

Taylor Fox

B.A. | M.Ed. | M.A. | Doctoral Candidate

**Curriculum Strategist | Curriculum Developer | Assessment & Alignment Specialist
Education Researcher | K-12 to Higher Ed | AI in Education & Work**

San Diego, CA | (858) 472-7878 | taylor.fox@foxcurriculum.com
foxcurriculum.com | [linkedin.com/in/taylormorganfox](https://www.linkedin.com/in/taylormorganfox)



STATEMENT ON AI IN EDUCATION AND WORK

I stopped using em dashes this year. I still love them. A machine started loving them too, and that was enough.

That is a small thing to admit, and it is exactly why I am starting here. Nobody decided that human writers should give up a piece of punctuation. No product manager shipped that. It happened as a side effect, downstream of somebody's choice about how a model should sound, and it changed what I am willing to put on a page. A tool reached into how I write without anyone intending it to. If it can do that to how a person writes, it can do it to how a person thinks. That is not a forecast. It already happened to me, over a punctuation mark, in under a year.

The people building these tools are designing the cognitive conditions of the next generation, and almost none of them have that written anywhere in the product spec.

I keep talking about two settings that sound unrelated, corporate and education, and that sentence is why. They are not two markets for the same technology. They are two ends of one pipeline. Companies build the tools that general society runs on. Those tools land in classrooms, in front of minds that are still being assembled, and they shape what those minds turn out to be capable of. A decision made in a product meeting becomes a condition of learning three years later, for students who were not in the room and whose teachers were not either.

AI is arriving fast enough that this is not a problem for later. It is a problem for the onset, and we are standing in the onset right now. If we accept that AI is going to change how humans learn at a basic psychological level, and I do accept that, then the only question left worth arguing about is who is shaping it while it is still soft.

WHERE THE TOOLS GET BUILT

AI literacy has become baseline competency. Not an advanced skill, not a differentiator, not a line on a job description that signals ambition. Baseline, the way spreadsheet fluency stopped being remarkable somewhere around 1995. What organizations still call training is mostly rollout: here is the tool, here is the login, adoption is up 40%. Adoption is not capability. Nobody is measuring whether the work got better, and almost nobody is measuring what happened to the people doing it.

The part that gets missed is that adult learning and youth learning are psychologically different, and the tools should be built with that difference in mind. An adult arrives with judgment already built. She can look at a confident paragraph of output and sense that something is off, because she has spent twenty years developing the instinct that fires when something is off. A fifteen-year-old is still building that instrument. Hand both of them the same assistant and you have run two entirely different experiments, and only one of them is on a person whose capacity to evaluate the answer is still forming. A tool designed for adult productivity should not be handed to a developing mind unchanged. That happens constantly, and it happens by default rather than by decision, which is the part I would like to interrupt.

There is a smaller practice I keep defending, and I do not think it is small. I say please and thank you to AI, and I am not planning to stop. The usual objection is sound on its own terms: the thing has no feelings to hurt, and manners aimed at a machine are manners spent on nothing. That objection is measuring the wrong thing. My reasons have almost nothing to do with the AI.

Courtesy is a muscle, and you are either using it or you are not. We are all talking to systems more and to people less, and speech is a skill like any other. I do not want to spend four hours a day issuing flat commands and then walk into a meeting expecting my tone to remember how to be a person. Nobody is ruined by snapping at a chatbot once. Spending an entire workday in a low-grade snarl is a different animal.

Then there is the part nobody has settled, and I say so on purpose. We are training these systems on human interaction and we do not fully understand what that training is building. I am not the only one asking. Ribino's 2023 systematic review of 113 studies on politeness in human-machine interaction surfaced the same open question about children, and whether encouraging courtesy toward AI systems early might shape social behavior in ways nobody has measured. Every educator I know accepts that how you speak to a learner shapes what that learner becomes. I am not claiming a model is a child. I am saying we have not earned the confidence to assume the principle stops at the keyboard, and I would rather be wrong in the generous direction. Curriculum design taught me that tone is instructional whether or not you meant it to be. It is doing work in the room either way.

WHERE THE TOOLS SHAPE MINDS

Critical thinking is use it or lose it. That is the whole argument, and everything else I believe about AI in classrooms follows from it.

For most of human history, understanding something hard required sitting with it. Working it out, getting it wrong, trying again, and building the kind of reasoning that only comes from the struggle. AI has made that struggle optional. Ask, receive, move on. A mind that never has to wonder is a mind losing practice at wondering, and capacity that goes unpracticed does not hold still. It recedes.

| An AI tool built for learning has to require the thinking, not perform it.

Not permit the thinking. Not leave room for it. Require it, by design, the way a good assignment does. That is a design constraint, it is testable, and it is currently optional in almost every product on the market.

Testable is the word I want to defend. When my own students started improving on an AI-powered adaptive platform, the room wanted to celebrate. I ran a formal action research cycle instead, since a five-point gain means nothing if the platform is quietly showing them the test. I defined what would count as evidence before the intervention began, built the instruments, and tracked question overlap alongside accuracy. Accuracy moved from 70% to 75% at only 17% overlap between practice items and assessment items, which rules out memorization and leaves transfer. It worked. I did not know that until I checked, and trust me, it's good is not a methodology.

That is what shaping looks like in practice. Not a position paper. A measurement somebody bothered to take.

WHAT I AM ACTUALLY ASKING FOR

I do not think the answer is optimism or alarm. I think it is rigor, and I think rigor has an expiration date on it. The conventions being set right now, in products shipping this quarter, are going to harden into the defaults that schools inherit for a decade. Educators need new studies, new frameworks, and a real tolerance for being wrong in public as we learn what happens to a brain that grew up with an answer engine in its pocket.

I am a historian before I am anything else, and history is fairly consistent that resisting the direction a technology is moving is not the winning strategy. Technologies that reorganize how people think do not ask permission first. So I am not interested in wishing this away. I am interested in being one of the people in the room while the shape is still being decided, with evidence in hand rather than opinions.

The foundations of how education uses these tools are being set right now, by whoever shows up to set them. I would rather show up.

REFERENCES

- Ribino, P. (2023). The role of politeness in human-machine interactions: A systematic literature review and future perspectives. *Artificial Intelligence Review*, 56(1), 445-482. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10462-023-10540-1>
- Fox, T. (2026). AI-adaptive practice and skill transfer [Unpublished action research]. California Teacher Induction Program.