

A closer look at the technology shaping the future of work, school, and society

By: Charlie Christensen

Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming an increasingly significant part of classrooms around the world, with high schools at the forefront of this shift.

Sophomore student Sawyer Smith says, “AI is everywhere right now, ranging from AI Actors to ChatGPT. Our wide range of AI is going to take over our world, and its gonna make the students less engaged in life and in school.”

Teachers, students, and school leaders are all noticing the opportunities and challenges that come with using AI tools in education. Some teachers have noticed that students submit AI assignments without checking the information first, which has led to some issues.

Science and careers teacher Mrs. Laurel Rader says, “AI can be a helpful tool; however, students need to be able to scrutinize the information and shouldn't rely on it without processing it first.”

In many U.S. school districts, AI tools such as chatbots and automated lesson helpers are being used as a cheat source more than a helper.

A growing number of schools are developing guidelines to determine how to use AI responsibly and fairly in the classroom. Some are creating policies while others still struggle without clear rules.

Doniphan-Trumbull's policy prohibits AI unless teachers expressly permit students to use

it, but this rule isn't consistently followed and can rarely be enforced.

“Students know that they aren't supposed to use AI to generate their writing in English class, but some do it anyway,” said English teacher Mrs. Andee Turner. “It can be hard to penalize students for using AI because it can be hard to prove any wrongdoing, which means it's hard to explain to a parent why their student got a zero. In the long-run, these students are just hurting themselves, but they aren't old enough or wise enough yet to understand the long-lasting consequences of not being able to think or problem-solve by themselves.”

On the other side of the classroom, teachers say that AI can save time, help plan lessons, and increase engagement when used correctly. This has led some educators to adopt AI to improve instruction and support student learning. At the same time, many schools are still trying to find a balance between AI use and strong teaching practices.

High school principal Mrs. Michalea Goracke said, “I think that AI can be a tool to support what teachers are doing in the classroom - using it to help create engaging lessons, flashcards, games or quizzes allows teachers more time to spend on things that are just as important as daily lessons - but are not seen by students - like evaluating data, grading, planning and researching new projects.”

However, not everyone believes

that AI has only positive effects. Some reports indicate that the increased use of AI in schools is a real problem. There are concerns that students may feel less connected to teachers in the classroom, be less engaged, and rely too much on technology rather than practicing their own skills.

English teacher Mrs. Gail Saathoff says, “AI makes it too easy not to think. Students are out of the habit of using their brain power.”

Tech companies are also taking action. For instance, Microsoft recently introduced free AI training and tools for educators and students. These resources aim to help schools use AI in ways that support learning goals rather than detract from them.

As AI continues to expand in classrooms, students and teachers will need clear guidance, effective policies, and strong teaching strategies to ensure these tools help, not hinder, learning.

Many educators believe that AI is here to stay. The challenge now is to determine how to use it effectively in high school education.

Sophomore student Austin Witter says, “AI is a tool both teachers and students use; some people use it for good, and some use it for bad. Most students use it badly because they can use it to cheat on their quizzes/tests. Learning how and when use AI will be one of most important skill this generation of people will have to learn.”

Stop Treating AI Like the Enemy

Why AI Should be Used as an Advantage

By: Kilah Pfeifer

Artificial intelligence has become one of the most controversial topics in schools. Many teachers see it as cheating, while others worry it will make students lazy. But AI isn't the enemy of education; it's a tool, and schools should start treating it like one.

Students are already using AI, whether it is allowed or not; 33.9% of DT students polled say they use AI on more than 50% of their homework. Banning these programs will not stop students from using them; it just stops students from learning how to use these resources responsibly. When used correctly, AI can help students come up with ideas, understand confusing topics, and improve their writing, without AI doing all the work for them.

As a high school student, I know that sometimes the hardest part of an assignment is just getting started. AI can help organize thoughts or explain instructions in a way that makes more sense. For students who struggle with writing, focus, or confidence, AI can act as support, similar to a tutor by explaining confusing instructions in simpler terms or spellcheck by checking spelling and grammar students may have missed, making learning more accessible.

When I use AI, it's usually to brainstorm, get help starting on an assignment, which is one of the hardest parts, or check my spelling. I still do the assignments and work and make sure it's my own words

and ideas.

One of the biggest concerns about AI in schools is cheating. While misuse can happen, the problem is not the technology itself. Schools had the same worries about calculators, Google, and grammar checkers, and now those are normal tools. Instead of banning AI, teachers could change assignments, so students still have to show their own thinking by requiring personal reflections, step-by-step explanations, and asking students to explain their reasoning. This would prevent AI cheating because students would actually have to prove their work.

AI is already used in college and

many careers, such as healthcare, engineering, business, and technology. In business, more than half of companies now use AI for things like customer service chatbots or analyzing data. In technology, AI helps write and test code, improve cybersecurity, and power apps and voice assistants. Students should learn how to use it responsibly before they graduate. Teaching students how to use AI the right way prepares them for the real world better than pretending it doesn't exist.

AI is not going away. Rather than fighting it, schools should focus on helping students use it wisely.

Why I'm Second-Guessing AI

A Deep Dive Into the Effects of AI

By: Leilani Soto

Last week, I sat in the back of the room and watched a kid write an entire English essay in about thirty seconds. He didn't type a single word of his own. I get it, actually getting eight hours of sleep and securing some much-needed free time for yourself is tempting, but if we use AI on all of our assignments or essays, are we really learning anything? Are we really grasping what our teachers are trying to comprehend in our young minds? Will we really be prepared for life outside of school?

I don't think so. I'm starting to think AI's biggest contribution to society is its ability to make us

incompetent. In our hallways, “Chat GPT” is everywhere. We're told that AI helps us work efficiently and smarter, but I think it's just helping us skip the struggle and making us lazier. By being unmotivated, we will learn this habit. It's hard to know where to draw the line between working smarter and not working at all.

According to a report by the Pew Research Center, “about 19% of teens who have heard of ChatGPT say they use it to help them do their schoolwork.” Here at DT, over half of student's polled admit to cheating on their school work by using generative AI to complete their assignments.

I fear that for many of us who overutilize this technology, when we get into real-world situations and jobs, we're going to find ourselves in hot water. If we graduate into a world where we can't solve a problem without AI, we haven't actually learned anything. If people go throughout high school relying on Chat GPT and AI, they won't fully develop or understand college or even the world around them in the same way someone who studies through high school would.

I'm not saying we should pull the plug on AI completely. But I am firmly suggesting that AI should be something you use to check your work, not something that does the work for you. If we let AI do all of our work, not only will be jepordize our learning and our futures, we could be putting our safety at serious risk.

Furthermore, a lot of my friends take AI as gospel. They don't question it, instead believing that everything it says is correct, but we know that's not true. The danger is that it sounds so professional that we just believe it. This is just one of



Grapic by: Bailey Manka