



Entrepreneurship Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence How AI Literacy, Entrepreneurial Learning, and Human Skills Can Prepare Students for the Future of Work



Generative artificial intelligence is transforming education at an exponential rate, but schools are struggling to integrate practices that scaffold such rapid changes. According to a 2025 College Board research brief, the percentage of students using generative AI for schoolwork increased from 79% to 84% in just five months, highlighting both the speed of adoption and the urgency of educational response.¹

As AI systems become more integrated into daily life, education systems must move beyond debates centered solely on academic integrity and instead focus on preparing students to work alongside intelligent technologies in an increasingly AI-enabled economy. This requires more than technical AI literacy. Students must also develop creativity, critical thinking, adaptability, problem-solving, communication, and entrepreneurial thinking in order to navigate a rapidly changing workforce.

For organizations like the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), entrepreneurship education provides a powerful framework for helping students become active creators rather than passive consumers of AI technologies. Entrepreneurship education teaches students how to identify opportunities, solve problems, evaluate information, communicate ideas, and make decisions amid uncertainty. These capabilities are becoming increasingly important as AI automates routine tasks and changes how work is performed across industries. By combining AI literacy with entrepreneurial learning, students develop both the technical fluency and the durable human skills needed to leverage AI effectively, think critically about its outputs, and navigate a rapidly evolving workforce.



NFTE students participate in an EY Connect Day focused on AI in Philadelphia, 2026.

¹ College Board, Generative AI in Education: Spring 2025 Research Brief (New York: College Board, 2025), https://research.collegeboard.org/media/pdf/ai-research-brief-1_vf.pdf

About NFTE

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) is a global education nonprofit that empowers partners to integrate entrepreneurial education across curricula and equips youth in under-resourced communities with the skills, connections, credentials, and real-world experiences needed to lead change and own their futures. Since 1987, NFTE has reached more than a million learners worldwide.

One emerging example of this approach can be found through NFTE's Next Level Startup: Make AI Your Cofounder program, implemented in Massachusetts through Campus Without Walls. The initiative combines entrepreneurship education, AI literacy, and virtual collaborative learning to help students use AI tools critically, creatively, and entrepreneurially while expanding access to innovative learning opportunities across districts.

This brief explores how entrepreneurship education and AI literacy can work together to better prepare students for future careers and outlines policy recommendations to support effective implementation in K–12 education systems.

Entrepreneurship Education as a Framework for AI Literacy

Schools nationwide are grappling with how to integrate artificial intelligence tools into existing curriculum in ways that promote meaningful learning rather than passive consumption of technology. One model emerging in Massachusetts illustrates how AI literacy can be effectively integrated into entrepreneurship education and project-based learning. Through a partnership between Campus Without Walls and the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), students engaged with a program called Next Level Startup: Make AI Your Cofounder, which fosters entrepreneurial thinking, critical thinking skills, and AI literacy through the development of real-world business ideas.

Campus Without Walls expands access to specialized learning opportunities by enabling students across districts to participate in live, virtual courses with educators and external partners they otherwise may not have access to in their home schools or communities. It is founded in promoting access across the state of Massachusetts by providing students with the opportunity to participate in specialized courses taught by highly-qualified educators and external partners. Dr. Portia M. York and Ronald L. Walker II, both strategic leaders at Campus Without Walls, describe its design as “leveling the playing field” by connecting students with learning opportunities that are career-technical, relevant, and easily incorporated into school schedules. By leveraging virtual collaboration, the model expands access to emerging fields such as entrepreneurship and artificial intelligence while helping schools overcome geographic and resource constraints.



Ryan Kinser, NFTE Platform Operations Manager

One example of this approach was NFTE's Next Level Startup: Make AI Your Cofounder program, delivered through a partnership with Campus Without Walls. Created and facilitated by Ryan Kinser, Platform Operations Manager at NFTE and Clinical Assistant Professor of Educational Technology at Arizona State University, the program combines entrepreneurial learning with AI literacy to help students develop and pitch business ideas. Students use tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and Perplexity to conduct market research, develop customer targets, formulate app and website interfaces, and generate pitch presentations. Because the course was delivered live through Campus Without Walls, Kinser was able to teach students in Boston despite being based outside Massachusetts. Without the CWW model, those students would not have had access to a specialized course taught by an educator with Kinser's expertise in entrepreneurship, educational technology, and AI—and Kinser would not otherwise have had the opportunity to teach and learn alongside students in Boston.

The program creates an authentic, project-based learning environment where students practice critical thinking, problem-solving, and the evaluation of AI-generated information. Kinser notes that prior to the course, students “had no idea how to talk to these AI models and get output that helped them move their business idea forward.” Students often approached AI similarly to traditional search engines accepting outputs at face value rather than critically evaluating responses.

To help students use AI more intentionally, the program introduced the CLEAR framework: Context, Length, Examples, Audience, and Role. This framework guides students in crafting effective prompts while encouraging them to critically assess the quality, relevance, and accuracy of AI-generated outputs. Through this process, students learn that AI is most effective when paired with human judgement. Kinser describes this as “a conversation back and forth that improves with your prompting, rather than just a single search.”

Students need opportunities to apply their knowledge in authentic contexts that foster analytical reasoning, creativity, and problem-solving. The partnership between Campus Without Walls and NFTE illuminates how entrepreneurship education can serve as a powerful framework for AI literacy by giving students real-world opportunities to evaluate information, make decisions, test ideas, and solve meaningful problems. Rather than learning about AI in isolation, students learn how to use AI tools intentionally to advance goals, overcome challenges, and create value. As schools seek to prepare students for an increasingly AI-enabled economy, innovative learning models like this can help ensure that AI literacy is paired with the human skills and entrepreneurial mindset needed to succeed in the future of work.

Teacher Experience: From AI Tool Use to Real-World Impact

The educator experience during the implementation of this program shines a unique light on how entrepreneurial learning environments can shape the development of AI literacy. At one TechAcademy Boston, Dr. Bruce Pontbriand integrated NFTE’s Next Level Startup program into his civics and leadership class through the Campus Without Walls model. Students applied the program to strengthen their nonprofit initiative Quality Homes for Humankind, which focuses on connecting students with nontraditional career pathways through workforce partnerships and support services.

Guided by the resources within Next Level Startup, students used AI tools to strengthen grant applications, refine project plan, and develop pitches for community stakeholders. The results were remarkable: the students secured approximately \$40,000 in grant funding and sparked momentum towards broader community engagement. Dr. Pontbriand underscored how AI tools enhanced students’ ability to organize, refine, and communicate their ideas, building upon the critical thinking and foundational work they had already completed.

Teachers also observed the evolution of student interaction with AI as the course progressed. According to Dr. Pontbriand, students initially struggled to critically evaluate outputs and often accepted responses at face value. As they worked through the entrepreneurial process, however, students learned to approach AI as a tool that required human judgment rather than as a source of definitive answers. They evaluated outputs against project goals, identified inaccuracies, and refined their prompts to generate more useful results. In one example, students recognized when AI-generated content misrepresented Boston communities and corrected those inaccuracies rather than incorporating them into their work.



Dr. Pontbriand emphasized that “There's got to be a balance, that AI is a partnership. You come to AI with your work, with your prework. It is not the first stop.” Students learned that AI was most valuable when it supported their reasoning, creativity, and decision-making rather than substituting for those skills. The entrepreneurial nature of the project provided an authentic context for students to practice evaluating information, making decisions, communicating ideas, and solving real-world problems.

The Campus Without Walls model demonstrates that expanding AI education is not only about developing new curriculum; it is also about expanding who students can learn from. Through live, virtual instruction, schools can connect students with specialized educators and courses that may not otherwise be available locally. Dr. Pontbriand described the partnership as making innovative learning experiences accessible, and remarked on its ability to make AI education equitable, fast. He reflected on the success of Quality Homes for Humankind, and highlighted the importance of AI-focused entrepreneurship in allowing students to be competitive candidates for jobs and future educational endeavours. The impact of this project and the learning process for the students, supports the expansion of programs like this across academic disciplines, districts, and states. By placing students in active learning environments where judgment, iteration, communication, and problem-solving remain central, programs like Next Level Startup help ensure that AI enhances learning rather than replaces it. As education systems consider how best to prepare students for an AI-enabled future, they must focus not only on teaching students how to use AI tools, but also on developing the human skills that enable them to use those tools effectively and responsibly.

Policy Recommendations

Standardize AI Literacy Frameworks

There is an abundance of emerging legislation regulating the use of AI in classrooms, but much less regarding how to teach the use of AI effectively. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into education and the workforce, states should move beyond policies focused solely on access and academic integrity and develop guidance that supports meaningful AI literacy instruction. Virginia and California legislatures have both built out comprehensive guides for the integration of artificial intelligence into K-12 education. California's Department of Education released Guidance for the Safe and Effective Use of Artificial Intelligence in California Public Schools emphasizing the goal of "learning about AI to learn with AI."² The guide outlines cross-disciplinary instructional approaches, professional development practices, accessibility considerations, and responsible use practices. Similarly, Virginia recently passed legislation that requires the Virginia Department of Education to develop statewide guidance on AI integration and establish policies aligned with that guidance. The bill also established the AIS Innovation in Education Pilot Program which funds and evaluates AIS (Artificial Intelligence Systems) applied in tutoring, instruction, and student engagement contexts.³

As states develop AI literacy initiatives, frameworks should extend beyond technical competencies to include critical thinking, communication, ethical decision-making, creativity, and entrepreneurial problem-solving. Students must learn not only how AI systems function, but also how to evaluate outputs, identify inaccuracies, exercise judgment, and apply AI tools to solve meaningful problems. Establishing comprehensive statewide frameworks can help ensure that all students develop the knowledge and skills needed to navigate an increasingly AI-enabled world.

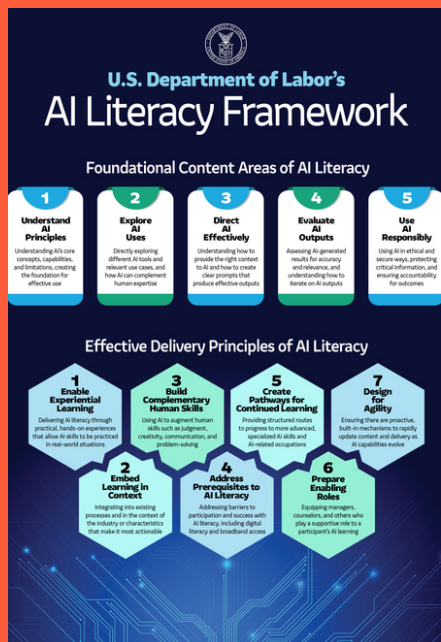


2025 NFTE National Champions, Adrian Bautista and Evan Perez present their AI powered business, Color Your Life, a personalized coloring book that uses AI to turn memories into hands-on experiences that reduce screen time. 2025

2 California Department of Education, Artificial Intelligence in California: Learning with AI, Learning About AI (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, September 2023), <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/pl/documents/aiguide.pdf>

3 Commonwealth of Virginia, Office of the Secretary of Education, Guidelines for AI Integration Throughout Education in the Commonwealth of Virginia: Guidelines to Support the Responsible & Effective Implementation of AI Across Education in Virginia (Richmond, VA: Office of the Secretary of Education, 2024), <https://www.education.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/secretary-of-education/pdf/AI-Education-Guidelines.pdf>

Expand Entrepreneurial and Experimental AI Learning



Department of Labor 2025 AI Literacy Framework, [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEN/2025/TEN%2006-25/Attachment%20I%20\(Accessible%20PDF\).pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/advisories/TEN/2025/TEN%2006-25/Attachment%20I%20(Accessible%20PDF).pdf)

AI literacy is most effective when students apply AI tools within authentic learning experiences rather than studying them in isolation. Experiential and entrepreneurial learning environments provide students with opportunities to practice problem-solving, decision-making, collaboration, and innovation while learning how to use AI responsibly.

Several states are beginning to adopt this approach. The Alabama Department of Education recently partnered with the Alabama School of Cyber Technology and Engineering to implement an AI literacy curriculum during the 2026-2027 school year.⁴ The initiative aims to prepare students for AI-related career pathways while supporting educators in delivering AI instruction and helping students critically evaluate AI-generated content. Similarly, the Department of Labor's Artificial Intelligence Literacy Framework emphasizes the importance of integrating AI into career preparation programs, project-based learning, and workforce development initiatives. The framework encourages education systems to integrate AI tools into career training programs and project-based learning experiences, rather than standalone AI literacy programs.⁵

Programs such as NFTE's Next Level Startup: Make AI Your Cofounder demonstrate the potential of this approach. By combining entrepreneurship education with AI literacy, students learn how to leverage AI tools to conduct research, generate ideas, communicate solutions, and solve real-world problems. Policymakers should support the expansion of experiential AI learning opportunities that connect classroom learning to entrepreneurship, career exploration, and workforce readiness.

Invest in Teacher Training and Professional Development

Teachers play a critical role in helping students navigate the opportunities and challenges associated with artificial intelligence. Yet many educators are learning about AI at the same time they are being asked to integrate it into their instruction. Without adequate support, schools risk creating uneven implementation and widening gaps in student access to high-quality AI learning experiences.

Recognizing this need, Idaho recently enacted legislation requiring the State Department of Education to develop a professional development plan focused on building educator capacity for the safe and effective integration of generative AI technologies. Similar efforts are emerging nationwide as states recognize that educator readiness is foundational to successful AI implementation.⁶



4 Yellowhammer News. (2025, December 11). ASCTE is preparing Alabama students to work with AI—not be replaced by it. <https://yellowhammernews.com/ascte-is-preparing-alabama-students-to-work-with-ai-not-be-replaced-by-it/>

5 U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. (2026, February 13). U.S. Department of Labor releases AI literacy framework providing foundational content areas, delivery principles to guide nationwide efforts. <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20260213>

6 Idaho State Legislature. (2026). S1227: Education—Adds to existing law to establish provisions regarding generative artificial intelligence in public education. <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/billbookmark/?yr=2026&bn=S1227>

Professional development should extend beyond technical training on AI tools. Educators need support in designing project-based learning experiences, facilitating entrepreneurial problem-solving, teaching responsible AI use, evaluating AI-generated content, and helping students develop critical thinking skills. Ongoing professional learning communities, instructional resources, and opportunities to share best practices can further strengthen implementation efforts.

Investing in educator capacity will help ensure that AI is used not simply as a productivity tool, but as a catalyst for deeper learning, creativity, and student engagement.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is transforming how people learn, work, and solve problems. As AI technologies become increasingly embedded in daily life, education systems face a critical challenge: preparing students to use these tools effectively while ensuring that technology enhances, rather than replaces, human thinking.

The experiences of students and educators participating in NFTE's Next Level Startup: Make AI Your Cofounder program, delivered through Campus Without Walls, demonstrate that AI literacy is most impactful when combined with entrepreneurship education and authentic problem-solving experiences. Students learned not only how to use AI tools, but also how to evaluate information, exercise judgment, communicate ideas, and create solutions that address real-world challenges. The Campus Without Walls model further demonstrates how live, virtual learning can overcome geographic barriers: an educator like Ryan Kinser can teach students in Boston who otherwise would not have access to his expertise, while schools can offer emerging courses without needing to develop every area of expertise internally. As AI continues to reshape the workforce, preparing students for the future will require more than technical proficiency. Young people must develop the critical thinking, creativity, communication, adaptability, and entrepreneurial mindset needed to navigate uncertainty and create value in an increasingly AI-enabled economy. By developing comprehensive AI literacy frameworks, expanding experiential learning opportunities, and investing in educator capacity, policymakers can help ensure that students are prepared not only to work alongside AI, but to lead, innovate, and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

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