Recognize AI's Role and Influence in Different Contexts

Competency

Learners recognize how AI appears in everyday tools, reflect on how it influences their thinking and decisions, and apply a human-centered, critical lens to use AI responsibly in their professional practice.

Key Method

Learners examine where AI influences their daily work, reflect on how those systems shape their choices, and evaluate AI output with human judgment. They determine when AI can support their thinking and when human expertise, verification, or context is essential.

Method Components

AI Literacy for Educators

Many educators use tools for communication, planning, and instruction that utilize at least some artificial intelligence (AI). When they understand the basic types of AI—**reactive, predictive, and generative**—educators can identify what these systems are designed to do and how they function.

- **Reactive** systems respond directly to input.
- **Predictive** systems anticipate needs and/or preferences.
- **Generative** systems create new content based on learned patterns.

These systems appear in many everyday tools. For example, YouTube and Amazon rely on predictive algorithms to recommend content; Grammarly

and spell-check tools use AI to suggest edits; and generative tools, like ChatGPT, create explanations or examples based on prompts. By recognizing these interactions, educators can strengthen their AI literacy and better understand how AI shapes the digital environments in which they work and learn.

AI Literacy Defined

To gain AI literacy, educators must possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to confidently navigate a world that is increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence.

To become "AI literate," educators must:

- Recognize when AI is present;
- Understand how AI works;
- Successfully interpret AI's strengths and limitations; and
- Make informed decisions about when and how to use it.

For an educator in the classroom, this might look like:

- Knowing when to trust an AI-generated explanation of a science concept and when to verify it with a textbook; or
- Being able to explain to students why an AI-generated reading passage may sound fluent but still may include errors or omissions.

The Human-Centered Approach

Human judgment is the foundation of practical and ethical AI use. The Human → AI → Human (H-AI-H) approach keeps educators at the center of the process — using AI as a thinking partner while ensuring human expertise and values guide the final outcome. AI systems reflect the data, assumptions, and design choices that shape them. As such, AI systems and output should never be considered neutral or impartial.

Although educators may use an AI planning tool to produce a ready-to-use lesson plan, they still need to review the content for accuracy and alignment with the appropriate standards. Once they evaluate the content, they can adapt it based on students' needs.

Ultimately, educators are responsible for any decisions informed by AI. And as such, they need to review all AI-generated content for accuracy and

alignment with instructional priorities. AI systems and tools must aid human thinking, not replace it.

When educators understand human-centered AI use, they begin to recognize how AI influences the information we see and the decisions we make.

Self-Awareness, Bias Recognition, and Critical AI Evaluation

AI systems play a subtle but important role in the information that educators and students see every day. For example, search engines decide which articles show up first; recommendation systems suggest videos and resources; and generative tools create explanations that might sound convincing. However, these systems can still generate errors and/or omit certain content.

As educators become aware of these influences, they better understand how AI shapes their own views and the decisions they make in planning, teaching, and communicating.

Recognizing AI Is Not Neutral

AI systems reflect the data, assumptions, and design choices made by the humans who build them. Because these human decisions and perspectives shape how AI works, AI systems are not neutral or impartial — and may unintentionally reinforce narrow viewpoints or existing inequities.

Examples of how AI systems can provide biased results include the following:

- When asked to generate an “example student paragraph,” AI might reproduce dominant linguistic patterns, disadvantaging emergent multilingual learners.
- An AI-generated reading passage might appear grade-level appropriate while simultaneously embedding subtle stereotypes or omissions.
- Recommendation systems may repeatedly surface similar perspectives, limiting exposure to diverse voices or experiences.

When educators recognize these patterns, they can move beyond surface-level trust and toward informed, critical use.

Evaluating AI Output Through a Human-Centered Lens

A critical, human-centered approach requires educators to actively evaluate AI output rather than accept it at face value.

- **Check for Accuracy:** Verify facts, explanations, and/or claims against trusted sources.
- **Identify Missing Perspectives:** Notice whose voices, identities, or experiences may be absent.
- **Consider Differential Impact:** Reflect on how incomplete or biased content might affect different groups of students.
- **Determine Appropriateness:** Decide whether the AI tool is suitable for the task, context, and learners involved.

In some cases, this evaluation may lead educators to revise or supplement the AI-generated content. In others, educators may need to outright reject the AI output.

Assessing Ethical Considerations Beyond the Classroom

Critical evaluation goes beyond just the content being taught. Generative AI systems use a lot of energy, water, and computing power, which raises environmental and social concerns that affect how responsibly they are used. When educators choose to use AI systems, they must be aware of these wider impacts and consider ethical implications.

Maintaining Agency in AI-Supported Environments

Educators should always critically evaluate how AI shapes information and carefully review its output. This scrutiny ensures that technology supports, rather than replaces, human expertise and judgment. As AI becomes more common in learning environments, educators who actively question and assess AI-generated content are better positioned to make unbiased decisions, uphold professional autonomy, and promote fairness for all learners.

Augmentation vs. Stunted Learning

AI can be a valuable support when educators use it to enhance human thinking. For example, they can use AI to streamline repetitive tasks; generate options to provide quick models for brainstorming; create a rubric; or summarize an article, saving time and making space to focus on planning instruction.

However, educators and students who over-rely on AI may circumvent the deep thinking they need to develop certain competencies. For example, an educator who uses AI to write all parent communications but doesn't review them misses the opportunity to practice professional communication skills. Similarly, a student who uses AI to generate an essay outline without reflecting on the structure or reasoning runs the risk of weakening their analytical skills.

Maintaining the distinction between augmentation and over-reliance supports stronger professional growth and more intentional use of AI.

The Human-Centered Approach, Revisited

When using AI tools, educators should practice regular reflection to remain grounded in their humanness and leverage their professional expertise. Educators who use the H-AI-H model reinforce the importance of beginning with human inquiry, using AI as a support, and ending with human evaluation and decision-making.

For example, an educator who uses an AI tool to draft lesson ideas may then review them through an equity lens and ensure they align with the appropriate standards. After a review, the educator may make revisions based on their teaching style and goals for the lesson.

Those who make it a habit to journal or note reflections after using AI can refine their awareness of how AI influences their thinking.

Attitudes for Engagement

To develop healthy engagement with AI, educators must cultivate key attitudes, including responsible, curious, and empathetic. For example, responsible learners consider the consequences of AI use and take

accountability for their decisions; curious learners explore AI's possibilities and limitations with an open mind; and empathetic learners recognize how AI affects individuals and communities differently and strive to reduce harm.

In practice, this may take many forms. For example, an educator might experiment with different prompt styles to understand how AI changes its responses or pause to consider how an AI-generated scenario might feel to students from diverse backgrounds.

Embodying these attitudes strengthens AI literacy and prepares educators to navigate more sophisticated systems in the future.

Supporting Rationale and Research

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Resources

AI Support for Educators

Microsoft Elevate for Educators

AI Literacy for Educators

Teaching and Learning with Generative AI

What is AI Literacy?

AI Literacy Framework Review Draft

AI in the Classroom: Teachers Leading the Way (Video)

Learn Essential AI Skills

Report on the NEA Task Force on Artificial Intelligence in Education

Bringing AI to School: Tips for School Leaders

AI Glossary of Terms

Foundations and Applications of AI (NEA Independent Study Course)

Human-Centered Approach and Ethical Use of AI

Human-Centered AI Guidance for K–12 Public Schools

Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence in Schools

Implementing AI: A Practical Guide for the Classroom

A Framework for Human-Centric AI-First Teaching

Advocating for a Human-Centered Approach to AI Integration in Education

Human-Centered AI: What Is Human-Centric Artificial Intelligence?

Human-Centered Approaches to AI (NEA Independent Study Course)

Dos and Don'ts of AI in the Classroom

Self-Awareness, Bias Recognition, and Critical AI Evaluation

Recognizing AI Is Not Neutral

Six Concerns About AI's Inequity and Bias

Helping Students Check for Bias in AI Outputs

Real, Fake, or Deepfake? This Lesson Helps Students Decide

Why Teachers Don't Need to Ban ChatGPT or AI Tools (and What to Do Instead)

As ChatGPT Enters the Classroom, Teachers Weigh Pros and Cons

AI Teacher Assistants Are Useful but Can Pose Risks in Classroom, Report Finds

Evaluating AI Output Through a Human-Centered Lens

4 Principles for Classroom AI, From an Experienced Educator

How to Use AI in the Classroom Ethically and Responsibly

Vetting AI Resources

AI in Education: Questions to Ask

Ethical Considerations, Equity, and Environmental Impact

Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research

Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

AI and the Future of Education: Disruptions, Dilemmas and Directions

A Human-Centered Approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI) Ethics

Safe and Ethical Use of AI (NEA Independent Study Course)

Promoting AI Equity and Access (NEA Independent Study Course)

Environmental Impact of AI

AI and Accessibility

AI for Multilingual Learners

Student and Educator Data Privacy

Augmentation vs. Stunted Learning and Reflective Practice

Beyond Algorithms (NEA/ISTE Webinar)

Using AI as a Thought Partner to Spark Creativity (NEA/ISTE Webinar)

Enhancing and Redefining Teaching and Learning with AI (NEA/ISTE Webinar)

Enhancing Educator Practice with AI (NEA Independent Study Course)

Student-Centered AI Literacy (NEA Independent Study Course)

Evidence-Based AI for Learning (NEA Independent Study Course)

SMART Goal Writing (for Artifact 3)

University of California: How to Write a SMART Goal

Setting SMART Goals as a Teacher

Tools and Templates

AI Glossary of Terms

AI Interaction and Influence Log (Template)

Writing an Effective Personal Reflection

Submission Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and be proficient in all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

(200-300 words)

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

Answer the following prompts.

1. Describe how you currently notice or respond to AI in your professional life (for example, recommendations, AI-generated content, or planning tools).

2. How do you hope increased self-awareness of AI's influence will benefit you both personally and professionally? Include at least one specific example for your personal life and one for your practice with students or colleagues.

3. Name at least three aspects of your identity (such as strengths, interests, language, culture, learning needs, or other factors). How do these shape your views about technology and AI and how you connect with students?

Passing:

To receive a passing score for Part 1, you must respond to all questions clearly and thoughtfully.

A passing response:

- Explains why you selected this micro-credential;
- Describes your current self-awareness related to AI; and
- Includes specific examples showing how your identity and context shape your experiences with AI.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following **three artifacts** as evidence of your learning. See the Rubric for the passing score. *Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Artifact 1: AI Presence and Purpose Audit (Self-Reflection and Analysis)

This artifact demonstrates your ability to recognize where AI systems are present in daily life, how those systems are designed to function, and the ways they influence personal choices, perceptions, and habits of mind.

Task 1: AI Interaction and Influence Log
Over three days (can be non-consecutive), document your use of three digital tools that incorporate AI. Use a simple table, log, or graphic organizer to track. Check out AI Interaction and Influence Log for an example of a log.

Be sure to include:

- The name of the tool you used;
- Type of AI observed (reactive, predictive, generative);
- Your purpose for using AI;
- How the tool noticeably influenced one of your choices, actions, or perceptions; and
- Where human review/oversight would be needed and why.

Task 2: Reflection on Awareness and Oversight (200–300 words)
Respond to the prompts below.

1. Which personal strengths (digital literacy, critical thinking, awareness of bias, etc.) help you stay aware of how AI influences your decisions or perceptions?

2. What aspects of AI influence are hardest for you to recognize. What areas of self-awareness do you want to continue developing?

For your submission, please combine the AI Interaction and Influence Log and Reflection on Awareness and Oversight into one document (PDF format preferred).

Artifact 2: Evaluating AI's Influence on Reality and Learning (Critical Evaluation and SWOT Analysis)
This artifact applies critical thinking and ethical awareness to examine how AI shapes understanding, reflects biases, and affects learning.

Task 1: Bias and Reality Check (Algorithmic Bias Mini-Audit)
Select a topic from your grade-level content area and use a generative AI tool to produce a short explanation, summary, or example.

In your analysis (150–200 words), include your grade level, subject area, chosen topic, AI tool, and the content generated by the AI tool. Then identify:

- One potential bias, inaccuracy, or missing perspective; and
- A description of how this issue could impact student groups differently (for example, emergent multilingual learners, students with disabilities, or students from historically marginalized groups).

Task 2: Augmentation vs. Stunted Learning Reflection (150–200 words)
Describe one experience where you used AI to complete a professional task, such as planning a lesson, summarizing text, generating ideas, etc.

Respond to the following prompts.

1. What immediate benefit did AI provide (augmentation)?

2. What human skill or insight did you bypass (potentially stunting learning)?

3. Why does this distinction matter for your own learning or for students?

Task 3: AI Influence Snapshot (Simplified SWOT Analysis)
Complete a short SWOT analysis, including the below components.

- **Strengths:** Three ways that AI supports your professional role
- **Weaknesses:** Three limitations or concerns you've observed
- **Opportunities:** Three ways that AI could improve teaching/learning
- **Threats:** Three risks, including at least one related to shaping reality, reinforcing bias, or stunting human skill development

For your submission, combine all three parts of this artifact (Bias and Reality Check; Augmentation vs. Stunted Learning Reflection; and AI Influence Snapshot) into one document (PDF format preferred). Please include the three titles as headers in your document to clearly delineate the different tasks.

Artifact 3: Intentional AI Self-Awareness Growth Plan
(Goal Setting and Human-Centered Professional Practice)
This artifact demonstrates your ability to intentionally deepen your AI literacy and maintain a human-centered approach to AI-supported work.

Task 1: SMART Goal for AI Self-Awareness
Write one SMART goal that focuses on strengthening your awareness of

how AI influences your professional judgment, instructional choices, and/or creative decision-making. Your goal should be grounded in a specific professional context (for example: lesson planning, assessment design, student feedback, or communication). For support writing your SMART goal, refer to the Resources section.

Task 2: Action Steps
List at least three actionable steps you will take to work toward your goal. Include a general timeline for completing or revisiting these steps.

All steps should reflect intentional human review rather than automation. At least one action step should explicitly address identifying or mitigating bias, missing perspectives, or inequitable impacts in AI-supported work.

Task 3: Challenges and Supports
Identify two potential challenges in achieving your goal (for example, over-reliance, time constraints, uncertainty about accuracy, etc.). Why do you perceive these as challenges?

Provide two supports or resources you will use. For example, professional learning communities (PLCs), rubrics, district guidance, ethical frameworks, etc. Describe how each one will help you achieve your goal.

Task 4: Human-Centered Reflection (100–150 words)
Explain how your growth plan will:

- Ensure AI serves as an augmentation tool rather than a replacement for thinking;
- Help prevent stunted learning for yourself and/or your students; and
- Reinforce the Human → AI → Human (H → AI → H) cycle in your work.

Reference at least one insight from Artifact 1 or Artifact 2 that directly informed your growth plan. Implement your growth plan according to the time-bound element of your SMART goal.

For your submission, combine all parts of this artifact (SMART Goal, Action Steps, Challenges and Supports, and Human-Centered Reflection) in one document (PDF format preferred). Please include the titles as headers in your document to clearly delineate the different tasks.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	**Basic**	**Developing**
Artifact 1: AI Presence and Purpose Audit	The submission includes a complete AI Interaction and Influence Log that documents three AI-enabled tools with clear, accurate descriptions of the type of AI, the educator's purpose, a specific example of how the AI influenced a choice or perception, and an appropriate identification of where human oversight is needed. The Reflection on Awareness and Oversight thoughtfully analyzes patterns across the log, identifies personal strengths and growth areas related to AI awareness, and explains where human judgment is essential for accuracy, fairness, and responsible use.	The submission includes the AI Interaction and Influence Log, but one or more entries may be incomplete, unclear, or lacking detail. The reflection addresses some required ideas but may be general, under-developed, or not well-connected to the log. The submission shows partial understanding of AI influence and human oversight but lacks depth or clarity in analysis.	The submission is missing key elements of the AI Interaction and Influence Log, includes fewer than three tools, or provides a minimal or unclear description of AI influence or human oversight. The reflection is missing, incomplete, or does not address the required ideas. The submission does not demonstrate sufficient understanding of AI presence, purpose, or human-centered evaluation.

	The submission is clear, well-organized, and easy for reviewers to follow.		
Artifact 2: Evaluating AI's Influence	The submission includes all three required components (Bias and Reality Check, Augmentation vs. Stunted Learning Reflection, and SWOT Analysis), each clearly labeled and well-developed. The Bias and Reality Check response identifies a specific issue in the AI output and explains how it could differentially impact students. The Augmentation vs. Stunted Learning reflection clearly describes both the benefit of AI and the bypassed human skill, with a strong explanation of why this distinction matters.	The submission includes all three components but one or more sections may lack clarity, depth, or specificity. The Bias and Reality Check response identifies an issue without fully explaining student impact. The Augmentation vs. Stunted Learning reflection describes benefits or limitations but without a clear statement about the significance of the distinction. The SWOT Analysis may be uneven or overly general. The submission demonstrates basic understanding but lacks full articulation of critical evaluation.	The submission is missing one or more components. Analyses are vague or overly brief or do not address required prompts. SWOT analysis shows a limited understanding of how AI shapes reality, influences learning, or reinforces bias. The submission is unclear, disorganized, or lacks the critical evaluation required for proficiency.

	The SWOT Analysis includes three thoughtful entries in each quadrant that demonstrate understanding of AI's strengths, limitations, opportunities, and risks. The submission is clear, coherent, and well-organized, demonstrating strong critical thinking and alignment with the competency.		
Artifact 3: Intentional AI Self-Awareness Growth Plan	The submission includes a clear SMART goal grounded in a specific professional context. It includes at least three actionable steps with a reasonable timeline, including at least one step that explicitly addresses bias, missing perspectives, or inequitable impacts in AI-supported work. The plan reflects intentional human review	The submission includes a SMART goal related to AI self-awareness, though the goal is broad or loosely connected to a specific professional context. The plan includes action steps and a timeline but lacks clarity or depth, and attention to bias or equity is limited or underdeveloped.	The submission includes a goal related to AI use, but it does not meet SMART criteria or is not grounded in a clear professional context. Action steps, timeline, challenges, or supports are missing from the plan, unclear, or not actionable, and attention to bias, equity, or human review is minimal or absent.

	rather than reliance on automation. The plan identifies two relevant challenges and two appropriate supports and clearly connects to achieving the goal. The Human-Centered Reflection explains how AI is used as an augmentation tool, how stunted learning is avoided, and how the Human → AI → Human (H → AI → H) cycle is reinforced. The reflection explicitly connects the growth plan to insights from Artifact 1 and/or Artifact 2. The submission is clearly organized and demonstrates intentional, human-centered, and responsible AI practice.	The submission identifies challenges and supports but the explanation is general or inconsistent. The reflection addresses augmentation, stunted learning, and the H → AI → H cycle, but explanations are surface-level or uneven. The reflection connects to learning from Artifact 1 or Artifact 2 but is implicit rather than explicit. The submission is easy to understand but lacks specificity or coherence in places.	The reflection is missing, incomplete, or does not meaningfully address augmentation, stunted learning, or the H → AI → H cycle, and it does not connect to insights from earlier artifacts. The submission shows limited organization or understanding of intentional, human-centered AI practice.

Part 3 Reflection

(300-500 words)
Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

In your reflection, include responses to all the following prompts:

- How did implementing your growth plan strengthen your self-awareness about AI's role and influence in your professional practice? Provide specific examples.
- What next steps will you take to continue developing your self-awareness when engaging with AI systems?
- What will you do differently in the future, or what practices are already working well for you?

For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource:
Writing an Effective Personal Reflection

Passing:
To receive a passing score, you must clearly explain how this micro-credential strengthened your self-awareness of AI's influence.

A passing reflection must:

- Include specific examples from your growth plan;
- Identify meaningful next steps for applying this learning in your professional context; and
- Demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the concepts and evidence of professional growth.