

The Future of AI in K-12 and Higher Education Opportunities, Risks, and Strategic Planning for Arkansas

Employment

- Employment rates might be falling, but trends are similar to when computers began being used in workplaces (1989-1993). COMPUTER USE AND THE U.S. WAGE DISTRIBUTION, 1984-2003, Valletta R, 2006
- AI is a tool just like a computer. If used well, it can open another golden age for the US, like the 1990s and early 2000s. What Went Right in the 1990s? Sources of American and Prospects for World Economic Growth, DeLong, 2000.

Why This Matters for Arkansas

- Arkansas is positioning itself as a technology hub.
 - Major Investments (AVIVO, Google, XAI) in AI-ready data infrastructure
 - Growth of specialized jobs and increasing demand for AI-literate graduates
- This creates an important window for strategic planning in education to ensure students and educators are prepared for AI-driven industries.

Educators Perspectives on AI

- 9 School Districts (Little Rock, Springdale, Jonesboro, Fort Smith, Fayetteville, Hot Springs, Texarkana, El Dorado, Stuttgart), thanks to ADHE
- Educators recognize that AI tools can support lesson planning, assist grading, and enhance learning when used responsibly
- Educators express concerns about over-reliance on AI reducing critical thinking, Academic Integrity, and students relying on tools without understanding them
- Ethical issues are potential biases in AI systems, unequal access to AI tools, and privacy risks involving student data
- Educators strongly support district-level AI management frameworks, oversight of AI tools used in classrooms, and monitoring of data used by AI systems
- Educators emphasize the need for training programs for both teachers and students on responsible AI use, institutional support and guidance, and access to approved tools

Current Implementation

- Institutions have already begun integrating AI into education
 - AI-powered learning tools such as chatbots, exam generators, etc (UCA), and field-used AI applications used in sciences and business (University of Ozarks)
- The development of AI libraries and standardized syllabi to use these tools is essential

The Next Five Years

- AI may function as a personal assistant for nearly every professional
- Individuals will operate like a “one-person team,” supported by AI systems
- This transformation makes education in agency, judgement, and leadership important

Change in the Role of Education

- Education should now focus on Agency, morality, character, integrity, and critical thinking

Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face.

- Ronald Reagan

AI is not simply a technological shift, but a leadership challenge for education systems. Successful institutions will implement AI responsibly, train educators effectively, establish governance frameworks, and prepare students to lead AI rather than be led by it.