

5 Questions Every Parent Should Ask Their Child's School About AI

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Artificial intelligence is rewriting the rules of education.

The jobs our children will hold likely haven't been invented yet. Their world will be shaped by AI in ways we can barely imagine. Are their schools preparing them?

As AI permeates every sector, a chilling statistic from the International Monetary Fund reveals that up to 60% of jobs in advanced economies are at risk. For jobs not at risk, we will likely see them augmented to the point where additional skills will be needed. Schools must rise to the challenge of preparing their students for this AI-driven future or risk leaving them woefully unprepared.

The stakes are high.

Imagine the competitive edge your child will have if they are empowered to not only understand AI but to wield it as a productivity superpower. Imagine a generation equipped to tackle the ethical dilemmas of this technology. Schools hold the key to unlocking this potential.

AI currently has the capacity to boost a skilled worker's productivity by up to 40%, a piece from MIT's Sloan School of Management notes. Junior developers can expect productivity gains of 20% to 30% when using an AI tool like GitHub's Co-Pilot, while seasoned developers leveraging their expertise alongside the AI assistant may experience productivity increases of up to 50% to 60%, according to a UNESCO webinar.

It's time for education to embrace AI and ensure our children are prepared for an AI world.

Questions To Ask Your Child's School To Ensure They Are On The Right Track

I tapped into the wisdom of 10 respected education specialists, from school leaders and technology experts to AI researchers.

Their insights offer vital insights and helped me form five essential questions:

1. How are you incorporating AI into student learning, promoting its benefits and ensuring its effective use?

Ben Whitaker, a former U.K. school leader and innovation consultant, underscores the need for schools to go beyond passive acceptance of AI. He wants parents to ask their child's schools: "How are you actively encouraging students to use AI at all levels of the learning journey — ideation, iteration and improvement — while being transparent in how they use it?" Whitaker advocates for an approach where educators proactively integrate AI into the entire learning process.

Kevin Oldershaw, academic director at Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate, emphasizes the dual importance of AI literacy and appreciation. "How do you provide children with opportunities to learn about, use, and appreciate the role of AI to enhance their learning and benefit society?" Oldershaw asks. By fostering both critical and creative engagement with AI, schools help students effectively harness and shape the technology for good.

Asking these kinds of questions could be the impetus an overly cautious school needs to start exploring AI's benefits. We are seeing more and more schools start to have conversations about the use of AI, but many are still avoiding the necessary questions and banning its use.

2. How can we work with the school to help our children learn about AI, ensuring its safe and meaningful use?

Michael Fricano, technology integration specialist at 'Iolani School Hawaii, takes a different approach and stresses the need for parents to partner with schools in their AI efforts. Fricano says we should ask schools about two things "how parents can take responsibility at home with helping their child learn about AI" and "how parents can help support their child's school."

Efraim Lerner, founder of Br1ne, similarly advocates for parental involvement in shaping a child's relationship with AI. He proposes the question: "How does the school involve parents and the school community in understanding and supporting the safe and meaningful use of AI and technology for their children's education?" Open communication between parents and schools lays the foundation for consistent reinforcement of safe, ethical AI practices.

AI skills won't just be vital for our children. Singapore's government is considering giving a \$3,000-per-month allowance for workers ages 40 and older who undergo full-time re-training, The Straits Times reported. A strong parent-school partnership

could help parents gain new skills, boosting their confidence and equipping them with skills for their own development, while supporting their children.

3. What can the school put in place to ensure fair AI use and prevent false cheating accusations?

The rise of AI necessitates a shift in how we assess student work.

Carol S. Scott, a senior director at Microsoft, poses a thought-provoking question: "How do you make sure teachers do not falsely accuse students of cheating when everyone is learning? If teachers use AI for preparation and checking students' work, then shouldn't students be able to use it and learn?" This emphasizes the need to establish new parameters that balance academic integrity with the evolving roles of both students and teachers in an AI-influenced environment.

4. How are you equipping students with the skills to use AI safely, ethically and responsibly?

Melissa McBride — chief education officer at Sophia High School, an online educational institution in the U.K. — stresses the importance of guiding students toward responsible AI engagement. She proposes the question, "How are you preparing young people to use AI tools safely, ethically, and effectively?" This underscores a focus on digital citizenship in the age of AI.

Daren White, technologies lead at the Academies Enterprise Trust, extends this theme by asking: "How are you preparing pupils to use AI in terms of recognizing/avoiding bias, being open about use, taking ownership of AI-generated content they choose to share, and looking after personal data?" White's questions highlight the importance of understanding AI's limitations and potential pitfalls while fostering responsible data practices.

5. How is the school nurturing the essential skills students need for positive, safe and innovative AI use?

Caroline Allams, educationalist and chief of product at Natterhub, emphasizes the enduring value of soft skills for success in the AI age: "How are you, as a school, developing the soft 'power' skills to underpin positive, ambitious, safe, creative use of AI?" This underscores the need to cultivate resilience, empathy, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. These are timeless skills that will serve students well in a tech-driven world.

Navigating A World of Flux

Artificial intelligence has the potential to reshape the very fabric of society. This means we also need to ask our schools how they are empowering students to use AI to address complex global issues, such as poverty, climate change and

inequality.

Our schools bear the responsibility of preparing students to navigate a world where job markets and societal structures will be constantly in flux. It's paramount for them to emphasize the development of adaptive mindsets, lifelong learning and a willingness to embrace change. Schools can cultivate resilience by creating opportunities for students to explore emerging fields, experiment with new technologies and collaborate on projects that mirror the shifting dynamics of the real-world workplace.

What questions will you ask your child's school about AI?