



Innovation in High School Teaching and Assessment Amid AI Misuse Concerns

High school educators across the United States are rapidly adapting their teaching methods and assessment models to counter the rise of AI-assisted cheating and plagiarism. The advent of generative AI tools (like ChatGPT) has made it easy for students to offload cognitive work, forcing teachers to rethink how they engage students and evaluate learning ¹ ². Below, we explore **instructional innovations, assessment redesigns, subject-specific strategies**, and approaches for **ethical integration of AI** – all aimed at preserving academic integrity while harnessing AI’s educational potential.

Instructional Innovations to Curb AI Misuse

Teachers are shifting classroom practices to make student thinking more visible and less prone to AI shortcuts. A key trend is **emphasizing the learning process** over just the final product. For example, many educators now require students to produce and submit evidence of their thinking – rough drafts, outlines, research notes, or even voice recordings explaining their approach – as part of an assignment ³. By assessing the *process* (how students develop ideas or solve problems) alongside the outcome, teachers ensure that real learning is taking place even if AI tools are accessible ⁴ ³. High school English teacher David Nurenberg writes that he is “spend[ing] more time assessing [his] students’ process of drafting multiple iterations of their work, with and without AI assistance,” relying on structured reflections and drafts rather than a polished final essay alone ⁴. This process-oriented approach makes it harder for students to simply turn in AI-generated work, since they must show *how* they arrived at their answers or ideas.

Another instructional shift is a renewed focus on **higher-order thinking and class engagement** that AI cannot easily mimic. Many teachers are incorporating more real-time discussions, debates, and oral activities so that students practice critical thinking in person. In Nurenberg’s English classes, for instance, he has “substantially increasing the role of discussions – paired, small group, and full class – and spending less time on formulaic writing tasks” ⁵. The rationale is that skills like debating ideas, analyzing texts collaboratively, and synthesizing information on the spot cannot be outsourced to an AI. Similarly, other educators stress teaching “the cognitive processes AI can’t replace: critical thinking, creative problem-solving and effective communication,” through interactive and iterative practice rather than isolated homework ⁶. By making learning more participatory and discussion-based, teachers not only reduce opportunities for AI misuse but also help students build skills that transcend what an algorithm can do.

Tailoring prompts and class work to be *AI-resistant* is another innovation. Instead of generic assignments that a chatbot can handle, teachers design tasks that demand personal insight, creativity, or cross-disciplinary connections. This can mean asking students to draw on their own experiences, reflect on their learning, or connect class material to very recent or hyper-local events. Such prompts are difficult for AI, which “struggles with deeply personal writing” or analyzing niche, up-to-the-minute issues ⁷ ⁸. For example, one STEM educator had students write about a local environmental issue (water quality in a nearby pond) and link it to global conservation themes – an assignment for which “there probably just isn’t

a lot of data available online,” limiting AI usefulness while pushing students to think critically ⁸ . Across subjects, teachers are becoming more creative in crafting learning activities that **engage student voice and originality**, thus “removing students’ temptation to use ChatGPT” by making assignments that AI *can’t* easily do ⁹ .

Redesigning Assessments for the AI Era

Beyond daily instruction, high schools are **redesigning assessments and evaluations** to uphold integrity in an AI-pervasive environment. A common strategy is moving high-stakes assessments back into the classroom under supervision. Many schools have shifted major writing tasks from take-home essays to in-class essays or timed writings, and some even require hand-written responses. For instance, Townsend Harris High School in New York recently *banned* take-home summer essays and now makes students write them by hand during class in the fall, explicitly to “provide a ‘more authentic representation of student thinking’” without AI help ¹⁰ . While such measures can be labor-intensive, they greatly limit opportunities for students to feed prompts into AI. Education officials and teachers alike acknowledge that nearly every form of unsupervised, at-home assessment “can now be compromised by AI,” so supervised settings or old-fashioned pen-and-paper work are returning as reliable evaluation methods ¹¹ ¹² .

Another powerful assessment innovation is incorporating **oral components and defenses**. When students know they will have to explain their work face-to-face, they are less likely to submit something they don’t understand (whether generated by AI or not). Some high school teachers now routinely add a brief *oral presentation, interview, or Q&A* after a paper or project. In practice, this might mean a student records a short video on Flip (Flipgrid) explaining the key points of their essay, or sits for a one-on-one discussion with the teacher about their report. This turns assessments into a dialog; as one science teacher noted, even if a student used AI for initial answers, “they would have had to read it, digest it, and then talk about it,” thereby demonstrating (or not) their actual comprehension ¹³ . Oral defenses quickly reveal gaps in understanding and deter those who might otherwise rely on AI-generated material ¹⁴ ¹³ . In fact, some schools are formalizing this: a Bay Area student observed that teachers began requiring students “to be able to explain and defend their written work through one-on-one discussions,” flushing out any outsourced thinking ¹⁵ . Even surprise *viva voce* exams are being used as spot-checks in some cases ¹⁶ . By turning assessments into conversations and performances, teachers make it “harder to fake” learning and ensure students can personally articulate the knowledge or analysis they submit ¹⁷ .

Teachers are also building **verification and process-tracking** into grading. Rather than trusting a polished final essay, educators ask for evidence of work progression: multiple drafts with timestamps, revision histories, or writing logs. Some districts encourage teachers to collect writing *process journals* or use Google Docs’ version history to see how an essay took shape. This way, if a fully formed essay suddenly appears with no draft evolution, it raises a red flag. In one educator learning network, participants agreed that “student thinking [must remain] visible, even when AI was in the room,” by redesigning tasks to value the *process* as much as the product ¹⁸ ¹⁹ . Teachers began requesting “drafts, notes, or voice recordings explaining their thinking” as part of assignments, so that each student’s unique thought process could be assessed alongside the final answer ³ . This not only deters misuse but actually deepens learning: students engage in reflection about how they arrived at an answer, and even if they used AI for help, they are prompted to critique or compare that help with their own ideas ²⁰ . Such metacognitive elements (e.g. “Explain how you structured your argument and why” or “What did you learn from the AI’s suggestion versus your initial idea?”) hold students accountable for their process ²¹ ²⁰ .

Assessment formats are diversifying as well. Educators are gravitating toward formats that showcase student voice or hands-on effort, which AI can't easily replicate. These include: multi-stage projects, portfolios, presentations, debates, and collaborative work. For example, some history and social studies teachers have replaced the lone research paper with interactive assignments like **mock trials or debates** on historical events, where students must spontaneously respond to arguments – a scenario “AI was never going to do... it'd be impossible to cheat” in such a live format ²² ²³ . Science teachers may emphasize laboratory experiments and data analysis done in class, or require students to design an experiment and carry it out, yielding original data that can't be procured online. Interdisciplinary project-based learning is also on the rise: in one case, students across different schools tested **local water quality** and analyzed policies affecting it, then presented their unique findings – a complex project “ChatGPT was never going to do for them,” and one in which students were highly engaged because it was authentic and relevant ²³ . Educators note that when students take pride in such original work, they are far less inclined to let a “robot” do it for them ²⁴ . In sum, assessments are being reimagined to **“AI-proof”** themselves: whether through in-person oversight, requiring personal context, or formats that demand creative human thinking, teachers are actively removing the easy shortcuts that AI might offer ⁹ ²⁵ .

Subject-Specific Strategies and Examples

While the broad principles above apply across the curriculum, teachers in different subject areas are tailoring strategies to their discipline's needs. Below are examples from English, STEM (science/math), and history/social studies classrooms illustrating how educators are combating AI misuse in context.

English & Humanities

English teachers – often on the frontlines of the essay-writing crisis – have been quick to innovate. One major adjustment is designing writing assignments that *emphasize personal voice, creativity, and original analysis*. Instead of the standard, generic literary essay, many English teachers now prompt students with more personal or imaginative tasks. For instance, Cherie Shields, a high school English teacher in Oregon, advocates moving away from the typical “five-paragraph essay” response and towards “a lot more imaginative” assignments that require **personal narratives or critical reasoning** ²⁶ . By asking students to tie literature to their own experiences or to current events, or even respond to quirky, thought-provoking questions, teachers make it difficult for AI to spit out a satisfactory answer. (As one expert noted, “*Writing about something deeply personal*” or specific to local context is an effective way to thwart ChatGPT ⁷ ⁸ .) Of course, English class isn't turning into diary hour – teachers still value analytical writing, but they are finding ways to infuse analysis with authentic student perspective. Michelle Brown of CommonLit cautions not to “overcorrect” by only assigning personal essays, but judiciously adding personal or contemporary angles can preserve the *reasoning* rigor of writing while undermining AI assistance ²⁷ .

English instructors are also placing more weight on **in-class writing and discussion**. Many require initial drafts or timed writes to be done on paper under teacher supervision (to establish a baseline of a student's voice and abilities) ¹² . Subsequent revisions can incorporate feedback or even AI tools with permission, but the student must then *reflect on the changes* and *justify their choices*. Some teachers explicitly allow students to use AI as a starting point (for example, generating a rough essay outline or a first draft via ChatGPT), but then guide them to critically **revise, personalize, and deepen** that draft in class ²⁸ . The *learning* happens in the editing: students might compare the AI's bland prose to their own ideas, deciding “what's worth keeping, what to modify, and why” to make the writing more insightful and personal ²⁸ . This approach both demystifies AI and ensures students are actively thinking. Additionally, English teachers like

Nurenberg report **devoting more class time to discussion and critical analysis** of texts rather than formal essay writing alone ⁵ . Through Socratic seminars, debates on themes, or collaborative analysis of a reading, students practice the interpretive skills that an AI cannot replicate in real time. Such dialogic activities also give teachers an informal way to gauge who has actually done the reading and formed an opinion – something a copied AI essay might conceal. Overall, humanities educators are reclaiming the “messy, big-picture work” of literature and philosophy – exploring what texts say about the human condition, fostering empathy and deep thinking – areas where human creativity, not ChatGPT, shines ²⁹ ³⁰ . By grading students more on their **intellectual journey** (contributions to discussion, evolving drafts, personal insights) and less on perfectly polished final essays, English teachers are adapting their craft to ensure authentic student engagement in the age of AI ³¹ ⁵ .

STEM (Science and Math)

In science and math classrooms, the challenge of AI looks a bit different – it’s not just essays, but problem sets, lab reports, and calculations that could be auto-generated. STEM teachers are meeting this with strategies that stress **hands-on work and reasoning**. For example, many science teachers now prioritize **laboratory experiments, data collection, and analysis** that students must perform themselves. A chemistry or biology teacher might assign a lab where each student gathers unique data (e.g. measuring local soil pH or performing an experiment in class) and then write up findings. Because the results are original to the student’s experiment, an AI can’t fabricate the correct answer without that data. Moreover, teachers often require detailed **calculations and reasoning steps** to be shown for math and science problems – a solution isn’t accepted unless the student demonstrates how they arrived there. This mimics the long-standing “show your work” rule in math, now applied to written explanations too ³² . If a student provides a correct answer with no supporting steps, teachers may suspect AI usage and probe further. By asking “*Why did you choose this approach?*” or “*Explain in your own words how you solved it,*” teachers compel students to display understanding, not just a solution ²¹ .

Science educators are also incorporating **oral and interactive assessments**. A physics teacher, for instance, might follow up a problem set with a quick individual oral quiz: “*Tell me how you approached problem #3 and why that formula applies.*” Similarly, a biology teacher might require students to create a short presentation or video analyzing their lab results. These tactics echo those in humanities – adding an oral defense element – but are tailored to STEM content. One middle school science teacher, Kristin Daley Conti, suggests having students record themselves on video “talking about their essay, story, report, or other assignment” so they must put the concepts into their own words ³³ . Even if an AI helped with some writing, the student’s *explanation* reveals whether they truly grasp the science concept. Math teachers have reported giving open-book, open-note tests focused on complex problem-solving rather than rote questions ³⁴ . For example, instead of asking students to compute a derivative (which a calculator or AI can do), a calculus teacher might present a real-world scenario and ask students to *set up* the problem and interpret the result – tasks requiring understanding over computation.

Incorporating **project-based learning** in STEM has also proven effective. Rather than isolated homework problems, some teachers design extended projects that integrate science, technology, engineering, and math skills – often with a real-world angle. A notable example came from a multi-school initiative where students investigated their region’s water quality as a science *and* civics project ²³ . They gathered water samples, tested for contaminants, researched local environmental policies, and ultimately presented their findings with charts and recommendations. Because students were doing *authentic scientific inquiry* and tying it to local data, there was no opportunity (or incentive) to use AI to “cheat” – the AI wouldn’t know how

polluted **their** town's river is, nor could it analyze policies unique to their state. Joseph South of ISTE pointed out that in such cases, "ChatGPT was never going to do that project for them... it'd be impossible to cheat" and moreover, students were highly engaged in "something really cool and interesting and relevant to their lives" ²³. The takeaway for STEM: by giving students more **experiential learning** – whether it's coding a simple program, building a device, gathering data, or solving an applied problem – teachers ensure students must *do the thinking and tinkering themselves*. These experiences not only circumvent AI misuse but also align with best practices in science/math education by focusing on inquiry and problem-solving.

History and Social Studies

In history and social studies classes, teachers are retooling assignments to stress analysis of sources, critical thinking, and connections to current events – areas where AI's factual regurgitations fall short. One effective strategy is to require students to work with **primary sources or local history** that an AI may not have readily learned. For instance, instead of a generic essay on the causes of World War I, a teacher might ask students to analyze a set of primary source letters or to compare a historical event with a recent local event or policy. ChatGPT's knowledge of highly local or very recent events is limited, especially if the prompt involves "hyperlocal issues" like a new school rule or a city council decision – thus students can't lean on the AI for a full answer ⁸. Teachers also design questions that require nuance: e.g. "*Compare a very recent news event to a historical one – how are they similar or different in context?*" As one educator noted, asking students to connect, say, a breaking news headline to the Cuban Missile Crisis will likely stump ChatGPT or yield muddled, factually weak responses ³⁵. Students, on the other hand, must do real research and reasoning. This kind of assignment not only thwarts AI cheating but also builds the critical skill of applying historical lessons to modern-day situations.

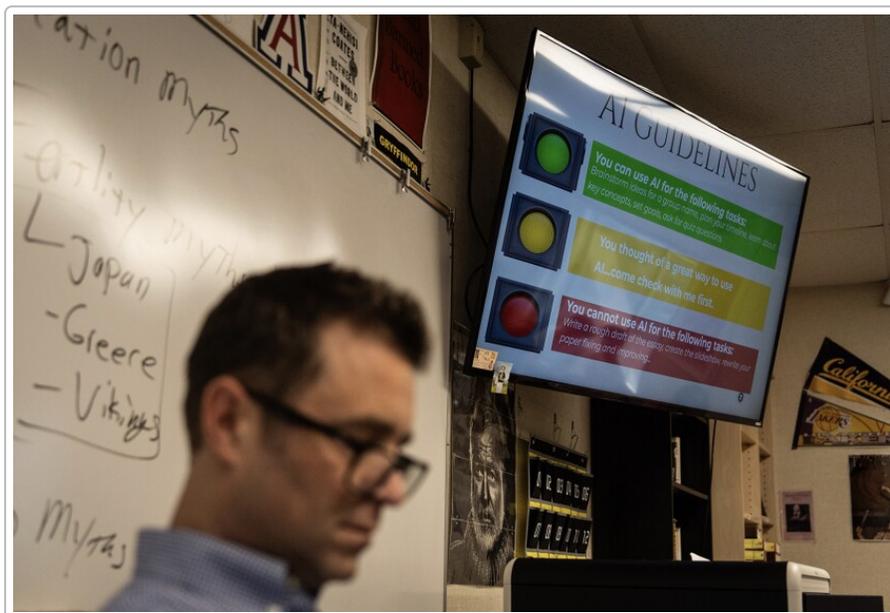
History teachers are increasingly using **interactive and performance-based assessments** to verify learning. In-class debates, simulations (like Model UN or mock congress), and **mock trials of historical figures** have gained popularity. In a mock trial assignment, students might take on roles (prosecution, defense, historical witnesses, jury) around a historical controversy, requiring them to *internalize facts* and *think on their feet* – something no student wants an AI to do for them in the moment. Such activities force students to demonstrate knowledge dynamically and make it "harder to fake and easier to personalize" their understanding ³⁶. Teachers can then evaluate students on the content of their arguments and their engagement, rather than a written essay alone. Even for written work, social studies teachers emphasize **perspective and voice**: for example, a prompt might ask for a first-person journal entry from the viewpoint of a historical figure, or a personal family history project tying into larger historical themes. These require creative thinking and personal input that AI would struggle to imitate convincingly.

Furthermore, social studies educators have begun to **blend history with civic and ethical discussions**, which both enriches learning and discourages shortcut-taking. Given the controversies and biases that can accompany historical interpretation, some classes have students use AI as a *starting point to critique*. An educator might have the class ask ChatGPT a question about a historical event, then collectively critique the AI's answer for bias or missing perspectives. (In fact, high school students in New York who tried an AI-written lesson on a technology topic found it "very bland" and even "biased," and concluded that their teacher's human-led discussion was far superior ³⁷ ³⁸.) This kind of critical exercise teaches students to not accept AI outputs at face value – a valuable lesson in media literacy – and it reinforces the idea that *analysis requires human judgment*. By designing history assignments that demand interpretation, evaluation of sources, and often a connection to the student's own world, teachers ensure that students are *doing the historical thinking*, not just searching for an answer to copy.

Teaching Ethical AI Use and Constructive Integration

Alongside preventative measures, educators are increasingly focusing on **ethical integration of AI** – teaching students *how to use AI as a tool responsibly* rather than simply outlawing it. Many experts argue that outright bans are neither practical nor educative in the long run. Instead, the emphasis is shifting to **AI literacy**: helping students understand what generative AI can and cannot do, and instilling guidelines for its ethical use ³⁹. Punya Mishra of ASU noted that schools should “focus on integrating AI instruction rather than excluding it,” ensuring students learn to harness AI in *productive* ways while knowing its pitfalls ³⁹. In practice, this means teachers are developing clear usage policies and lessons on AI as part of the curriculum.

One example is posting transparent **AI use guidelines** in classrooms. At Valencia High School in California, English teacher Casey Cuny created a traffic-light poster of AI rules for his students (green = permitted uses, yellow = use with caution/teacher approval, red = prohibited uses) ⁴⁰. This kind of visual guideline helps students navigate when using an AI tool is acceptable and what constitutes cheating. Common green-light uses might include using AI for brainstorming ideas, getting feedback on grammar, or summarizing background information – *with proper citation or disclosure* ⁴¹. Red-light activities are clearly delineated (e.g. “Do not have ChatGPT write your essay or do your analysis”), reinforcing the school’s academic integrity policy. By setting these boundaries, teachers demystify AI: students learn that **AI can be a helper for certain tasks, but not a substitute for their own thinking** ⁴² ⁴³.



An English teacher in California displays classroom guidelines for student use of AI (green = allowed for brainstorming/outlining, yellow = ask teacher, red = not allowed). Such posters help set clear expectations for ethical AI use ⁴⁰.

Many high schools are also implementing **disclosure requirements** to promote transparency. Students are instructed that if they do use an AI tool in completing an assignment (in a way that’s allowed), they must *cite or acknowledge it*, just as they would cite a human source. For instance, Park East High School in New York City instituted a detailed AI policy: any student who “collaborate[s] with AI for portions of a...assignment”

must “cite the AI tool used and specify what portions of the work it generated”⁴³. The policy even provides a standardized *AI Disclosure Form* for students to explain how they used the tool⁴⁴. Failing to disclose AI assistance when it was used is treated as a form of plagiarism. Some forward-thinking teachers require students to **highlight AI-generated text in a different color** or attach the AI chat transcript as an appendix to their work, so that the process is fully transparent (a practice echoed in sample AI policies shared by universities)⁴⁵. The goal of all these measures is to remove the secrecy around AI use: if students know they must openly declare any AI help, they are less likely to misuse it, and more likely to leverage it in *educationally appropriate ways*.

Teachers are weaving ethical AI use directly into lessons as well. In computer science classes, educators like Marisa Shuman in the Bronx have pioneered a “critical computing” approach – where AI itself becomes the subject of study and critique⁴⁶³⁸. Shuman had her students follow a ChatGPT-generated lesson plan, then led a discussion on its quality and biases; the students found the AI lesson “bland” and inferior to a human teacher, driving home the lesson that AI is a tool with clear limitations³⁷. Other teachers have students **fact-check and edit AI-generated content** to foster skepticism and improve their research skills. Cherie Shields, the Oregon English teacher, suggests having students *evaluate the accuracy* of ChatGPT’s output – for example, checking quotes in an AI-written literature essay and discovering that the AI often produces misquotes or erroneous details⁴⁷⁴⁸. By catching AI’s mistakes, students practice critical reading and realize that relying on AI unchecked can hurt their learning. Some assignments now explicitly ask students to *use AI* as a starting point and then **“reverse engineer” or improve upon it**. A teacher might provide an AI-written essay and ask students to personalize it, add missing evidence, or compare it to a human-written piece⁴⁹. This not only teaches writing skills but also ethical use – students see that AI output is a draft at best, not a finished product to pass off as their own.

At a broader level, schools and districts are developing **AI literacy programs and professional development** to support teachers and students. New York City, after initially banning ChatGPT, reversed course and is investing in AI training: the Department of Education launched an *AI Policy Lab* to guide ethical implementation, and the local teachers’ union partnered with tech companies to fund \$23 million in training for educators on using AI in the classroom⁵⁰. The message is that *both* teachers and students need guidance to navigate AI. Experts emphasize that students must learn *how* to use AI as a “learning partner, not a shortcut”²⁰. Just as we teach students when and how to use a calculator in math, teachers like Kim Lepre argue we should “show them how to use [AI]” effectively – “*hand them a TI-85...but show them how to use it*”⁵¹. Ethical integration means giving students permission to use AI in helpful ways (brainstorming ideas, practicing problems, translating or leveling text for comprehension, etc.) while making clear the lines of academic honesty. It also involves discussing the **responsibilities and pitfalls**: data privacy (not entering personal info into AI), the potential biases in AI outputs, and the importance of original thought. By addressing these topics, educators are **building students’ digital citizenship and integrity** for the AI age.

Notably, some schools treat AI misuse as an opportunity for *conversation rather than immediate punishment*. If a student is suspected of turning in AI-written work, teachers might respond by having a one-on-one talk where the student must “verbally walk [the instructor] through the assignment and demonstrate understanding” as a first step⁵². This approach (used at Park East High School) both verifies authenticity and turns a cheating incident into a learning moment – often, students confronted in this way realize they didn’t actually learn the material, reinforcing why misuse is against their own interest. Repeat or egregious offenses still carry penalties (like zeros or detentions)⁵³, but the emphasis is on **restoring learning** rather than just catching cheaters.

Across the United States, these emerging strategies – from reimagined assignments and supervised assessments to explicit AI ethics instruction – illustrate a profound shift in education prompted by generative AI. Teachers are rising to the challenge with creativity and pedagogical courage: **the solution is not to run from AI, but to redesign learning such that AI becomes just another tool students must learn to use appropriately.** By making assessments more authentic and instruction more student-centered, educators are working to ensure that *thinking* and *integrity* remain at the heart of education, even as technology evolves. As one high school student aptly put it, the problem of AI misuse “isn’t technological...Ultimately, the problem is behavioral” ⁵⁴ ² – and with the kinds of innovations described above, teachers are proactively shaping behaviors and mindsets for a future where human creativity and ethical use of AI go hand in hand.

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