

## Artificial Intelligence in Education: Advice for Members

Education is relational by nature, grounded in the irreplaceable and integral role of human connection in the learning process. Ongoing human interaction remains fundamental to fostering meaningful relationships among educators and students, as well as within the school community. The federal government's [Artificial Intelligence and Data Act \(AIDA\)](#) includes no explicit provisions to address the unique challenges presented by using AI systems in public education, despite acknowledging that the "information of minors is considered to be sensitive." It is also possible that school boards could have access to all the user data which can then be used to develop performance metrics for their employees. As such, while Artificial Intelligence (AI) can provide valuable support in education, AI tools should be viewed as complements to human processes, not replacements. To be proactive, ETFO members should exercise caution while selecting and utilizing AI technology and contact their local if they have questions on their school board's policy on the use of AI tools.

### Responsible Digital Citizenship

The rate of AI usage, particularly generative AI, is increasing across society and within the education landscape. ETFO members and school boards are becoming more interested in the use of AI tools for teaching, learning assessment, and reporting. As always, members should refer to and follow the direction of their school board's list of approved resources and digital tools to use with students. If no such list exists, members should seek approval from their principal/supervisor prior to using a specific resource.

As noted in the Canadian Teachers' Federation report *The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on Education Workers*, algorithmic bias exists when AI systems rely on algorithms that favour or discriminate against particular types of knowledge or people with specific identities. Training should not only be provided on how to use AI tools but also how to examine the tools for bias and inequities, and how adaptive technology works within AI tools.

Members should:

- Prioritize the humane and ethical use of AI tools and use them responsibly.
- Critically evaluate AI tools to understand how data is being collected and used, if a tool reinforces existing biases and inequities, and if the information is accurate and reliable.
- Use [professional judgement](#) when determining if, and when, AI tools can be used to support teaching and learning.
- Ensure that the AI tool aligns with the Ontario curriculum and instructional approaches.
- Always cite and attribute credit to original sources, including AI-generated content.
- Be aware of privacy issues when entering information into AI tools.
- Follow all school district guidelines and policies and only use digital tools and resources that are approved.

There are key ethical considerations foundational to the use of AI in education. It is important to understand who is promoting the use of a specific AI tool or resource in a school or school board. Is

the tech industry and/or a tech company driving decisions? Educators should be consulted and involved in the selection and evaluation of AI tools and developing AI literacy guidelines and policies. Furthermore, there should be a diversity of lived experiences among the people being consulted in the selection and evaluation of AI tools.

Education International's research paper [The Unintended Consequences of Artificial Intelligence and Education](#) points to four key principles of ethics by design:

1. transparency and explainability
2. privacy and data protection
3. addressing biases and promoting fairness
4. fostering human agency and accountability

### Cautions to Consider

- Educators receive limited professional development on how to use the AI systems that are integrated in their schools, and the potential risks to the privacy and safety of themselves and their students.
- There is a risk that the automation enabled by AI systems de-professionalizes the teaching profession.
- The implementation of AI systems, without suitable evaluations risks, threatens the security and privacy of users.
- A growing concern is the increasing use of AI tools on worker surveillance and performance reporting.
- AI systems may lead to the commercial exploitation of education workers and students.

### Questions for Ongoing Reflection

- Am I using AI in a way that empowers educators and supports human rights, social justice, and student agency?
- What are the potential barriers to accessing and using an AI tool?
- Have there been any violations of the collective agreement?
- Is your professional judgement being respected in your decision to use or not use an AI tool?
- Do you find your school board's guidelines and policies on AI clear and accessible?
- What type of training, professional learning, and support are required to help you learn how to evaluate AI tools, including how to examine the tool for bias and inequities?
- How do you ensure AI tools reflect human voice in its use and do not diminish critical thinking skills?

### References

Government of Canada. *Bill C-27 Artificial Intelligence and Data Act (AIDA)*.  
<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/innovation-better-canada/en/artificial-intelligence-and-data-act-aida-companion-document>

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE). *The Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on Education Workers*.

Holmes, W. (2023, October). *The Unintended Consequences of Artificial Intelligence and Education*.  
[www.ei-ie.org/en/item/28115:the-unintended-consequences-of-artificial-intelligence-and-education](http://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/28115:the-unintended-consequences-of-artificial-intelligence-and-education)

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