

Generative AI: Student Literacy Scaffolding

The Kinkaid School — PreK–12

Purpose

To help students learn safe, ethical, and human-centered use of Generative AI at age-appropriate points during their time at Kinkaid.

How to Read This Document

This document is designed to help teachers identify where AI literacy skills naturally connect to their existing curriculum. Each row represents a literacy domain—a category of skills students should develop over time. Read across any row to see how the same skill progresses from Lower School through Upper School. During the curriculum review process, teachers should look for natural touchpoints where these skills can be practiced within lessons and units they already teach.

You do not need to teach every domain. The goal is to find places where AI literacy fits organically into your subject area and grade level. Over a three-year implementation period, your department will work together to identify which domains align most closely with your curriculum.

Key Terms

- AI “hallucinations”:** When an AI tool generates information that sounds confident and plausible but is actually inaccurate or entirely made up. AI does not “know” things—it predicts what words are likely to come next, which sometimes leads to convincing but false outputs.
- Prompt:** The question, instruction, or request a user types into an AI tool. The quality and specificity of the prompt directly affects the quality of the AI’s response.
- Prompt chaining:** Building a sequence of connected prompts, where each prompt builds on the AI’s previous response to accomplish a more complex task step by step.
- Training data:** The large collection of text, images, or other information that an AI system was built on. The content and quality of this data shapes what the AI “knows” and where its blind spots are.
- Bias (in AI):** When AI outputs reflect unfair patterns present in its training data—for example, consistently associating certain jobs with certain genders or races.

Acceptable Use Menu: Kinkaid’s framework defines levels of AI use, from No Use through Thought Partner, Editor/Analyst, and Co-Creator. Each level specifies how much AI involvement is appropriate and what disclosure is required. See the companion reference document for full definitions.

Agentic AI: AI systems that can take multiple steps toward a goal with less human direction at each step—unlike current tools where the user types one prompt and gets one response.

A Note on AI Beyond Text

While much of this framework focuses on text-based AI tools (chatbots, writing assistants), AI is increasingly used to generate images, audio, video, and code. The same principles of ethical use, transparency, critical evaluation, and disclosure apply to all forms of AI-generated content. As these tools evolve, teachers should apply the same literacy domains to multimodal AI outputs in their subject areas.

Literacy Domain	Kindergarten – Fifth Grade Exploration and Curiosity <i>Introduce AI through guided play, storytelling, and observation. Focus on thinking about their own thinking and safe, ethical habits.</i>	Sixth – Eighth Grade Critical Use and Responsibility <i>Empower students to evaluate, question, and apply AI appropriately. Encourage peer discussion and ethical judgment.</i>	Ninth – Twelfth Grade Agency and Ethical Innovation <i>Enable students to co-create, research, and innovate ethically. Emphasize authorship, accountability, and impact.</i>
Ethical Use	Discuss the importance of academic honesty and why AI-generated work must be acknowledged: “I got this idea with help from AI.”	Demonstrate responsible use of AI through transparent disclosure (e.g., “This image was created using an AI tool” or “I used AI to help brainstorm ideas for this essay”) and digital integrity.	Independently disclose, cite, and justify AI usage in all work; write methodology notes describing AI use (e.g., “Portions of this outline were generated by [tool name] and then revised by the author”).
Systems Thinking	Identify examples of AI in daily life (spell checkers, voice assistants) and distinguish between human thinking and AI processing (“AI doesn’t think—it predicts”).	Explain core ideas such as pattern recognition and training data; distinguish between using AI as a tool for learning versus a substitute for human thinking.	Analyze and explain how algorithms and data shape decision-making across disciplines; understand AI “hallucinations” (confidently generated but inaccurate outputs) and model limitations.
Productivity and Adaptability	Use non-AI tools (graphic organizers, brainstorming with classmates) to visualize how the quality of a question affects the quality of the answer.	Engage in structured collaboration where AI acts as a partner (e.g., tutor, editor, research assistant) within clear boundaries set by the teacher.	Integrate AI strategically for productivity (research management, synthesis, project management) while avoiding overreliance; recognize when human effort produces better results than automation.
Inquiry Design(Prompt Craft)	Practice rewriting vague questions into specific ones using structured sentence starters (e.g., “What if...”, “How might...”, “What would happen if...”) and natural language.	Apply questioning strategies independently; craft complex, multi-part prompts that reflect clear goals and parameters (e.g., specifying the role AI should play and who the audience is).	Design advanced, multi-step prompts (building a sequence of connected prompts) for research or synthesis; refine and iterate on queries for precision and depth.

Literacy Domain	Kindergarten – Fifth Grade <i>Exploration and Curiosity</i> <i>Introduce AI through guided play, storytelling, and observation. Focus on thinking about their own thinking and safe, ethical habits.</i>	Sixth – Eighth Grade <i>Critical Use and Responsibility</i> <i>Empower students to evaluate, question, and apply AI appropriately. Encourage peer discussion and ethical judgment.</i>	Ninth – Twelfth Grade <i>Agency and Ethical Innovation</i> <i>Enable students to co-create, research, and innovate ethically. Emphasize authorship, accountability, and impact.</i>
Critical Evaluation	Understand that AI can make mistakes and that its responses should always be checked using human thought and trusted sources.	Describe bias and limitations in AI tools; evaluate and refine AI responses based on accuracy, completeness, and tone.	Critically evaluate multiple AI outputs for validity, source bias, and ethical consequences before integrating them; verify AI responses against reliable sources to check for inaccurate or invented information.
Human Collaboration Using AI	Practice giving feedback on peers’ questions; build collaborative questioning habits (student-to-student inquiry) that will later transfer to working with AI tools.	Provide constructive feedback to peers on prompt design; demonstrate collaborative problem-solving that integrates human insight and AI-generated ideas. Understand that AI should not be used to resolve ethical dilemmas—those require human judgment.	Collaborate with AI for organization, style improvement, or early drafts, clearly distinguishing between AI-generated content and the student’s own contributions and voice.
Metacognitive Reflection	Compare human-generated and AI-generated text; reflect on what humans bring to the process (emotion, ethics, creativity, lived experience).	Compare and contrast human and AI-generated reasoning; reflect on how AI suggestions compare to their own ideas and where their own thinking adds value.	Evaluate how AI shaped their process, explaining what they changed, added, or rejected from AI-generated content and why. Articulate both the benefits and limitations of human-AI collaboration.
Digital Wellness	Recognize examples of appropriate versus unsafe prompts; discuss respect for others’ ideas and “human-centered” technology. Know when to stop using a tool and think on your own.	Understand that AI-generated media can be manipulated (e.g., deepfakes) and learn to question the authenticity of digital content. Recognize the difference between AI tools and human relationships. Help students understand when AI reduces productive struggle and undermines deep learning.	Critically evaluate online content for reliability; practice protecting personal information (privacy and safety). Recognize when AI usage threatens to replace the hard thinking required for genuine learning. Understand that personal support and companionship should come from humans and not from AI.

Literacy Domain	Kindergarten – Fifth Grade Exploration and Curiosity <i>Introduce AI through guided play, storytelling, and observation. Focus on thinking about their own thinking and safe, ethical habits.</i>	Sixth – Eighth Grade Critical Use and Responsibility <i>Empower students to evaluate, question, and apply AI appropriately. Encourage peer discussion and ethical judgment.</i>	Ninth – Twelfth Grade Agency and Ethical Innovation <i>Enable students to co-create, research, and innovate ethically. Emphasize authorship, accountability, and impact.</i>
Societal Impact	Identify examples of AI in daily life (recommendation systems, etc.) and discuss fairness in simple terms: “Is it fair if the computer only shows certain people certain things?”	Evaluate global and societal effects of AI systems—equity, environmental impact (energy consumption), and misinformation. Examine how biased training data can lead to unfair outcomes.	Analyze the systemic consequences of AI at scale: policy implications of algorithmic decision-making, the environmental cost of AI infrastructure (e.g., data centers and energy use), global equity challenges, and how automated systems can reinforce existing societal inequities.
Accessibility and Equity	Understand that not all students have the same access to technology at home; practice using AI tools collaboratively in school so all students gain foundational experience.	Discuss how AI tools can support students with different learning needs (e.g., text-to-speech, translation) and recognize that not everyone experiences these tools the same way.	Examine how AI tools may advantage some users over others; consider how differences in access, language, and cultural context shape both AI outputs and who benefits from them.
Data Security	Understand what personal data means and why we don’t share it with online tools (e.g., “Never type your full name, address, or phone number into a software tool”).	Recognize how personal data is collected, used, and shared by AI platforms and services; understand responsible data use and what a “digital footprint” means.	Analyze data ethics in real-world contexts (e.g., privacy, surveillance, consent) and propose responsible data practices.
Agentic AI	N/A	N/A	Understand the shift from “I type a prompt and get a response” to “I set a goal and AI takes multiple steps to achieve it.” Recognize the increased need for human oversight and verification when AI acts with greater autonomy.

Literacy Domain	Kindergarten – Fifth Grade Exploration and Curiosity <i>Introduce AI through guided play, storytelling, and observation. Focus on thinking about their own thinking and safe, ethical habits.</i>	Sixth – Eighth Grade Critical Use and Responsibility <i>Empower students to evaluate, question, and apply AI appropriately. Encourage peer discussion and ethical judgment.</i>	Ninth – Twelfth Grade Agency and Ethical Innovation <i>Enable students to co-create, research, and innovate ethically. Emphasize authorship, accountability, and impact.</i>
Kinkaid’s AI Focus & Approach	Introduce the Kinkaid Generative AI Acceptable Use Menu categories (No Use → Thought Partner) at a general level; AI use is heavily guided by teachers.	Select and justify an appropriate level of AI assistance (No Use → Editor/Analyst) for a task, with teacher permission. Students articulate why they chose a particular level of AI support.	Follow Kinkaid’s Acceptable Use Menu for appropriate disclosure and responsible use in projects (Co-Creator level allowed). Students take ownership of their AI use decisions.

Implementation Note: This framework will be implemented over a three-year period alongside a parallel Faculty AI Literacy guide and differentiated professional development plan. During the curriculum review cycle, departments will identify natural touchpoints for integrating these skills. Faculty will receive training and support at novice, intermediate, and advanced levels before full implementation is expected.