

Why pausing AI in classrooms is best for students

Executive summary

- Many schools across BC have made generative AI chatbots (Copilot, ChatGPT, Gemini) available to students in classrooms.
 - Over [2,200 BC residents have signed a petition](#) asking for the BC Ministry of Education and Childcare to **pause generative AI chatbots in schools**.
 - Current research shows that **AI undermines the productive struggle of learning**. A pause would allow more time for further research, without making students guinea-pigs to this unproven tech.
 - Students would benefit from **expert-led critical education** on generative AI: how it works, its effects on society, the environment and learning. However, learning about AI is not the same as making students use it in every class.
 - Federal and provincial teachers' unions do not want AI in classrooms.
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What scientific research says

Since ChatGPT's release, scientists have been researching its effects on students and adults. The preliminary results show **AI has a negative effect on education and mental health**.

- A 2026 study of 26,000 highschoolers in China found that as students began to use AI, their homework scores rose by 18%, and then their **exam results dropped by 20%**. This is consistent with research on highschoolers in the UK: students who use AI to study did not retain what they learned and performed worse than students who took notes (Kreijkes et al. 2025).
- The recently-published [OECD PISA 2025 report](#) states that *"students who do not use AI outperform those who do, ... equivalent to being around one year of schooling ahead of their peers."*
- When people use AI, they become worse at judging their own skills (Fernandes 2025).

AI chatbots also have dangerous effects on mental health.

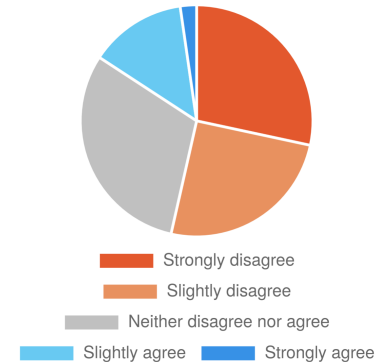
- [OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, is being sued](#) for its role in the Tumbler Ridge Shooting.
- Chatbots agree with users even if the user is factually incorrect (Nature 2025).

What teachers say

Teachers and university educators have been dealing with the impacts of AI products in classrooms since their release.

- The Canadian Teachers' Federation released a [policy brief on AI and students](#), in which they highlighted students **offloading thinking** onto AI as a **"threat to democracy"**.
- The [2025-2026 BC Teachers' Federation survey](#) made it clear that school teachers are extremely skeptical of the promises of AI:
 - **Only 16%** of teachers think that AI will improve student learning outcomes.
 - 89% of teachers think that AI will cause students to be overly dependent on AI tools for learning.
 - 87% of teachers agree that **AI will negatively impact** students' development of **critical thinking skills**.
 - 83% of teachers agree that AI makes it harder to know what students understand.
 - 81% agree that AI will provide students with **misleading** or incorrect information.

"AI will improve student learning outcomes"



What other districts are doing

In the last few months, many districts and countries around the world have been reining in AI and technology in classrooms:

- In September 2026, **New York City** school district and **Los Angeles** Unified School District enacted a **moratorium on AI in schools**, affecting nearly a million students.

Common Myths

- Myth: *"Students need to learn AI for the workplace"*
 - The tools that professionals use to save time are not the same as the ones students should use to learn. AI products are built to speed up production, not to improve learning.
- Myth: *"Students will use AI at home anyway, so we should put a safer version in classrooms"*
 - The "safer" version still has the same negative effects on students: cognitive offloading. Putting it into classrooms teaches students that it is OK to offload your thinking onto AI.
- Myth: *"AI is here to stay."*
 - This is not an argument for using AI in classrooms. You could say Minecraft or Microsoft Excel is "here to stay". The question is: does the technology help students learn? The research on AI is clear, it does not.