Eden Prairie Schools enhances student learning with AI in classrooms

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(METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION)

Students in a classroom using electronic tablets.

Eden Prairie Schools is implementing artificial intelligence (AI) in its elementary, middle and high school classrooms to enhance student learning and assist educators in providing high-quality educational experiences for all learners.

Teachers from Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion School, Central Middle School (CMS) and Eden Prairie High School (EPHS) presented to the school board at the Nov. 24 meeting about the impact AI tools are having on classrooms of all ages. The presentation showcased how those schools are using AI for deeper learning and assessment.

In elementary school classrooms, educators are using MagicSchool AI specifically to deepen reading comprehension; middle school classrooms are using AI to connect daily lessons to the school's Site Improvement Plan (SIP); and high school classrooms are creating their own AI tools to assist with studying and learning comprehension.

"Though AI is a new tool, the same purpose is to help students learn more and deeper and have sticky learning experiences," said Robb Virgin, assistant superintendent at Eden Prairie Schools.

At Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion, students are using an AI conversation tool, ChatBot, to help with their reading comprehension. Second-grade teacher Angelica Soberg customized the ChatBot tool to fit her students' specific educational goals. Since this particular elementary school is an immersion school, the ChatBot exclusively communicates with students in Spanish.

Students will read the assigned text independently and then have a conversation about the reading with ChatBot. The tool is programmed to ask probing questions and not provide students with answers. It will always provide students with a new question after one interaction is complete, forcing students to maintain a longstanding conversation.

It supports both teachers and students by generating a summary of each student's conversation to show reading comprehension progress.

The summary covers strengths and interests, areas for improvement and behavioral notes, including engagement levels measured as high, moderate or minimal. If a student is having difficulty with comprehension, Chatbot will flag their name so their teacher knows to investigate further.

ChatBot allows every child to talk through the texts they're reading; encourages students to ask more questions; and allows for a more personalized learning experience for each student, as it adjusts conversational content based on the student's responses and questions.

Soberg added that the tool supports all learners, including multilingual students, through the many language options available. Incorporating ChatBot into learning has resulted in more meaningful conversations about assigned texts and has provided additional insight to teachers on individualized student needs.

At CMS, educators are using AI tools to help connect the school's strategic vision and Site Improvement Plan to the daily lesson plans taught in classrooms.

The Literacy Alignment Assistant is an AI tool that is engineered to align with the SIP as well as Advancement Via Individual Determination strategies, or AVID, and multilingual strategies. It provides teachers with quick, personalized instructional matches tied to SIP goals and specific strategies to support student needs, according to the meeting presentation.

It also offers a user-friendly interface to empower teachers to make fast instructional decisions. Teachers covering different subject areas can input their course content and the tool will tailor its support to those subject needs.

Students are able to apply their education to real life scenarios through an AI tool called Real World Connections. One of the tool's capabilities is to provide students

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with a list of career paths they could pursue in the future that relate to the subjects they're discussing in the classroom.

At EPHS, students are taking AI to the next level by creating their own AI programs for classroom use. Two current EPHS seniors created the program Athena, which promotes AI literacy for both learners and educators.

The Athena co-founders discovered that several students weren't ever properly taught how to use AI for educational settings until recently and that prior to schools becoming more accepting of AI as a learning tool, students were using it to complete their work rather than to supplement their learning.

When asked by the student AI developers, many teachers stated they had a strong desire for AI to support students' learning without replacing their critical thinking, while students expressed interest in normalizing AI usage in classrooms.

Students have found Athena especially useful when studying, as it can assemble customized study plans for different focuses.

Athena may be brought to more districts and departments in the future, with ongoing improvements driven by feedback cycles.

"We really want [students] to be able to use AI as a thought partner and really think about how it can continue to enhance." said Felicia Thames, assistant superintendent of elementary education at EPS.

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