

Artificial Intelligence and Civic Learning

As Congress grapples with the federal government's policies towards artificial intelligence (AI), we must invest in teachers' capacity to develop students' media literacy skills across the curriculum.

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The Problem

While our students may be digital natives, they lack basic information literacy skills, including evaluating the credibility of information consumed online and understanding how digital forums and communications can be manipulated to undermine democracy and sow divisions. This is especially true for contentious topics of social and political importance.

The Solution

Congress must increase federal investments in K-12 civic education with a specific focus on cultivating students' information literacy skills in order to navigate the challenges posed by the proliferation of AI and evaluate the quality of online information. Specifically, teachers need high-quality instructional materials aligned with course content and professional development on classroom implementation.

→ The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Technology Spring 2023 report titled "[Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) and the Future of Teaching and Learning](#)" rightfully recommends that teachers be central to AI adoption and integration. Moreover, its emphasis on professional development is critical for both pre-service teachers, where technology is often siloed into a single course, and to in-service teachers trained for a world preceding the advent of AI.

→ The Digital Education Project at Stanford University evaluated the effectiveness of an information literacy curriculum implemented in middle and high school classrooms. [Across multiple studies](#), students learned to be more discerning consumers of online information sources, using lateral reading skills to determine the credibility of sources and the quality of information they provide by consulting other credible sources simultaneously.

→ Increased federal funding for K-12 civic education is essential to scaling promising information literacy practices, including:

- the design of and open access to high-quality instructional materials;
- continuous teacher professional development opportunities to facilitate classroom implementation;
- integration of information literacy pedagogy and practice into pre-service teaching programs at the collegiate level; and
- continued research on effective classroom interventions as AI and other information technologies evolve at exponential rates.

The proliferation of AI presents both benefits and threats to K-12 education and our constitutional democracy. Targeted federal investments in developing students' information literacy skills will enhance the benefits of AI and mitigate its risks, building competencies of evaluating social and political information endemic to the strength and sustenance of this grand experiment in self governance.

