LESSON PLAN

# The Cost of Artificial Intelligence

**Estimate Pacing**: 45 minutes

In this lesson, students explore the hidden costs and benefits of artificial intelligence in schools. After watching a short **DECA at the Bell** video about the financial, environmental, and technological demands of AI, students take on the role of a **Student Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council**. Working in groups, they evaluate whether their school district should adopt a $1.5 million AI platform for tutoring, grading, and administrative support. Students analyze the trade-offs, design a creative presentation to share their recommendation, and engage in a class discussion about balancing innovation with responsibility.

## Lesson Objective

Students will analyze complex problems and propose solutions that balance innovation with responsibility.

## Performance Indicator

Solve problems using creativity, innovation, and critical thinking skills (analyze, synthesize, and evaluate).

## Vocabulary

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Center, Large Language Model

## ENGAGE

**ACTIVITY: DECA at the Bell | AI Series: The Cost of Artificial Intelligence**
***Est:*** *10 minutes*

Have students watch the At the Bell episode and respond to the related activity.

**Episode Description**: AI might feel “free,” but running tools like ChatGPT and Gemini takes massive resources. Behind the scenes are billion-dollar data centers that use powerful chips, nonstop electricity, and sometimes vast amounts of water to keep our digital lives running 24/7. Join Emma and Jaden as they explore the costs of AI.

**Release Date | Tuesday, October 7, 2025**

## EXPLORE

### ACTIVITY: School Adoption Role-Play

***Est:*** *30 minutes*

Students take on the role of the **Student Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council**. Their task is to evaluate whether their school district should adopt a costly AI platform that promises to provide tutoring, grading support, and administrative assistance. Students will work in groups to identify the benefits, costs, and hidden impacts (e.g., energy use, data privacy). Each group will design a short, creative presentation (e.g., a poster, skit, infographic, or pitch) to share their recommendation with the "school board."

**Teacher Instructions**

Divide students into groups of 3–4. **Pro tip:** Assign roles (e.g., data researcher, environmental advocate, student representative, financial analyst).

**You Decide**: Read the scenario aloud as a class, provide each student with a copy, or distribute one to each group.

#### Scenario: Should Our School Invest in AI?

Your school district has been offered a partnership with a company that provides an advanced AI platform. The company claims that this AI can assist students with tutoring, provide teachers with grading support, and handle specific administrative tasks—saving time and enhancing student outcomes.

But there are trade-offs. The AI platform requires:

- **Constant internet access** and storage of student data in large data centers.
- **Significant energy use** that contributes to environmental costs like electricity demand, water usage for cooling, and e-waste from outdated hardware.
- **A financial commitment of $1.5 million over five years**, which could otherwise be spent on other district needs.

Community members are divided: some are excited about the educational benefits, while others are concerned about the financial and environmental impacts.

The district has created a **Student Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council**—that's you! Your job is to analyze the benefits and costs, then make a recommendation: Should the district adopt this AI platform, reject it, or suggest a modified plan?

**Student Instructions**

You're part of the **Student Artificial Intelligence Advisory Council.** Your school district is deciding whether to spend $1.5 million on a new AI system to assist students and teachers. Your job:

1. In your group, list all the possible **benefits** (like better grades, less teacher stress) and **costs/risks** (like electricity, privacy, money).
2. Come up with a creative solution: Should the school say yes, no, or yes with changes?
3. Design a quick presentation to share your answer. You can make a poster, short skit, infographic, or quick pitch—your choice.
4. Present your group's decision to the class "school board."

## WRAP UP

**ACTIVITY: Class Discussion**
***Est:*** *10 minutes*

1. What benefits of AI in schools are the most exciting to you? Why?
2. What costs or risks do you think are the hardest to solve?
3. How did your group balance the trade-offs between educational benefits and environmental/financial costs?

**ACTIVITY: Reflection**
***Est:*** *5 minutes*

Students will submit an individual, one-page summary outlining their top three risks and benefits of adopting the AI platform, along with their recommendation (supported by evidence) for the school board. This summary does not need to mirror their group's presentation.

**ACTIVITY: Exit Ticket | Poll**
***Est:*** *5 minutes*

Should our school district say yes, no, or yes with changes?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Yes, but with changes