Artificial Intelligence English Language Arts (AI ELA) Framework for ELA Teachers in Grades 6–12

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INTRODUCTION

As the landscape of literacy continues to shift under the influence of generative artificial intelligence (known as AI), English language arts (ELA) educators in grades 6–12 find themselves in a state of constant change and uncertainty. AI technology has become and will continue to be inescapable—for teachers and students alike. NCTE understands that the integration of these technologies into the classroom carries significant weight, involving complex considerations that cannot be taken lightly. We recognize that there are serious ethical concerns, environmental impacts, student data privacy concerns, and an increasing focus on student mental health concerns. These issues are vital to the broader conversation regarding AI use and should be top of mind when considering the implications and impact of these tools.

This document is designed to provide targeted guidance on the pedagogical intersections of AI and the English classroom, ensuring that technology serves as a bridge rather than a barrier to meaningful learning. While this technology is still emerging, there are ways in which AI can provide support for deeper critical thinking, differentiation, support for multilingual learners, and building deeper understandings for learners.

The core of this framework centers on three elements for teachers to consider as they explore how AI can support ELA use in the classroom. First, we focus on the elevation and fostering of student voice and agency in the section entitled "Students as Critical Thinkers with AI" to ensure that AI tools are used to amplify, not replace, the unique perspectives and creative identities of our students. As teachers navigating this digital transition, the "Critically Examining AI Source Material" section focuses on how important it is to remain attentive to the potential biases found in AI-generated results, which often reflect and reinforce societal inequities. By focusing on critical AI literacy, educators can empower students to question these results and maintain their position as the primary architects of their own ideas. The "Ethical and Responsible Use" section looks closely at the impact of AI tools on both students and teachers, refining what academic integrity and scholarly pursuit look like in the age of AI rather than focusing solely on policing and compliance. We recognize and emphasize the intrinsic value of the writing process as a human-centered act of thinking and discovery and believe that the fundamental goals of the English classroom (cultivating critical thinkers, empathetic readers, and effective communicators) are more relevant than ever.

This framework seeks to provide the strategies to uphold these academic standards, ensuring that even as tools evolve, the rigor of intellectual exploration and the authenticity of a student's journey remain the core of ELA instruction. By grounding classroom practice in the belief that AI can be a partner in inquiry rather than a substitute for thought, we protect the sanctity of the student's intellectual growth and

the teacher's professional expertise. As you navigate this framework, we invite you to view these topics not as a rigid set of rules, but as a living document meant to foster resilient, tech-savvy, and deeply reflective students who are prepared to lead with their own voices in this digital age. As the use of AI advances, we recognize that this document must also evolve, but we seek to capture this moment in time as a way to move forward with intention and make sense of our current reality.

STUDENTS AS CRITICAL THINKERS WITH AI

At the heart of English language arts classrooms is the foundational belief that students are thinkers, creators, storytellers, and makers of meaning. As artificial intelligence continues to integrate into education, it must support, not replace, the human intellectual work of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Through co-designing and augmenting with AI, teachers and students can shape these tools as partners in inquiry that support reflection and collaboration while keeping human voice and judgment at the center.

Through human-centered interactions with AI, students are positioned not as passive users, but as decision makers who question, guide, and refine the technology in front of them. When students are invited to shape prompts and refine their questions, they take an active role in directing their own inquiry. They also learn to approach AI responses with curiosity and discernment, recognizing that generated information may be incomplete, inaccurate, or biased. Used intentionally, AI can expand access for multilingual students through linguistic support and translation, creating entry points into complex texts while honoring students' full linguistic repertoires. It can also support students in designing, revising, and producing digital media texts that reflect their identities and lived experiences, extending literacy beyond the page and into the world they already navigate. In this way, AI becomes a support for thinking rather than a replacement for it, what scholars such as Bodong Chen and Ethan Mollick describe as co-intelligence, where students remain the authors of their ideas and meaning-making.

PURPOSE

Students are critical thinkers who may use AI to deepen, not replace, their thinking. ELA already cultivates critical thinking through reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and AI tools can extend this work by opening new opportunities for questioning, analysis, and reflection with teacher support. Human thinking and voice remain at the center.

TEACHER TOOLS

AI tools may be used to:

- Foster collaborative partnerships by encouraging teachers and students to learn alongside one another and reflect on what goals and activities AI supports, where it falls short, and when human judgment matters most.
- Co-design prompts with students, inviting them to shape meaningful questions and tasks.
- Serve as partners in inquiry to extend thinking rather than complete it.
- Make thinking visible by prompting students to reflect on how AI tools supported or limited their ideas.
- Facilitate comparison between human and AI responses to strengthen voice, revision, and ownership.
- Expand access for multilingual learners by providing translation, language scaffolds, and entry points to complex texts while honoring students' full linguistic repertoires.

STUDENT VOICE IN ACTION

Students learn to:

- Question AI generated responses by analyzing, critiquing, and challenging the information presented, comparing with credible sources to verify accuracy.
- Refine prompts to explore multiple perspectives and deepen inquiry while forming independent interpretations.
- Reflect on how AI tools shape their thinking and ideas.
- Strengthen their thinking by testing claims and examining counterarguments.
- Design prompts, questions, or tasks for peers, taking ownership of learning.
- Use AI to support expression across languages by translating, clarifying ideas, and communicating thinking while honoring their full linguistic repertoires.

QUICK STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

- Keep human voice at the center by prioritizing student thinking, expression, and meaning-making, and honoring students' choice to use or not use AI.
- Use AI as a starting point for ideas while encouraging students to question, revise, and extend their thinking.
- Leverage AI to support multilingual learners through translation and language scaffolds, and build in reflection by asking what AI supported, what students changed, and what still needs thinking.

EMERGING PRACTICES

- Design human-centered interactions with AI by positioning students as decision makers who guide, question, and refine AI use, ensuring that technology supports inquiry while human voice and judgment remain central.
- Integrate AI into media and multimodal composition so students can create podcasts, images, videos, and digital storytelling pieces, using AI to support ideation and revision while maintaining ownership of their message and meaning.
- Teach students to critically evaluate and refine AI responses by prompting them to question accuracy, identify bias, compare sources, and revise prompts, shifting AI from a shortcut for answers to a tool for deeper thinking. In the process, they can compare primary source documents with information generated by AI to evaluate its accuracy.

CRITICALLY EXAMINING AI SOURCE MATERIAL

A crucial part of educating students to become critical thinkers with artificial intelligence is teaching them to critically examine its source material. The inherent bias in AI begins at its very foundation, the data. Because generative AI models are trained on massive datasets scraped from the internet, books, and social media, they inevitably mirror the prejudices, stereotypes, and inequities present in those human-authored sources. Therefore, the technology upon which AI tools are built is not a neutral purveyor of truth, but rather, a reflection of the collective, and often flawed, digital footprint of humanity. That being said, bias is not just a flaw in the technology or its programming, it is also a byproduct of the human-computer interaction. The way a user frames a prompt can inadvertently steer the AI tools toward a given conclusion or reinforce the user's own preconceived notions. In an English language arts context, this means that both the teacher's instructional design and the student's inquiry methods are opportunities for human bias to make an appearance, making it essential to approach prompting as a deliberate and self-reflective rhetorical act.

Users must also contend with the phenomenon of what's known as AI "hallucinations." These are instances where the model confidently generates fabricated facts, fake citations, or nonexistent historical events that are easily believed. Because AI is designed for fluency and pattern-matching rather than factual verification, the responses can be linguistically persuasive while being entirely untruthful and unreliable. To protect against these errors and maintain academic integrity, it is vital to treat AI tools as a starting point rather than a finish line. Double-checking every source and verifying claims and outputs against credible, human-vetted databases remains a non-negotiable step in the research process, ensuring that the convenience of technology never comes at the cost of accuracy.

PURPOSE

AI-generated content is a reflection of historical human prejudices and technical hallucinations rather than an objective source of truth and therefore is subject to the biases and inequities that the tools are trained on. Consequently, users must approach the technology with a self-reflective and critical lens, treating AI outputs as preliminary drafts that require rigorous human verification to maintain academic integrity.

TEACHER TOOLS

AI tools may be used to:

- Discuss where AI models get their information and how they are trained to explore biased outputs. (Example: Research why certain communities, historical events, or non-English languages are underrepresented in these datasets and how those gaps lead to biased outputs. Following this discussion, consider developing classroom norms for AI use that incorporate regular checks on biased outputs.)
- Treat prompting as an act of rhetorical composition. Just as students choose specific words to influence an audience in an essay, the words they choose in a prompt dictate the bias of the output.
- Focus on the *practice* of prompting as opposed to the *results* of the prompt.
- Instruct students to use neutral language and "loaded" or leading language to ask questions. Have them compare the results to help students see how their own phrasing can "nudge" the AI to confirm their existing biases.
- Remind students that every AI-generated citation or "fact" is a claim that must be proven. Require students to verify AI output against library databases, peer-reviewed journals, and primary sources to protect against fabricated information.
- Demonstrate to students the differences and similarities in output between work that is created when students rely on their own expertise and critical thinking and work produced after consulting an AI platform for a task.

STUDENT VOICE IN ACTION

Students learn to:

- Investigate specific websites or authors that AI tools cite to determine their credibility and potential bias.
- Practice comparing the results from AI tools to see how different prompt language can "nudge" the AI to confirm existing biases or how it is influenced by the different algorithms of tools.
- Determine whose perspectives or voices are amplified and diminished. Aim to find the perspectives and voices of those who are missing.

- Regularly practice analyzing AI-generated responses for harmful or stereotypical rhetoric that could impact their peers.
- Routinely respond to prompts allowing them to reflect on how they used AI, how it enhanced or complemented their work, and how it influenced their creativity or critical thinking.
- Refrain from inputting personal or sensitive information about themselves and others into AI platforms.

QUICK STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

- Create classroom procedures where students ask:
  - Whose voice is missing or amplified in this result?
  - How does this result enforce or negate cultural stereotypes?
  - How could I alter the prompt to reduce the likelihood of my own bias?
  - Where else should I look to verify this information?
  - Why was this information provided as the first response?
- Print out an AI-generated essay or response and have students annotate it looking for logic gaps, stereotypical assumptions, and "fluff" that obscures a lack of actual insight.
- Provide students with a primary source document (like a letter from the Civil Rights Movement or a treaty) and ask an AI to summarize its "significance." Students must then compare the AI's summary to scholarly historical analysis.

EMERGING PRACTICES

- Engage students in analysis of their own prompts to determine their slant (neutral, positive, negative) and recognize how their prompting impacts results.
- Develop lessons where students ask AI to generate character descriptions and media on "stock" stories based on simple nouns and ask them to map the results against historical inequities. Once identified, discuss how AI can perpetuate stereotypes to move beyond a simple "it's biased" and explore "why is it biased and how do we fix it?"
- Create opportunities for students to serve as the citation developer based on an AI generated persuasive text. Students act as the verification layer to check the sources for claims made by the AI to a credible, human-vetted database or primary source.

ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE USE

A critical component of ELA education is to support students in gaining knowledge, proficiency, understanding, and a sense of themselves as learners and citizens. In order to protect student learning and engagement, academic integrity needs to be explicitly taught and discussed with students. No matter how and where AI tools are integrated into education, choices need to be rooted in conversations about academic integrity and the decisions students make in the composition process. This is particularly important and relevant as students learn how to cite sources and use AI tools. While the technology has the potential to assist students, AI platforms are not a shortcut or replacement for student learning and student voice. Rather, these tools may have the ability to enhance their experience and create deeper understandings along the way.

It's important to note that NCTE recognizes teachers are professionals who plan and differentiate for their students; therefore, they should use their expertise to make responsible decisions regarding when and how to use AI platforms both with their students and for their own educational planning. The use of these emerging technologies has the potential to remove student barriers and enhance the role of teachers while keeping the focus on reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking as primary educational goals. While this technology may be used as a tool by educators to assist with differentiation and equitable access, AI platforms are not a shortcut for educator knowledge and expertise. When used with transparency, the technology empowers teachers to model ethical and responsible use for their students, preserving the focus on human expertise and critical thinking.

PURPOSE

Transparency between the student and the educator is key so that it is clear what work the student has created and when and how AI platforms may have been used. As professionals in the field, English teachers have the unique opportunity to model ethical use of AI tools and teach students how to use it responsibly rather than only attempting to police student behavior.

TEACHER TOOLS

AI tools may be used to:

- Support equitable learning practices, including for differentiation and to support multilingual learners.
- Generate lesson and activity ideas that the teacher can then adapt for their needs and purposes.
- Convey information in different modes, such as with the creation of podcasts and infographics, in order to allow students to access and engage with teacher-curated content in new ways.

- Create district documentation so that teachers can spend more time on curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Help provide supplemental and low-stakes practice for students.
- Model for students the ways in which AI tools can advance their learning.

STUDENT VOICE IN ACTION

Students learn to:

- Cite their sources and/or explain how AI tools were used in the creation of their work.
- Prompt AI platforms intentionally as a tool to continue to develop their skills outside of class.
- Practice speeches, presentations, and other verbal class components using the multimodal capabilities of AI tools.
- Recognize the limitations of AI platforms.
- Decide when to use the technology and when to rely on their own intellect, imagination, or analog tools.

QUICK STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS

- Create a clear classroom policy on AI use so that students understand the expectations for their academic work.
- Teach students how to cite their sources and reflect on their use of AI tools on assignments.
- Create a stoplight-themed list of expectations for students that include categories such as AI-free (red), AI-supported (yellow), and AI-driven (green), so that students and teachers are in agreement regarding the use of AI for assignments. Teach students how to reflect on and cite their use of AI when they use it on assignments and justify why any given assignment should be classified in one of those categories.

EMERGING PRACTICES

- Create opportunities for students to create their own boundaries for how they will use AI in a given assignment or project. Through the process of creating their boundaries, they will better understand their own use, and the potential, of AI.
- Teach students prompt engineering strategies, including how to provide the AI tool with a role, objective, audience, context, and boundaries that will get them better results.
- Shift the focus of AI as a shortcut to AI as a tool for learning by teaching students how to critique the AI outputs. Students can revise their prompts to explore how the AI tool can produce more desired outputs and can reflect on any shortcomings or successes of the AI tool.

DEFINITIONS

TECHNICAL BASICS

- **Algorithm** – A specific set of step-by-step instructions a computer follows to complete a task.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** – The broad field of computer science dedicated to building systems that can perform tasks traditionally requiring human intelligence such as reasoning, problem-solving, and understanding language.
- **Machine Learning (ML)** – A subset of AI where computers "learn" from patterns in data rather than being explicitly programmed with every rule. Instead of a teacher giving a student every single rule of grammar, it's like a student reading 10,000 books and "figuring out" how sentences work on their own.
- **Large Language Model (LLM)** – The specific engine behind tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude. It is a type of AI trained on massive amounts of text to predict the next likely word in a sequence. It doesn't "know" facts; it knows the statistical probability of which word comes next.

CREATION

- **Agentic AI** – A more advanced form of AI that doesn't just respond to prompts but can take independent actions to achieve a goal. For example, an agentic AI might not just write a lesson plan; it might research the standards, find the materials, and email them to your printer.
- **Augmented Intelligence** – A subsection of AI machine learning developed to enhance human intelligence such as reasoning, learning, problem solving, and decision making, rather than operate independently of or outright replace it. It's designed to improve human decision making and, by extension, actions taken in response to improved decisions.
- **Co-Intelligence** – The central idea that humans and AI can work together, with AI acting as a partner in inquiry to improve thinking and performance.
- **Conversational AI** – AI designed to simulate a back-and-forth dialogue with a user (e.g., chatbots). This is the interface students use to "talk" to the model as if it were a tutor or a peer.
- **Generative AI** – AI that doesn't just analyze data but creates "new" content (text, images, music, code, etc.). While older AI might just suggest a spelling correction, generative AI can draft an entire essay and more.
- **Multimodal AI** – AI that can process and generate multiple types of "modes" simultaneously, such as text, images, audio, and video. A multimodal AI tool could "read" a student's handwritten poem and "compose" a piece of music that matches its tone.

- **Synthetic Text (AI-Generated)** – Texts generated by an AI model with minimal human prompting or editing. In the ELA classroom, identifying the differences between "synthetic" and "human" voice is becoming a core literacy skill.

INTERACTION & RISKS

- **AI Bias** – The tendency of AI models to reflect the prejudices, stereotypes, or limited perspectives present in the data they were trained on. If an AI tool is trained primarily on readings from Western literature, the "default" storytelling voice may lack cultural diversity.
- **Hallucination** – A phenomenon where an AI confidently generates false or fabricated information. Because LLMs are "prediction machines," they will sometimes "predict" a quote or a historical fact that sounds perfect but doesn't actually exist.
- **Prompting** – The act of giving specific instructions to an AI tool to get a desired output. For teachers and students, "prompt engineering" is becoming a new form of digital composition—learning how to be precise, clear, and iterative in our instructions.

ETHICS & PEDAGOGY

- **Academic Integrity in an AI Environment** – The evolving standard of what constitutes "honest" work. It moves beyond "don't cheat" to "how do I transparently acknowledge the tools I used?" It's about the process of learning being as valuable as the final product.
- **Human Authorship** – The traditional concept of a human being the primary source of ideas, voice, and creative choices in a piece of writing. In an AI world, we are now debating where "authorship" starts if a human uses AI as a collaborator and/or generator.
- **Privacy** – In the AI context, this refers to how student data and writing are stored and used by AI companies. Many AI models "learn" from the input they received, raising questions about whether a student's personal essay should be used to train a commercial product.
- **Student Agency** – The degree of control and voice a student has over their own learning process. The goal for many educators is to ensure AI acts as a **scaffold** that empowers student choice, rather than a **substitute** that removes the need for critical thinking.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The following collection of NCTE documents serves as a foundation of professional inquiry and represents the essential position statements that informed the creation of this framework.

- *Definition of Literacy in the Digital Age*
- *ELATE Position Statement: Exploring, Incorporating, and Questioning Generative Artificial Intelligence in English Teacher Education*
- *Expanding Formative Assessment for Equity and Agency*
- *Media Education in English Language Arts*
- *NCTE Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners (ELLs)*
- *NCTE Position Statement on Supporting Teachers and Students in Discussing Complex Topics*
- *Position Statement on Writing Instruction in School*
- *Recognizing Teacher Experts and Their Paths to Expertise*
- *The Students' Right to Write*