

Insights, News & Events

CHATGPT PRESENTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOLS – BUT BE SURE TO THINK THROUGH THESE PROS AND CONS

Insights
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Have you heard about ChatGPT? Your students definitely have, and they are probably already using it. ChatGPT is a new artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot developed by OpenAI. This new technology has the potential to revolutionize education – both by providing opportunities and presenting you with new challenges to overcome. On the positive side, it can provide innovative ways for schools to personalize learning, improve student engagement, and streamline administrative tasks. And as AI becomes more accessible to schools of all sizes and budgets, it can be a viable option for just about any educational institution looking to improve their programs and services. From implementing AI-powered learning management systems to using chatbots that provide real-time feedback, the possibilities are endless. On the flipside, you may be concerned about students using this technology as a shortcut in violation of your policies and protocols. Thus, schools should consider addressing how they plan to deal with ChatGPT. Here are some key points you should think about before you decide whether to ban it – or embrace it – in the classroom.

Are You Surprised?

Service Focus

AI, Data, and Analytics

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Industry Focus

Education

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AI Governance Hub

Although we polished it up, that last paragraph was drafted by ChatGPT with a simple one-sentence request! ("Write the introduction to an article about how schools can use AI").

ChatGPT's premise is simple: you "talk" to a chatbot and it can assist you with any number of tasks. For example, you can ask it to explain a subject, write an essay or article, run a calculation, help draft computer code, or simply follow a conversation. ChatGPT then pulls knowledge from its dataset and produces a response that looks surprisingly accurate. Despite being in an initial research preview, ChatGPT is unexpectedly good at mimicking human dialogue and decision-making.

These days, ChatGPT is being used in many ways. It is [writing essays](#) and [research paper abstracts](#) and even [passing professional law and business exams](#) – which has led some [school districts to block it](#) on their networks because they recognize the potential for abuse. Still, some educators are choosing to embrace it, including a University of Pennsylvania professor who said he [probably couldn't stop students](#) from using it anyway.

Whether you decide to ban ChatGPT or encourage its use (or land somewhere in between) you should recognize the pros and cons of each decision.

Should You Ban ChatGPT?

While banning ChatGPT on school devices might appear the easiest solution, students are remarkably talented at getting around roadblocks. And ChatGPT can easily be accessed on cellphones, VPNs, tablets, or their home computers – where many assignments are completed.

To address these issues, schools may wish to have more writing exercises completed in class the old-fashioned way, with paper and pencil, and a proctor. And for work-product prepared outside of school, educators can now run their students' out-of-school

writing through a [just-released tool from OpenAI](#) – its [A.I. Text Classifier](#) – which was trained to distinguish between text written by a human and text written by AI. While it is impossible to reliably detect all AI-written text, good classifiers like this one can help inform whether text was written by a human or an AI (particularly when the length of the text is longer).

You should also consider the following questions before implementing a ban:

- First, you will need to identify how to detect material prepared by ChatGPT. Will you conduct a manual review or use some sort of software?
- If you flag a student as having improperly used ChatGPT, how will you confront them? Do you have adequate proof? How will you handle pushback from parents who are upset that their child has been accused of cheating? What are the consequences if confirmed?
- What kind of time and resources will this require? Will IT need to become part of the educational process to verify?

Teachers may test whether students actually wrote essays themselves by asking questions in class to determine the student's understanding of the subject. A student who submits a lovely essay but cannot articulate the substance of the assignment might be using AI to prepare the assignment. Faculty should be careful, however, about jumping to conclusions, as some students express themselves better in writing than they do verbally.

Of course, it does not have to be all-or-nothing—you could also limit rather than outright ban ChatGPT. For example, you could craft a specific policy directly addressing the use of AI and outlining when it may be used. You could also revise your existing academic integrity policies to expressly permit it but similarly setting guardrails.

Overall, banning may help reduce the possibility of cheating. However, promoting and monitoring academic integrity will be challenging.

Should You Embrace ChatGPT?

You've heard it before: *If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.* The reality is, even if you do ban ChatGPT, it is unlikely to be a perfect system. As difficult as it is to combat cheating, policing it may be even harder.

Some schools are choosing to embrace ChatGPT by using it as a teaching aid and brainstorming creative ways to incorporate it. For example, a recent New York Times [article](#) describes how teachers have allowed students to generate essay outlines with ChatGPT even though they are required to write the actual essays by themselves. Others have used it to help generate lesson plans and quizzes. Some teachers — who recognize that ChatGPT could be wrong — challenged students to try confusing the AI and to evaluate its written responses the way a teacher would.

Embracing ChatGPT offers endless opportunities for creativity. And while that's great, there needs to be some structure. When crafting a policy to incorporate ChatGPT into your processes, you should consider the following questions:

- Who gets to decide about its use? Will individual teachers be permitted to lesson plan with ChatGPT? Does administration need to approve?
- What uses will be permitted? In class use? Homework? What about use for quizzes and exams or assignment-specific tasks? Like a calculator, will use be permitted at some times but not at others?
- As we know, ChatGPT isn't always accurate. So, how will you verify when it is providing useful information? Will students be inadvertently absorbing incorrect knowledge?

Be Prepared to Explain Your Reasoning

Regardless of how you chose to approach ChatGPT and related technology, you should be prepared to communicate your rationale with students and parents, as both will have something to say. Students may be disappointed with a ban, while some parents may see this technology as a shortcut and get upset if students are using it.

You may also want to address ChatGPT use outside of the classroom, as it can be used for administrative and business purposes. For example, it may be a helpful starting point when crafting employment, academic, and other policies. It can also be used to draft template forms or communications to students and families. But you should be [mindful of its limitations as](#) outlined in our detailed Insight found [here](#), including confidentiality and privacy concerns.

CONCLUSION

ChatGPT is just the tip of the iceberg for AI. Thanks to ChatGPT, AI is in the global spotlight and will only continue to prompt excitement, concern, discussion, and questions from the school community.

As always, we will continue to monitor developments on ChatGPT and artificial intelligence, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to keep up with the most up-to-date information. Please consult your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney on [our Education Team](#) to obtain practical advice and guidance on how to adapt your school policies to the changes we expect as a result of this new technology.