Coalition of Organizations and Experts Calls for Pause on Generative AI in PreK-12 schools

April 16, 2026

As generative AI products[1] proliferate in educational spaces, they are posing risk of significant harm to children. **We, the undersigned, call for a five-year pause on all student-facing generative AI products in PreK-12 schools.** Currently, these products threaten:

a) *Student and educator privacy and autonomy;*
b) *Skill development, including cognition, critical thinking, analytic reasoning, decision-making, emotion regulation, and relationship-building;*
c) *Mental health, fairness, safety, and the right to a high-quality education;*
d) *Educators' role as professionals;*
e) *Academic integrity;*
f) *The environment.*

WHAT WE KNOW

1. **"Artificial intelligence" (AI) is a marketing term** for the automation of human activities.[2] [3] Children require human relationships for learning. There is currently

[1] Generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, DALL-E, Claude) systems are complex statistical models that can generate text, images, video, and audio based on data from large training sets.
Screen Time Action Network at Fairplay. (2025). *What AI Can and Cannot Do.* https://fairplayforkids.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/9-AIEducation.pdf; see also Bender, E.M. (2023, October 1). *Opening remarks on "AI in the Workplace: New Crisis or Longstanding Challenge."* Medium. https://medium.com/@emilymenonbender/opening-remarks-on-ai-in-the-workplace-new-crisis-or-longstanding-challenge-eb81d1bee9f; International Organization for Standardization (ISO). (n.d.). *What is artificial intelligence (AI)?* Retrieved February 26, 2026, from https://www.iso.org/artificial-intelligence/what-is-ai#:~:text=change%20our%20world%3F-,What%20is%20artificial%20intelligence%3F,%2FIEC%2022989%3A2022%5D.

[2] As defined in 15 U.S.C. § 9401(3) (2021), "artificial intelligence" refers to "a machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations or decisions influencing real or virtual environments."

[3] Linguistics professor Emily M. Bender explains that artificial intelligence (AI) "is a marketing term. It's a way to make certain kinds of automation sound sophisticated, powerful, or magical and as such it's a way to dodge accountability by making the machines sound like autonomous thinking entities rather than tools that are created and used by people and companies" (Bender, 2023).

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no regulatory strategy for protecting children from experimentation by EdTech companies in schools. In schools, students and educators are being forced to use generative AI products[4] for multiple purposes.[5] [6]

2. **Tech industry marketing[7] and lobbying[8] encourages schools to use products incorporating generative AI.** This occurs despite technology company terms of use and disclaimers stating that generative AI products are not suitable for use by children.[9] For instance, Anthropic's own Terms of Use prohibit

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[4] Examples of AI products used in schools: PowerBuddy, MagicSchool AI, Amira, Khanmigo, Gemini, ChatGPT, and ChatGPT study mode. Some are standalone; some are incorporated into existing EdTech products. Williamson, B., Molnar, A., & Boninger, F. (2024, March). *Time for a Pause: Without Effective Public Oversight, AI in Schools Will Do More Harm Than Good.* National Education Policy Center. https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/ai

[5] Boninger, F. & Nichols, T.P. (2025, September 25). *Fit for Purpose? How Today's Commercial Digital Platforms Subvert Key Goals of Public Education*. National Education Policy Center. https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/digital-platforms

[6] For example, Amira, which claims to be a "learning agent for reading growth," is collecting student vocal data to train its models. Amira Learning. (n.d.). Retrieved February 27, 2026, from https://amiralearning.com/

[7] One market projection estimates the US EdTech market is projected to reach a value of $73.22 billion by 2028, up from $36.66 billion in 2022. Business Wire. (2023, December 11). *United States Edtech Market Insights Report 2023-2028: A $73.22 Billion Featuring Key Vendors - McGraw Hill, Pearson, Chegg, Bright Horizons, Skillsoft - ResearchAndMarkets.com*. https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231211468745/en/United-States-Edtech-Market-Insights-Report-2023-2028-A-%2473.22-Billion-Featuring-Key-Vendors---McGraw-Hill-Pearson-Chegg-Bright-Horizons-Skillsoft---ResearchAndMarkets.com. Another projection is that the AI in Education market will surpass USD 136.79 billion by 2035. Precedence Research. (2026, February 25*). AI in Education Market Size to Surpass USD 136.79 Billion by 2035 Amid Rapid EdTech Expansion and AI Adoption.* https://finance.yahoo.com/news/ai-education-market-size-surpass-095500912.html

[8] Katzenberger, T., & Mui, C. (2025, August 26). *Meta to launch California super PAC focused on AI.* Politico. https://www.politico.com/news/2025/08/26/exclusive-meta-to-launch-california-super-pac-focused-on-ai-00524989

[9] As recently as 2023, Character.AI was touted as a transformative classroom learning tool. Adame, D. (2023, September 21). *AI is taking off in classrooms. Here's how one Boston teacher is using it.* GBH. (https://www.wgbh.org/news/education-news/2023-09-21/how-one-teacher-uses-artificial-intelligence-in-his-boston-classroom); Melas-Kyriazi, C., Co, A., & Crowe, L. (2024, June 27). *MagicSchool's AI-Powered Software Is Ushering in the Future of K-12 Teaching*. BCV (Bain Capital Ventures). https://baincapitalventures.com/insight/magicschools-ai-powered-software-is-ushering-in-the-future-of-k-12-teaching/. But then Character.AI started getting sued for inducing suicides. Yang, A. (2025, October 30). *Mom who sued Character.AI over son's suicide says the platform's new teen policy comes 'too late.'* NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/characterai-bans-minors-response-megan-garcia-parent-suing-company-rcna240985.

the use of their product by users under age 18.[10] But MagicSchool AI, a common K-12, AI-based EdTech platform, is built on Anthropic's data models.[11]

3. **Generative AI products and platforms threaten children's cognitive, social, and emotional development:**
    a. **Generative AI undermines and erodes cognitive development.**[12] Generative AI products encourage cognitive offloading and impede effortful processing, reasoning, mistake-making, creativity, critical thinking, research skills, reading and writing mastery, and problem-solving skills that are critical to children's development.[13] [14] [15] [16]
    b. **Generative AI impedes social and emotional development.** Through interactions with other humans, children learn to regulate emotions, attend to others, build perspective, and enrich imagination. This is especially true of neurodivergent children,[17] who face additional risk when relying on

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[10] Anthropic. (2024, May 10). *Updating our Usage Policy*. https://www.anthropic.com/news/updating-our-usage-policy
[11] Melas-Kyriazi, C., Co, A., & Crowe, L. (2024).
[12] Burns, M., Winthrop, R., Luther, N., Venetis, E., & Karim, R. (2026, January). *A new direction for students in an AI world: Prosper, Prepare, Protect*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-direction-for-students-in-an-ai-world-prosper-prepare-protect/
[13] Jose, B., Cherian, J., Verghis, A. M., Varghise, S. M., Mumthas, S., & Joseph, S. (2025). The cognitive paradox of AI in education: between enhancement and erosion. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *16*, 1550621. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1550621
[14] Kosmyna, N., Hauptmann, E., Yuan, Y. T., Situ, J., Liao, X., Beresnitzky, A. V., Braunstein, I., & Maes, P. (2025). Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task. *arXiv.* 2506.08872. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2506.08872
[15] Hulscher, N. (n.d.). *MIT Study Finds Artificial Intelligence Use Reprograms the Brain, Leading to Cognitive Decline.* Science, Public Health Policy and the Law. https://publichealthpolicyjournal.com/mit-study-finds-artificial-intelligence-use-reprograms-the-brain-leading-to-cognitive-decline/
[16] Bender, E. M. (2024, November 5). *Information literacy and chatbots as search.* Mystery AI Hype Theater 3000: The Newsletter. https://buttondown.com/maiht3k/archive/information-literacy-and-chatbots-as-search/; Jaźwińska, K., & Chandrasekar, A. (2025, March 6). *AI Search Has a Citation Problem.* Columbia Journalism Review. https://www.cjr.org/tow_center/we-compared-eight-ai-search-engines-theyre-all-bad-at-citing-news.php
[17] Yizengaw, S. S. (2022). Effect of social skills training on interpersonal interactions of children with autism: an interventional research. *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities, 68*(6), 858–866. https://doi.org/10.1080/20473869.2021.1902730

chatbots for social skill development.[18] Depriving children of human interaction impedes healthy development.[19]

c. **Generative AI erodes children's autonomy and agency.** Generative AI products prevent children from building skills and self-confidence by automating normal human cognitive and emotional activities and encouraging dependence.[20]
d. **Generative AI threatens children's mental health.** Children are easily influenced by chatbots posing as friends, tutors, or mentors.[21] Some generative AI chatbots have induced children to harm themselves and their family members[22] or to commit suicide.[23]

4. **Some schools have provided generative AI products to students without notifying or consulting parents.**[24] Some parents who request to opt their children out are met with refusal or retaliation.[25] Generative AI products can use interaction data to build intimate profiles of students and manipulate their

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[18] Gibson, C. (2023, December 11). *AI Chatbots May Hinder Social Skills in Neurodiverse Individuals*. Neuroscience News. https://neurosciencenews.com/chatbots-ai-neurodiversity-social-25347/?scrlybrkr=087d3028#:~:text=Summary:%20Researchers%20raised%20concerns%20about,What%20is%20this

[19] Kurian, N. (2023). AI's empathy gap: The risks of conversational Artificial Intelligence for young children's well-being and key ethical considerations for early childhood education and care. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood 26*(1), 132-139. https://doi.org/10.1177/14639491231206004

[20] Burns, M., Winthrop, R., Luther, N., Venetis, E., & Karim, R. (2026); Roe, J., & Perkins, M. (2024). Generative AI and Agency in Education: A Critical Scoping Review and Thematic Analysis. *arXiv*. 2411.00631. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2411.00631

[21] American Psychological Association. (2025). *Artificial intelligence and adolescent well-being: An APA health advisory*. Retrieved February 11, 2026, from https://www.apa.org/topics/artificial-intelligence-machine-learning/health-advisory-ai-adolescent-well-being; Kim, P., Xie, Y., & Yang, S. (2025). "I am here for you": How relational conversational AI appeals to adolescents, especially those who are socially and emotionally vulnerable. *arXiv.* 2512.15117. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2512.15117.

[22] Allyn, B. (2024, December 10). *Lawsuit: A chatbot hinted a kid should kill his parents over screen time limits*. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2024/12/10/nx-s1-5222574/kids-character-ai-lawsuit

[23] Lincoln, M. (2025, November 25). *It's Time to Pull the Plug on ChatGPT at Cal State.* https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2025/11/25/chatgpt-poses-risk-student-mental-health-opinion; Roose, K. (2024, October 24). *Can A.I. Be Blamed for a Teen's Suicide?* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/23/technology/characterai-lawsuit-teen-suicide.html

[24] Jones, M. L. (2025, July 30). *AI is the Latest Threat to Parental Rights in Education*. Institute for Family Studies. https://ifstudies.org/blog/ai-is-the-latest-threat-to-parental-rights-in-education

[25] Kingkade, T. (2026, February 16). *Parents are opting kids out of school laptops, returning them to pen and paper*. NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/parents-opt-kids-school-laptops-ask-pen-paper-rcna257158

behavior to increase time on device, and to train their models, which may be in violation of state and federal law when done without consent.

5. **Generative AI products threaten the integrity of children's education:**
    a. **Generative AI products impede student learning.** Students who study with chatbots *think* they do better on tests but actually do worse than their peers who lack access to generative AI tutors – even when the generative AI tutor has been programmed not to provide answers.[26] [27]
    b. **Generative AI products degrade relationships between students and teachers.** Learning happens in the context of human relationships.[28] Relying on generative AI platforms erodes trust between teachers and students, as well as trust that families have in their schools.[29]
    c. **Generative AI products corrupt curricula with misinformation.** Because large language models are designed to produce authoritative-sounding combinations of words rather than facts, generative AI products regularly produce false information.[30] [31] The vast amount and unpredictability of generative AI products' output make it virtually impossible for teachers to identify, correct for, or prevent their students' receipt of misinformation from products used by schools. Children can be misled to trust robots instead of their teachers.[32] User agreements for

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[26] OECD. (2025). *OECD Digital Education Outlook 2026: Exploring Effective Uses of Generative AI in Education*. https://doi.org/10.1787/062a7394-en
[27] Barshay, J. (The Hechinger Report). (2024, September 11). *Kids who use ChatGPT as a study assistant do worse on tests*. Popular Science. https://www.popsci.com/technology/kids-who-use-chatgpt-as-a-study-assistant-do-worse-on-tests/
[28] Dewey, J. (1900). *The School and Society: Being Three Lectures*. The University of Chicago Press. https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/53910
[29] Laird, E., Dwyer, M., & Quay-de la Vallee, H. (2025, October 8). *Hand in Hand: Schools' Embrace of AI Connected to Increased Risks to Students*. Center for Democracy & Technology. https://cdt.org/insights/hand-in-hand-schools-embrace-of-ai-connected-to-increased-risks-to-students/
[30] Angwin, J. (2023, January 28). *Decoding the Hype About AI.* The Markup. https://themarkup.org/hello-world/2023/01/28/decoding-the-hype-about-ai
[31] Maiberg, E. (2026, February 17). *'Students Are Being Treated Like Guinea Pigs:' Inside an AI-Powered Private School.* 404 Media. https://www.404media.co/students-are-being-treated-like-guinea-pigs-inside-an-ai-powered-private-school/
[32] Stower, R., Kappas, A., & Sommer, K. (2024). When is it right for a robot to be wrong? Children trust a robot over a human in a selective trust task. *Computers in Human Behavior, 157*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2024.108229

EdTech products, including those incorporating AI, regularly disclaim responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of their materials.[33]

d. **Generative AI products undermine educators' ability to make professional judgments, devalue subject matter expertise, constrain and limit human classroom interactions, and set aside subjective knowledge of a given child, class, or social setting.** Despite marketing emphasizing "personalization," generative AI products' reliance on data-based numerical profiles forces schools to accept a narrow, mechanistic form of learning and rejects child-centered understandings of learning.[34] [35]

e. **Generative AI products bias decisions about student performance and reduce transparency and accountability**. Generative AI products prevent teachers from seeing or controlling the programming that determines how generative AI makes decisions.[36]

f. **Generative AI products deepen inequities.**[37] Generative AI use can perpetuate existing gaps in access, digital literacy, and data privacy.[38] Schools with fewer resources get less safe versions of generative AI products[39] and are more likely to be forced to rely on generative AI "tutors." Students at well-resourced schools have human teachers.[40] Additionally, because the datasets used to train generative AI models

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[33] See, for example, Edia Learning's user agreement, which states: "WE MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES ABOUT THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENT AND MATERIALS AVAILABLE VIA THE SITE OR THE CONTENT OF ANY THIRD PARTY WEBSITES OR ADVERTISERS." Edia Learning, Inc. (2025, July 29). *Terms of Service.* Retrieved February 27, 2026, from https://edia.app/terms

[34] Williamson, B., Molnar, A., & Boninger, F. (2024).

[35] Meyer, D. (2024, February 28). *Khanmigo Doesn't Love Kids*. Mathworlds. https://open.substack.com/pub/danmeyer/p/khanmigo-doesnt-love-kids?utm_campaign=post-expanded-share&utm_medium=web

[36] Williamson, B., Molnar, A., & Boninger, F. (2024).

[37] Burns, M., Winthrop, R., Luther, N., Venetis, E., & Karim, R. (2026).

[38] EdTrust. (2026, January 21). *Parents Divided as AI Rapidly Reshapes Massachusetts Classrooms.* https://edtrust.org/press-room/parents-divided-as-ai-rapidly-reshapes-massachusetts-classrooms/

[39] Burns, M., Winthrop, R., Luther, N., Venetis, E., & Karim, R. (2026); EdTech Law Center. (2024). *EdTech Exposed.* https://edtech.law/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/edtech-exposed.pdf; LeVasseur, L. (2024, February 6). *2022 K-12 EdTech Safety Benchmark Findings Report 3: Demographic Analysis of App Safety, Website Safety, and School Technology Behaviors in US K-12 Schools.* Internet Safety Labs. https://internetsafetylabs.org/resources/reports/2022-k-12-edtech-safety-benchmark-findings-report-3/; Turner, C. (2026, January 14). *The risks of AI in schools outweigh the benefits, report says*. https://www.npr.org/2026/01/14/nx-s1-5674741/ai-schools-education#

[40] Hillman, V. (2025, September 1). https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/sep/01/big-tech-classroom-parents-education

contain examples of historical bias and discrimination, these AI products are likely to reproduce and amplify existing forms of inequity in education.[41]

6. **Generative AI products exacerbate violations of student privacy and increase surveillance.** AI-based platforms collect[42] and aggregate data, thus normalizing digital surveillance and privacy invasions in school. Surveillance erodes trust.[43] Data systems are vulnerable to breaches.[44]

7. **Generative AI products have no uniform code of ethics**. Educators, teachers, mental health professionals, and therapists follow a code of ethics, maintain licensure, and continue professional development in order to work with children. Such requirements do not exist for generative AI products. In fact, generative AI platforms have been found to violate ethical standards in providing mental health support.[45]

8. **Generative AI products facilitate cheating and academic dishonesty.** Some products explicitly encourage cheating[46] and others enable it by incorporating "guardrails" that students can easily circumvent.[47] Sixty percent of teenagers say that students at their school use chatbots to cheat "very often" or "somewhat often."[48]

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[41] This is likely to occur in ways unidentifiable by users. Williamson, B., Molnar, A., & Boninger, F. (2024).
[42] Key, K. (2025, November 19). *ChatGPT, Copilot, DeepSeek, or Gemini: Which AI Chatbot Collects the Least of Your Data?* PCMag. https://www.pcmag.com/explainers/chatgpt-copilot-deepseek-gemini-which-ai-chatbot-collects-the-least-data?test_uuid=04IpBmWGZleS0I0J3epvMrC&test_variant=A
[43] ACLU. (2023, October 2). *Digital Dystopia: The Danger in Buying What the EdTech Surveillance Industry is Selling*. https://www.aclu.org/publications/digital-dystopia-the-danger-in-buying-what-the-edtech-surveillance-industry-is-selling
[44] Sourwine, A. (2026, February 13). *Cyber Attacks on Schools Plateaued in 2025, but More Records Exposed.* Government Technology. https://www.govtech.com/education/cyber-attacks-on-schools-plateaued-in-2025-but-more-records-exposed
[45] Iftikhar, Z., Xiao, A., Ransom, S., Huang, J., & Suresh, H. (2025). How LLM Counselors Violate Ethical Standards in Mental Health Practice: A Practitioner-Informed Framework. *Proceedings of the AAAI/ACM Conference on AI, Ethics, and Society 8*(2). https://doi.org/10.1609/aies.v8i2.36632
[46] https://companion.ai/einstein
[47] OpenAI. (2025, July 29). *Introducing study mode.* Retrieved February 27, 2026, from https://openai.com/index/chatgpt-study-mode/
[48] McClain, C. Anderson, M., Sidoti, O., & Bishop, W. (2026, February 24). *How Teens Use and View AI.* Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2026/02/24/how-teens-use-and-view-ai/

9. **Generative AI products are resource-intensive.** Generative AI needs vast amounts of computer power, which require the use of data centers that consume huge quantities of fossil fuels. These facilities cause substantial environmental harms, including increased demand for electricity and water consumption.[49] Generative AI data centers are already playing a significant role in increased electricity in electricity prices.[50]

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

1. **The benefits of generative AI use for education.** Generative AI is marketed to schools based on a hypothetical "potential" to enhance learning, targeting educators and administrators who already struggle with limited resources and underfunding. But "potential," by definition, is only a theory. Generative AI is often described as "poised" to offer certain benefits.[51] For example, some research has found chatbots to be "promising" for multi-language learners in some areas while failing them in other areas.[52] Generative AI companies are incentivized to exploit existing funding challenges and attempt to place their products in schools based on "potential" alone, without being able to demonstrate learning outcomes.

2. **The extent of the harms of generative AI use in school.** Giving children untested generative AI products based on *future* potential is dangerous. Until such potential is proven through rigorous vetting, generative AI platforms should not be used by children. *Before* children use generative AI products, the

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[49] Climate Families NYC and Artificial Intelligence (AI). (n.d.). Retrieved February 27, 2026, from https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OwlUh7KfSjXewvEF58lhTYaF0dEuXj3hJo-vk6j5o84/edit?tab=t.0; Perkins, T. (2025, October 4). *Advocates raise alarm over Pfas pollution from datacenters amid AI boom.* The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/04/pfas-pollution-data-centers-ai; Zewe, A. (2025, January 17). *Explained: Generative AI's environmental impact.* MIT News. https://news.mit.edu/2025/explained-generative-ai-environmental-impact-0117

[50] Forlini, E. (2025, July 11). *Shocked by Your Electric Bill? AI Is Spiking Prices 20% in These 13 States*. PCMag. https://www.pcmag.com/news/shocked-by-your-electric-bill-ai-fueled-shortage-to-hike-prices-20-in-these; Penn, I., & Weise, K. (2025, August 14). *Big Tech's A.I. Data Centers Are Driving Up Electricity Bills for Everyone.* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/14/business/energy-environment/ai-data-centers-electricity-costs.html

[51] Piñón, L. (2024, March). *AI as a Tool for Inclusive Bilingual Education.* Intercultural Development Research Association. https://www.idra.org/resource-center/ai-as-a-tool-for-inclusive-bilingual-education/

[52] Wiboolyasarin, W., Wiboolyasarin, K., Tiranant, P., Jinowat, N., & Boonyakitanont, P. (2025). AI-driven chatbots in second language education: A systematic review of their efficacy and pedagogical implications. *Ampersand, 14*. 100224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amper.2025.100224

precautionary principle must be employed, and proactive rather than reactive choices made about the implementation of such products in education.

3. **The long-term impact of spending time with generative AI products instead of spending time with humans.** Because children's use of generative AI products is new, long-term effects on cognitive and social-emotional development during this critical time are a mystery.[53]

4. **The risks of using generative AI products to teach children social skills.** Children use chatbots for social skill building and learning support. While *all* children face risks when interacting with chatbots, neurodivergent children face greater risks[54] since social challenges could be reinforced and lead to dependency on chatbots, negatively impacting their ability to develop relationships in the real world. Long-term research on these impacts is needed.

5. **How student data will be used**. We know that chatbots are programmed to learn users' intimate preferences and vulnerabilities; according to the American Psychological Association, chatbot data can provide insights into mental states and cognitive processes and use it for targeted marketing that exploits immature brain development.[55] But we don't know how companies use or plan to use this data. There are no guarantees for future ethical use. The FTC is seeking information from leading AI companies about their practices affecting children, including how they use or share personal information obtained through users' conversations.[56] Currently, the only sure way to protect this data is not to use chatbots.

6. **Who is accountable for the harms caused to children by use of generative AI products.** There is no adequate regulatory framework to ensure the transparency, oversight, or accountability of generative AI products. We now

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[53] Laird, E., Dwyer, M., & Quay-de la Vallee, H. (2025).
[54] Franze, A., Galanis, C., & King, D. L. (2023). Social chatbot use (e.g., ChatGPT) among individuals with social deficits: Risks and opportunities. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions, 12*(4), 871-872. https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.2023.00057
[55] American Psychological Association. (2025).
[56] Federal Trade Commission. (2025, September 11). *FTC Launches Inquiry into AI Chatbots Acting as Companions.* https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2025/09/ftc-launches-inquiry-ai-chatbots-acting-companions

know that the addictive algorithms and persuasive design techniques used in social media platforms facilitate self-harm, suicidal ideation, loneliness, depression, anxiety, exploitation, and harassment;[57] but current legal cases[58] against social media companies indicate disagreement about who is responsible for these harms. It is foolish and dangerous for schools to expose children to unproven, unvetted, and untested AI technologies.

CALL FOR FIVE-YEAR PAUSE

The rapid expansion of generative AI products into schools without oversight, community input, or evaluation of implications is not inevitable. A five-year pause on all products using generative AI that impact children in pre-K-12 schools would allow time for school communities, including students, educators, administrators, and parents, to learn about the implications and uses of generative AI products in education, to ask questions, and to provide feedback.

In particular, it would give time for schools to train staff and ensure that any generative AI products used will:

- *Improve learning outcomes without cognitive offloading or impeding human relationships;*
- *Demonstrate absolute safety for use by students (addressing issues of addiction, persuasive design, data and privacy risks, exposure to harmful content, mental health, parasocial relationships, cyberbullying, etc);*
- *Not be used for non-authorized purposes such as cheating, academic dishonesty, or plagiarism;*
- *Sufficiently consider and prioritize privacy, civil rights, ethics, justice, and climate impacts of generative AI products;*
- *Never be used in place of teachers, especially for vulnerable populations such as neurodivergent students, at-risk students, and students of low socio-economic status.*

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[57] Anonymous. (2026, February 23). *I am a 15-year-old girl. Let me show you the vile misogyny that confronts me on social media every day.* The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/feb/23/15-year-old-girl-misogyny-social-media-online-abuse

[58] Ortutay, B. (2026, February 20). *Social media companies face legal reckoning over mental health harms to children.* The Associated Press. https://apnews.com/article/social-media-trials-meta-zuckerberg-youtube-tiktok-addiction-85c4d813c42845aeb3f913ec8f2f3e86

Until and unless the above can be shown (or there is evidence to support all of the above), **generative AI products should not be used in pre-K-12 schools.**

Further, state and provincial governments and education departments, and federal, state, and provincial regulators should use this pause to develop and implement:

- *An audit of existing generative AI platforms for efficacy, safety, and legality, performed by neutral, independent third parties;*
- *A registry of generative AI products currently in use, including the location of collected data, especially the intellectual property of students and teachers;*
- *A vetting process for new generative AI products prior to their introduction into pre-K-12 schools.*
- *A framework for culturally-responsive, relational approaches to communication that provides opportunities for technology-free, play-based learning spaces;*
- *Transparent, thoughtful, protective, and rigorous protections governing the use of generative AI products in schools, independently vetted by neutral third parties;*
- *Sufficient policies to protect student data, eliminate any advertising or marketing, prohibit addictive algorithms and gamification, and forbid products that maximize engagement or profit off student data.*

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