

GRADES 6–8 · AGES 11–14 · 55 MINUTES · STRUCTURED DEBATE

Should schools allow AI for schoolwork?

THE PROPOSITION

"This school should allow students to use AI tools on assignments."

The debate every middle school is having, run properly: assigned sides, evidence required, and a closing exercise that turns the argument into an actual classroom policy. Students learn how the tools fail before arguing about how they should be used.

STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO

- Describe how a language model produces text and why it can be confidently wrong.
- Argue an assigned side with at least one piece of evidence per claim.
- Draft a usable AI policy for one assignment type.

VOCABULARY FROM THE FIELD GUIDE

Large language model (LLM) · Hallucination · Verification · Automation bias · Prompt

WHAT'S IN THIS PACK

- Teacher guide: background, vocabulary, agenda, format, positions, questions, roles, rubric.
- Student handouts (photocopy one per student): position organizer, sentence starters, exit ticket.
- Standards: CCSS ELA SL.6.1 / SL.7.1 / SL.8.1 (collaborative discussions); CCSS ELA SL.8.3 (evaluate argument and evidence); CCSS ELA W.7.1 / W.8.1 (argument writing); ISTE Students 3.b (evaluate accuracy and credibility).

PRINT

US Letter, plain paper, duplex. Teacher pages once; student pages one per student. Free to photocopy for classroom and homeschool use. Not for resale.

Background for the teacher

Read this before class. Students get a version of the same facts on their handout; you get the framing and the traps.

Large language models predict the next token given everything before it. At scale that produces fluent essays, code, and explanations – and also invented citations, wrong dates, and plausible nonsense. The technical term for a fabricated answer is hallucination; the fix is verification, which is a skill students can be taught.

Automation bias is the tendency to trust a machine's output more than it deserves because it arrived formatted and confident. Middle schoolers are highly susceptible, and so are adults. This is the strongest point the 'restrict' side has, and the 'allow' side's best answer is 'so teach verification.'

Avoid framing this as cheating versus honesty. The live question is which uses build the skill an assignment is meant to build, and which replace it. Brainstorming, outlining, and getting feedback are different from generating a final draft. The policy exercise at the end makes students draw those lines assignment by assignment.

RUNNING DISCUSSION IN GRADES 6–8

Evidence enters the room. Students can hold a position they don't believe, and that's the point.

- Assign sides. Arguing a position you didn't choose is the fastest way to learn what the other side actually thinks.
- Require one piece of evidence per claim – a fact from the background sheet, a personal example, or a definition.
- Separate 'what is true' from 'what should we do.' Most middle-school debates tangle the two.
- Watch for the pile-on. If one side is winning on volume, pause and give the other side a 60-second huddle.

Vocabulary

Pulled from the Hi, Bot AI concepts field guide (hibot.space/learn/concepts). Read each card aloud, then have the class rewrite it in ten words or fewer.

Large language model (LLM)

The kind of model behind most chatbots – a very advanced next-word guesser.

An LLM is trained on enormous amounts of text and learns to predict what token comes next given everything before it. That simple objective, at scale, produces fluent answers, code, and summaries – but fluency is not the same as understanding or truth. Most consumer "AI chat" today is an LLM plus safety layers, tools, and a user interface.

WHERE PEOPLE ARGUE

Calling an LLM a "stochastic parrot" vs. "reasoning engine" is a whole philosophical industry. The practical middle ground: it's pattern completion that often looks like reasoning because language encodes reasoning patterns.

Hallucination

When a model states something false with full confidence.

A hallucination is a fluent, plausible-sounding output that isn't grounded in fact – fake citations, invented dates, wrong math presented smoothly. The model isn't "lying" in a human sense; it's completing patterns without a built-in truth checker. The fix is verification habits, not hoping the next model version eliminates the behavior entirely.

WHERE PEOPLE ARGUE

Some researchers dislike "hallucination" because it anthropomorphizes a statistical failure mode. Practically, the term stuck because it describes the user experience: the machine sounds sure about something that isn't true.

Verification

Checking outputs against evidence – the habit that makes AI usable.

Verification means treating model output as a draft: cross-check claims, run code, read sources, ask what would falsify the answer. It's the skill that separates tool use from blind trust. Kids and adults need the same loop – models don't get a pass because they sound confident.

Automation bias

Trusting the machine because it's fast and confident – even when it's wrong.

Automation bias is the human tendency to defer to automated recommendations, especially under time pressure. It's why verification matters in copilot settings: the risk isn't only model error, it's humans stopping checks. Training and UI design should keep responsibility visible.

Prompt

The instruction or question you give a model.

A prompt is whatever you send in: a question, a document to summarize, a role ("act as a tutor"), constraints ("under 200 words"), or examples of the format you want. Better prompts are specific about goal, audience, and what "good" looks like. Vague prompts reliably produce vague answers.

Warm-up

6 minutes.

Project a short, confident, wrong chatbot answer (e.g., a made-up quote attributed to a real author). Ask the class to find the problem. Time how long it takes. Then ask: 'Would you have caught it if it were in your own essay at 11 p.m.?'

Agenda - 55 minutes

Minutes	Segment	What happens
0-6	Warm-up	Confident wrong answer. Establish hallucination and automation bias.
6-14	Background + vocabulary	Read the background sheet. Each student marks one fact they could use as evidence.
14-22	Team prep	Assign sides (not chosen). Teams fill the position organizer: claim, three reasons, evidence for each, likely rebuttal.
22-44	Structured debate	Opening 2 min each · huddle 3 min · rebuttal 2 min each · cross-fire 6 min · closing 1 min each. Audience scores on the rubric.

Minutes	Segment	What happens
44-52	Policy draft	Mixed groups of four write an AI rule for ONE assignment type (essay, lab report, math set, presentation). Read two aloud.
52-55	Exit ticket	Complete the handout.

How structured debate runs

Two teams, assigned sides. Opening statements (2 min each), rebuttal huddle (3 min), rebuttals (2 min each), open cross-fire with hands (5 min), closing statements (1 min each). The audience votes on which side argued better – not which side they agree with.

GROUND RULES – POST THESE

1. Attack ideas, never people. "That claim has a hole" – not "you're wrong."
2. One voice at a time. The listener's job is to be able to repeat what was said.
3. Evidence beats volume. A quiet fact outranks a loud opinion.
4. Changing your mind is winning. Say so out loud when it happens.
5. You argue the side you were assigned. Your real opinion goes on the exit ticket.

The two positions

Starter arguments are scaffolds, not scripts. Strong teams find their own. Assign sides where the format calls for it; students record their real view on the exit ticket.

Affirmative – allow it, teach it

AI is a tool students will use for life; banning it teaches nothing and hides use.

- Bans don't work – students use it at home anyway, without guidance.
- Verification is a skill. You can only teach it by using the tool in class.
- AI can explain a concept five ways at midnight when no teacher is available.
- Employers and colleges already expect fluency with these tools.

Negative – restrict it, protect the skill

Assignments exist to build skills, and a machine doing the work removes the practice.

- You can't learn to write by reading what a model wrote.
- The model hallucinates; students trust it anyway (automation bias).
- Access is unequal – some students have paid tools, some don't.
- Teachers can't grade thinking they can't see.

Discussion questions

OPENING

1. What is an essay assignment actually for?

CORE

1. Is using AI to outline different from using it to draft? Where's the line?
2. If a model hallucinates a source and a student cites it, who is responsible?
3. Does a rule that can't be enforced still matter?

CLOSING

1. Write one sentence of AI policy you'd actually follow.

Roles

Role	Job
First speaker	Delivers the opening: claim + two strongest reasons with evidence.
Rebuttal speaker	Restates the other side's best argument, then answers it.
Cross-fire lead	Asks the questions during open exchange; keeps the team on evidence.
Closer	Summarizes the clash and gives the audience one reason to vote.
Audience judge	Scores each side on the rubric; votes on argument quality, not agreement.

Assessment rubric

Share this before the debate. Judges and self-assessors use the same sheet. 'Meets' is the target; note above or below in the margin.

Criterion	Meets
Claim	States a clear position that answers the question.
Evidence	Supports each claim with a fact, definition, or specific example.
Response	Restates the other side accurately before rebutting.
Vocabulary	Uses at least two lesson terms correctly.
Conduct	Follows ground rules; invites quieter voices in.

Exit ticket prompts

1. My assigned side was _____. My real position is _____.
2. The strongest argument the other side made: _____.
3. One AI use that helps learning: _____. One that replaces it: _____.

Extension

Ask a chatbot to write a paragraph about a topic you know well. Annotate it: mark every claim as verified, unverified, or wrong. Report your ratio.

SEND HOME

Ask at home: 'Do you use AI at work? What's the rule where you work – written or unwritten?'

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS ELA SL.6.1 / SL.7.1 / SL.8.1 (collaborative discussions)
- CCSS ELA SL.8.3 (evaluate argument and evidence)
- CCSS ELA W.7.1 / W.8.1 (argument writing)
- ISTE Students 3.b (evaluate accuracy and credibility)

More lessons by grade band, and the full AI concepts field guide, at hibot.space/learn/debates. Tell us how it went: hello@hibot.space.

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Large language models predict the next token given everything before it. At scale that produces fluent essays, code, and explanations – and also invented citations, wrong dates, and plausible nonsense. The technical term for a fabricated answer is hallucination; the fix is verification, which is a skill students can be taught.

Automation bias is the tendency to trust a machine's output more than it deserves because it arrived formatted and confident. Middle schoolers are highly susceptible, and so are adults. This is the strongest point the 'restrict' side has, and the 'allow' side's best answer is 'so teach verification.'

Avoid framing this as cheating versus honesty. The live question is which uses build the skill an assignment is meant to build, and which replace it. Brainstorming, outlining, and getting feedback are different from generating a final draft. The policy exercise at the end makes students draw those lines assignment by assignment.

WORDS WE'LL USE

Large language model (LLM) – The kind of model behind most chatbots – a very advanced next-word guesser.

Hallucination – When a model states something false with full confidence.

Verification – Checking outputs against evidence – the habit that makes AI usable.

Automation bias – Trusting the machine because it's fast and confident – even when it's wrong.

Prompt – The instruction or question you give a model.

MARK IT UP

Underline one sentence you agree with. Circle one you doubt. Write one question in the margin. Bring all three to the discussion.

Position organizer

Proposition: "This school should allow students to use AI tools on assignments."

Name: _____ Side (assigned or chosen): _____

OUR CLAIM, IN ONE SENTENCE

THREE REASONS – AND THE EVIDENCE FOR EACH

Reason 1:

Evidence (a fact, a definition, or a specific example):

Reason 2:

Evidence (a fact, a definition, or a specific example):

Reason 3:

Evidence (a fact, a definition, or a specific example):

WHAT THE OTHER SIDE WILL SAY – AND OUR REPLY

Their best argument:

Our reply:

VOCABULARY I WILL USE CORRECTLY

☐ Large language model (LLM) ☐ Hallucination ☐ Verification ☐ Automation bias ☐ Prompt

Sentence starters

Use these until you don't need them. The goal is to respond to what was actually said.

- Our claim is _____. Our evidence is _____.
- The other side argued _____. That's true, but _____.
- That's a fair point about _____; however, _____.
- Can you clarify what you mean by _____?
- Even if _____ is true, it doesn't follow that _____.

GROUND RULES

1. Attack ideas, never people. "That claim has a hole" – not "you're wrong."
2. One voice at a time. The listener's job is to be able to repeat what was said.
3. Evidence beats volume. A quiet fact outranks a loud opinion.
4. Changing your mind is winning. Say so out loud when it happens.
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HOW STRUCTURED DEBATE WORKS

Two teams, assigned sides. Opening statements (2 min each), rebuttal huddle (3 min), rebuttals (2 min each), open cross-fire with hands (5 min), closing statements (1 min each). The audience votes on which side argued better – not which side they agree with.

YOUR ROLE TODAY

Role: _____

Role	Job
First speaker	Delivers the opening: claim + two strongest reasons with evidence.
Rebuttal speaker	Restates the other side's best argument, then answers it.
Cross-fire lead	Asks the questions during open exchange; keeps the team on evidence.
Closer	Summarizes the clash and gives the audience one reason to vote.
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LISTENING TALLY

Keep count while others speak. Claims: _____ Evidence: _____ Questions: _____ Vocabulary used: _____
Minds changed: _____

Exit ticket

"This school should allow students to use AI tools on assignments."

Name: _____ Date: _____

My assigned side was _____. My real position is _____.

The strongest argument the other side made: _____.

One AI use that helps learning: _____. One that replaces it: _____.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Criterion	Meets looks like	Me today (above / meets / below)
Claim	States a clear position that answers the question.	
Evidence	Supports each claim with a fact, definition, or specific example.	
Response	Restates the other side accurately before rebutting.	
Vocabulary	Uses at least two lesson terms correctly.	
Conduct	Follows ground rules; invites quieter voices in.	

TAKE IT HOME

Ask at home: 'Do you use AI at work? What's the rule where you work – written or unwritten?'