Created by the Somerville Educators' Union

Educators and Artificial Intelligence

A definition of terms, explorations of dangers, naming our rights, and finding opportunities

What is AI?

"AI refers to computer systems that are designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. These include recognizing speech, processing language, analyzing data, detecting patterns, making predictions, generating new content—and increasingly, taking action based on that information."
DESE, Massachusetts Guidance for Artificial Intelligence in K-12 Education

Kinds of AI:

Predictive: Analyzes data to forecast likely outcomes or make recommendations.
Generative: Produces new content based on patterns in large data sets. These tools respond to user prompts with outputs like essays, code, summaries, feedback, images, videos, or music.
Agentic: Makes decisions, takes steps toward a goal, and adapts based on new information.

Potential Dangers

Increasing student reliance on screens and avenues to avoid critical thinking
Losing union work leading to elimination of jobs
Making some work faster leading to increased workloads/caseloads
Taking/leaking student/educator private information
Stealing educators' intellectual property/autonomy
Allowing for mass surveillance in coordination with state and federal authorities
Eroding professional character of teaching
Leading to algorithmic discrimination
Increasing reliance on standardization/data rather than student relationships and educator's assessments, including educator evaluations
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What rights do we have as a union?

1. MGL 150e says the SEU is the sole bargaining agent for all mandatory subjects of bargaining including terms, conditions, hours, compensation, etc. (we would assert AI is a MANDATORY subject as opposed to a School Committee right)
2. We proved in our last contract we have the power to bargain over permissive subjects, like student learning conditions
3. Legal and legislative advocacy through our union (MTA/NEA)

What opportunities does this present?

1. We have been struggling for years with the impacts of screen time, the covid pandemic, and technologies which have hurt student social and critical thinking skills
2. Setting an example across the commonwealth to pause to assess the impacts
3. Setting an example across the commonwealth to protect educators and students

4. Thoughtfulness around the implicit bias around AI
5. Environmental impact of AI (info request)

What are our demands?

1. Immediate pause on all use of generative & agentic AI technologies until we have agreed upon contract language and student policies around AI
2. Contract language protecting educator autonomy, work, data and student experience/data
3. A stringent policy which involves all stakeholders for selecting what technologies are used (after they have passed the rigorous tests)

What are our next steps?

1. Vote to endorse & host membership meeting
2. Send information request to the SC, moratorium, and demand to bargain
3. Review draft policy we shared with the city and school committee
4. Review draft bargaining proposal
5. Sit down to bargain with the district, sharing information with membership

Who is willing to help facilitate a section of the membership meeting?