

UNIT 1: LEARNING

Grade Level 9 - 12



INTRODUCTION

Themes & Ideas

- *Interpersonal Dynamics*
- *Academic Environments*
- *Mobile Device Usage*
- *Digital Advancements*
- *Artificial Intelligence*
- *Human Connections*

What Students Will Uncover

Through a variety of discussions and activities, students will learn about the potential impact of Artificial Intelligence on their learning habits, academic integrity and cognitive development. They will examine how reliance on generative tools influences independent thinking. They will also learn about the importance of critically evaluating AI-generated content.

Lesson Overview

This guide addresses the integration of generative AI tools into academic environments, exploring both the benefits for learning and the risks to critical thinking, memory retention, and academic stamina. It works well for educators to run:

As a follow-up to the Screening and Class Discussion Lesson Plan

OR

Independently, if you already know this is a subject you want to explore in particular.

We recommend that students watch Screenagers: Generation AI prior to (or as part of) this lesson, but relevant clips are embedded throughout the guide if students do not have time to watch the whole film or need a refresher.

The lesson is organized around activities that can be completed during a class period. Educators can select and arrange the activities to fit their class timing, including running activities over multiple periods or assigning them as homework.

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- *Examine how generative AI tools and automation impact independent problem-solving, cognitive stamina, and deep learning habits*
- *Evaluate the accuracy, bias, and reliability of AI-generated content.*
- *Identify healthy strategies for utilizing technology as a learning aid without replacing original thought and academic effort.*
- *Analyze the ethical considerations and academic integrity questions surrounding AI usage in school settings.*

Lesson Materials

- The lesson plan below
 - Activity 1: [Examples of Honor Codes](#) | [Academic Scenario Cards](#) | [Generic Honor Code](#)
 - Activity 2: [Evaluating Research Excerpts handout](#)
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LESSON ACTIVITIES

Discussion Prompts & Video Reflections

- Please see the Discussion Format guidance at the end of this document -

 [View/Show: Expert Reflection - Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath \(30 seconds\)](#)

1. Expert Reflection (Dr. Jared Cooney Horvath): Horvath explains that learning requires costly cognitive effort that the brain naturally resists. How might relying on AI shortcuts affect your job-readiness and real-world problem-solving skills?

Suggested Discussion Formats:

- Socratic Seminar
- Talk-Listen Partner Sharing

 [View/Show: Expert Reflection - Dr. Rebecca Winthrop \(50 seconds\)](#)

2. Expert Reflection (Dr. Rebecca Winthrop): Winthrop points out that AI is degrading trust between teachers and students in both directions. How do you feel about this loss of trust? Have you ever experienced this? What can schools do to restore this trust?

Suggested Discussion Formats:

- Fishbowl
- Anonymous Comments

 [View/Show: Fake AI Research Paper \(1 minute, 10 seconds\)](#)

3. How was a completely fake medical journal article able to easily infiltrate multiple AI products? How does AI-generated misinformation undermine public trust in real science and news?

Suggested Discussion Formats:

- Jigsaw Puzzle
- Poster Board Discussion (Chalk Talk)

 [View/Show: AI Detectors \(20 seconds\)](#)

4. OpenAI quietly abandoned its AI detector because it falsely accused students and missed real AI content. If AI detectors frequently fail, how should teachers evaluate authentic human learning?

Suggested Discussion Formats:

- Four Corners
- Socratic Seminar

 [View/Show: Data on Learning Standards \(50 seconds\)](#)

5. Consider the example of the drop in standardized-testing data: Do you think the score drop was caused by the introduction of the devices themselves? Or do you think these tests no longer measure what is being taught in schools?

Suggested Discussion Formats:

- Line Communication (The Consensus Continuum)
- Fishbowl

 [View/Show: Homework & AI \(1 minute, 15 seconds\)](#)

6. Do you agree that if a homework assignment can be completed by AI, it shouldn't be assigned? How is this different from using a calculator in math class?

Suggested Discussion Formats:

- Four Corners
- Musical Chairs (Concentric Circles)

7. Should assignments that can be easily completed using generative AI tools be eliminated entirely from school curricula, or should students be expected and trusted to value the learning process independently?

Suggested Discussion Formats:

- Fishbowl
- Four Corners

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: Academic Integrity & Policy Workshop

Overview: Students analyze real-world honor codes, evaluate realistic high school AI assignment scenarios across core subjects, and amend a baseline High School Honor Code to establish clear boundaries for responsible AI use.

Approximate Time: 35 - 45 minutes

Supplies:

- [Examples of Honor Codes](#) (1 per group)
- [Academic Scenario Cards](#) (1 set per group)
- [Generic Honor Code](#) (1 per group)
- Highlighters and pens

Teacher Instructions:

- **Preliminary Framing (5 mins):** Ask:
 - *If a school bans AI completely, does that actually work in real life?*
 - *If a school allows total, unmonitored AI freedom, what happens to the actual value of your diploma?*
- **Decoding Common Language (10 mins):**
 - Direct students to read the three [examples of honor codes](#) (San Domenico School, Duke University, and Harvard University).
 - Working in pairs or small groups, students highlight shared core values (e.g., *truth, integrity, personal responsibility, community trust*).
 - *Ask students: "Notice how these codes focus on character and mutual trust rather than listing every forbidden tool. Why is a broad, value-based policy more effective long-term?"*
- **Scenario Sorting & Behavioral Mapping (10 mins):**
 - Have student groups review the 8 [Academic Scenario cards](#)
 - Groups sort each scenario into one of three categories:
 - **Permitted Assistance** (Green Light)
 - **Gray Area / Ask Instructor First** (Yellow Light)
 - **Academic Misconduct** (Red Light)
 - Encourage groups to share some of their choices and debate a few of the "gray area" scenarios.
- **The Honor Code Amendment Challenge (7 mins):**
 - Direct students to read the [Generic High School Honor Code](#)
 - Groups act as a student-led policy committee to draft a concise 1 - 2 sentence "AI Amendment" directly into the baseline text.
- **Follow-up Debrief (3 mins):** Ask:
 - *Have 2 - 3 groups present their proposed amendments to the class.*
 - *Ask: Why is mutual trust between teachers and students essential for any AI policy to actually succeed?*

ACTIVITY 2: Peer Review Check Panel

Overview *Students act as academic peer reviewers by analyzing physical printouts of fraudulent or hallucinated research papers, using highlighters and flag sticky notes to mark fake sources and flawed data. This task turns abstract source evaluation into a physical review process.*

Approximate Time: 20 - 25 minutes

Video Clip (Shorter EdCut)

- 02:55 - 03:56 (*Fake Science Journal*)

Supplies:

- [Evaluating Research Excerpts](#) handouts (1 per group)
- Highlighters, colored pens and/or colored pencils

Teacher Instructions:

- **Preliminary Framing (3 mins):** Highlight the film excerpt detailing the fabricated scientific paper on an eye disease. Ask:
 - *How does official-sounding formatting trick us into trusting fake information?*
 -  [View/Show: Fake AI Research Paper \(1 minute, 10 seconds\)](#)
- **Document Review (12 mins):** Working in small teams of "Review Panels," students read through the [research excerpts](#) to search for indications that the research is not real.
- **Group Discussion (5 mins):** As a class, discuss each article. What were some of the "give-aways" that indicated the research articles were fake?
- **Follow-up Debrief (5 mins):** Ask students:
 - *What specific markers gave away the hallucinated content? Do you think these markers are always as obvious?*
 - *What can you do to fact-check the research articles you encounter?*
 - *Why is fast, automated content creation dangerous when applied to academic research and healthcare?"*

Frameworks

CASEL® SEL Competencies

Our Curriculum & Lesson Plans are independently aligned by the Screenagers Team to the CASEL® SEL Competencies Framework.

- **Self-awareness:** Examining prejudices and biases.
- **Self-management:** Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation.
- **Social-awareness:** Taking others' perspectives.
- **Responsible Decision-making:** Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness. Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners

Our Curriculum & Lesson Plans are also informed by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) Standards Framework for Learners. For additional information and resources, including a downloadable format for the Learners Standards Framework, for AASL's National Standards visit standards.aasl.org.

Inquire

- A. THINK** — Formulating questions about a personal interest or a need for information.
- B. CREATE** — Generating products that illustrate learning.

Include

- B. CREATE** — Evaluating a variety of perspectives during learning activities.

Collaborate

- D. GROW** — Recognizing learning as a social responsibility.

Engage

- C. SHARE** — Disseminating new knowledge through means appropriate for the intended audience.

Explore

- A. THINK** — Reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions. Developing personal habits that reflect a critical stance toward information.

DISCUSSION FORMATS

Turn-and-Talk (Elbow Partners)

Students discuss the question with the closest student to their right, then turn and talk with the closest student to their left. Afterward, students are invited to share their opinions with the entire class.

Supplies Needed: *None*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Present the discussion prompt on the board or read it aloud.
2. Direct students to turn to their right and discuss the prompt with their elbow partner for 60 seconds.
3. Signal a transition and instruct students to turn to their left to discuss the prompt with a new partner for 60 seconds.
4. Bring the class together and invite 2 - 3 volunteers to share insights from their conversations.

Fishbowl

A small group of students sits in a center circle and actively discusses the prompt while the remaining students sit outside taking notes. Periodically, outer circle observers rotate into the inner circle to join the conversation.

Supplies Needed: *Chairs arranged in two concentric circles, paper, and pens.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Arrange 4 - 5 chairs in an inner circle (the Fishbowl) surrounded by the rest of the class in an outer circle.
2. Assign the inner circle to begin actively discussing the prompt while the outer circle actively listens and takes notes.

3. Every 3 - 5 minutes, pause the discussion to rotate students from the outer circle into the inner circle.
4. Conclude with a full-class debrief summarizing key arguments brought up by the inner circle.

Musical Chairs (Concentric Circles)

Students form two facing concentric circles and discuss a prompt in pairs for two minutes. After two minutes, the inner circle rotates clockwise to a new partner to repeat the discussion.

Supplies Needed: *Open floor space or desks arranged in two facing rows.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Divide the class into two equal groups, forming an inner circle facing outward and an outer circle facing inward.
2. Post a prompt and give pairs 2 minutes to share their perspectives.
3. Call "Time!" and instruct only the inner circle to rotate one spot clockwise to meet a new partner.
4. Repeat for 3 - 4 rotations using the same prompt or introducing new reflection questions.

Jigsaw Puzzle

Small groups discuss one portion of a prompt before splitting up to join a new group. In their new groups, students share what their original group discussed before tackling the next prompt.

Supplies Needed: *Playing cards or grouping tokens, chart paper, markers.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Split the class into "home groups" of 3 - 4 students using playing cards or random selection, assigning each group a distinct portion of a prompt.
2. Give home groups 5 minutes to discuss and record key takeaways on chart paper.
3. Re-sort students into "expert groups" containing one representative from each original home group.
4. Give each student 2 minutes to present their home group's findings to their new group.

Post-It Notes (Silent Gallery Walk)

Teachers post questions on boards around the room, and students walk around writing their responses on sticky notes. Classmates then walk through to read the notes and add check marks next to comments they agree with.

Supplies Needed: *Post-it notes, pens, chart paper hung around the room.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Hang poster boards with different prompts around the room.
2. Hand each student sticky notes and give them 5 - 7 minutes to walk silently around the room, posting written answers under each question.
3. Direct students to do a second lap with a pen, drawing a check mark (✓) next to comments they agree with and a question mark (?) next to points they want to clarify.
4. Gather as a class to review the posters with the highest concentration of checks or questions.

Poster Board Discussion (Chalk Talk)

Questions are written on poster boards around the room, and students walk around for 10 minutes writing their thoughts directly on the paper. Students mark a check next to points they agree with, and an X next to points of disagreement for a final class debrief.

Supplies Needed: *Large poster paper/whiteboards, markers.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Write central discussion prompts in the middle of large poster sheets placed on tables or taped to walls.
2. Give students 10 minutes to walk silently between posters, writing their responses directly on the paper.
3. Instruct students to read their peers' comments and draw a check mark (✓) next to statements they agree with and an "X" next to points of disagreement, adding brief written explanations.
4. Lead a debrief focusing explicitly on the clusters of agreement and disagreement across the boards.

Anonymous Comments

Students write their honest responses to a prompt on paper and submit them to the teacher anonymously. The teacher reads the responses aloud so the class can discuss which parts they agree or disagree with.

Supplies Needed: *Index cards or uniform slips of paper, collection box/basket, whiteboard & markers.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Distribute identical slips of paper or index cards, reading the prompt aloud or writing it on the board.
2. Provide 2 - 3 minutes for students to write an anonymous, honest response, then collect all cards in a box and shuffle them.
3. Read selected responses aloud to the class without identifying handwriting.
4. Transcribe main themes onto the board and facilitate a class discussion around common patterns or surprising perspectives.

Talk-Listen Partner Sharing

Partner A has one uninterrupted minute to respond to a question while Partner B listens quietly. Students then switch roles, followed by a final minute where both partners respond to each other's ideas.

Supplies Needed: *Visual timer or stopwatch.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Pair students up as Partner A and Partner B.
2. Partner A speaks for 60 seconds straight responding to the prompt, while Partner B listens completely uninterrupted.
3. Switch roles immediately: Partner B speaks for 60 seconds while Partner A listens.
4. Open a final 60-second block for open, two-way dialogue where partners react to what they heard from each other.

Four Corners

The teacher reads a statement, and students physically walk to a corner of the room labeled with their stance (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree). Each corner group briefly discusses their reasoning before choosing a spokesperson to share with the class.

Supplies Needed: *Four corner signs labeled Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Post one sign in each of the four corners of the classroom.
2. Read a statement aloud to the class.
3. Instruct students to walk to the corner that best reflects their opinion.

4. Give each corner group 3 minutes to discuss their reasoning, then have a spokesperson from each corner present their argument to the class.

Socratic Seminar

Students sit in a single large circle and engage in a continuous, open discussion driven entirely by peer-to-peer questioning. Students build on each other's ideas and cite examples from the film without direct teacher intervention.

Supplies Needed: *Circle seating arrangement, printed text excerpts or discussion questions.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Arrange all chairs in a single large circle.
2. Provide a central question based on the film clip or reading.
3. Students lead the conversation entirely independently, raising hands to speak, building on peers' ideas, and citing evidence from the film without teacher intervention.
4. The teacher acts strictly as a timekeeper and recorder of participation.

Line Communication (The Consensus Continuum)

Students physically stand along a tape line on the classroom floor to show where their opinion falls between "100% Agree" and "100% Disagree." The teacher then prompts students standing at different points along the line to explain their stances.

Supplies Needed: *Masking tape line on the classroom floor labeled "100% Agree" on one end and "100% Disagree" on the other.*

Step-by-Step Guide:

1. Lay down a tape line across the room.
2. Read a policy or scenario prompt.
3. Ask students to physically stand along the continuum based on where their stance falls between the two extremes.
4. Ask students standing next to each other why they picked their specific spots, and invite students at opposite ends to debate their stances.