



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Artificial Intelligence in Schools

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The big picture: AI & inclusion



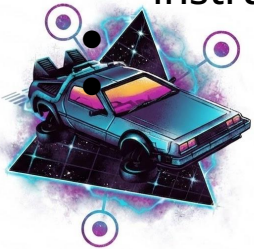
- AI further reinforced consolidation of power among a few leading technology companies and their leaders → People who own AI and data benefit disproportionately more than users
- History of previous waves of innovation (steam engines, electricity, cars, computer, internet) brought accessibility benefits, but many opportunities were not and are still not implemented
- Technological feasibility was never the roadblock to inclusion → The roadblocks are primarily political and sociocultural
- We could have a fully inclusive, fully accessible society without AI now, but we don't and that's a political decision



The promise: What could be possible



- AI might have specific advantages for people with disabilities, e.g. for neurodivergent people, it can be easier to work with AI than with a human (AI is comfortable with direct communication, can help with task initiation, can perform non-preferred tasks, ...)
- AI requires supervision and specific skills, e.g. prompt engineering (how to craft effective prompts)
- These skills and understanding of the limits of AI will need to be taught as core competencies in school in the future
- One of the biggest promise for special education specifically is how teachers can use it
- AI can be used on a case-by-case basis by teachers for individualization of instruction → More targeted instruction with less preparation time



The concerns: What to look out for



- Bias:
 - Lots of evidence where AI has discriminated on the basis of disability and also other social categories (race, gender, etc.)
 - 2 fundamental sources of bias: (1) definition of the algorithm's rules and (2) "training data" that teaches the algorithm about the "true" state of the world
 - AI propagates human bias
 - Training data can bias even seemingly "neutral" rules
 - This is why even in the absence of blatant intentional manipulation of the algorithm itself AI can be biased



The concerns: What to look out for



- Misinformation:
 - AI blatantly lies: makes up facts and makes them appear real
 - Always needs sense of skepticism → AI competency training
- Privacy
 - Care needed with sharing personal information
 - Care needed with permissions, especially agentic AI (autonomous systems that don't require frequent human supervision)



AI in Hawaii schools now



- AI guidelines for students and educators (downloadable here: <https://hawaiipublicschools.org/student-programs/artificial-intelligence/>)
 - Focused on minimizing risks
 - Mention key risks in terms of bias, misinformation and privacy
 - Less focused on harnessing opportunities → very new and dynamic area
 - Not yet any systematic teaching of AI competencies (individual educators may do more)
- Emerging professional development resources about AI for HIDOE educators
 - Includes more proactive elements (e.g. prompt engineering)
 - I could not find anything specifically focusing on applications of AI for special education



What you can do (at home)



- For IEPs: primary benefit of AI is as a component of assistive technology (e.g. hearing aids/mics, word prediction tools, text-to-speech and speech-to-text, etc.)
- Suggestions for things you can do at home
 - Experimenting with AI at home (“learning by doing”) to get a feeling for what is needed to write an effective prompt and what the pitfalls are (e.g. ask AI about a topic you know a lot about and know where to find information) → show and repeat with your child
 - Can be useful to use Gemini (used at school)
 - AI for individualizing and creating learning materials (e.g. creating stories for reading practice about child’s special interests at their reading level, appropriate length etc.)
 - Individualizing or simplifying instructions on worksheets (e.g. asking AI to change worksheet examples to child’s special interest while keeping the tasks the same or asking AI to write plain language instructions while keeping the actual task level and content the same)
 - Creating learning materials for topics where your child needs additional practice
 - Using other formats, e.g. video



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