

New York City Pauses AI Use for Younger Learners

A one-year school policy raises a question many classrooms face: when does AI help learning, and when does it replace it?



A closed laptop and school supplies sit on a classroom desk as a faint AI symbol fades behind them.

New York City will temporarily ban elementary and middle school children from using **generative artificial** intelligence in public schools during this school year, according to BBC Newsround. The rule affects around 600,000 children up to age 14. It is a big school decision about a tool many people already use for homework, writing, art, coding, and research.

Generative artificial intelligence, often called generative AI, is computer software that can create new text, images, or other content after a person gives it directions. Those directions are called a **prompt**. ChatGPT is one example. The software works through algorithms, which are sets of computer instructions that look for patterns and then produce an answer.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani said younger children need teachers, classmates, and human connection in order to learn and grow. He also said children need chances to struggle with hard problems on their own. That matters because school is not only about getting a finished answer. In math, writing, science, and social studies, the process is part of the learning. Explaining your

thinking, fixing mistakes, and trying again are skills too.

The **policy** also adds new **guidance** for **screen** time, which means time spent using a device with a screen during school. BBC Newsround reports that children in grades three to five should have up to 30 minutes of screen time in school. Children in grades six to eight should be limited to 45 minutes. The article does not say exactly how each school will divide that time among lessons, projects, and other activities.

The rule also bans **companion** chatbots for all grades. A companion **chatbot** is an AI program designed to act like a friend or constant conversation partner. That part of the policy applies even in high school. The city is treating those tools differently from a calculator, search engine, or spelling checker, because they can feel more personal and may shape how a young person talks, thinks, or asks for help.

High schoolers are not described as facing the same AI ban. Instead, they will have AI **literacy** lessons twice a year. AI literacy means learning

how artificial intelligence works, what it can and cannot do, and how to use it responsibly. The city also plans to test AI education programs during the year. In other words, the policy is not saying technology never belongs in school. It is saying age and purpose matter.

One reason this story matters in middle school is that it sits right in the middle of a real classroom debate. AI can help a person brainstorm ideas, explain a confusing topic, or check whether a paragraph is clear. But it can also do so much work that the person using it may not practice the skill. If a tool writes the first draft, solves the problem, or summarizes the reading, a teacher

may not know what the learner actually understands.

The mayor compared AI use to learning to cook: some tools may be unsafe or unhelpful for very young children, while older teens may be ready to learn with guidance. He also said the city will watch the policy during the year and change it if needed. That makes this a test of a larger question schools everywhere are facing. When a powerful new tool arrives quickly, schools have to decide whether to open the door, close it for a while, or teach people how to walk through it carefully.

Written from reporting by BBC Newsround.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. Should schools make one rule for all middle schoolers on AI, or should teachers decide by assignment? Defend your answer with a trade-off.

A strong answer: A strong answer should weigh fairness and clarity against flexibility for different subjects, ages, and learning goals.

2. If AI can help someone get a better final product, how should a teacher judge whether real learning happened?

A strong answer: A strong answer should discuss process evidence, explanation of thinking, drafts, conferences, or other ways to show understanding beyond the finished work.

3. What information would you want before deciding whether New York City's one-year ban should continue, change, or end?

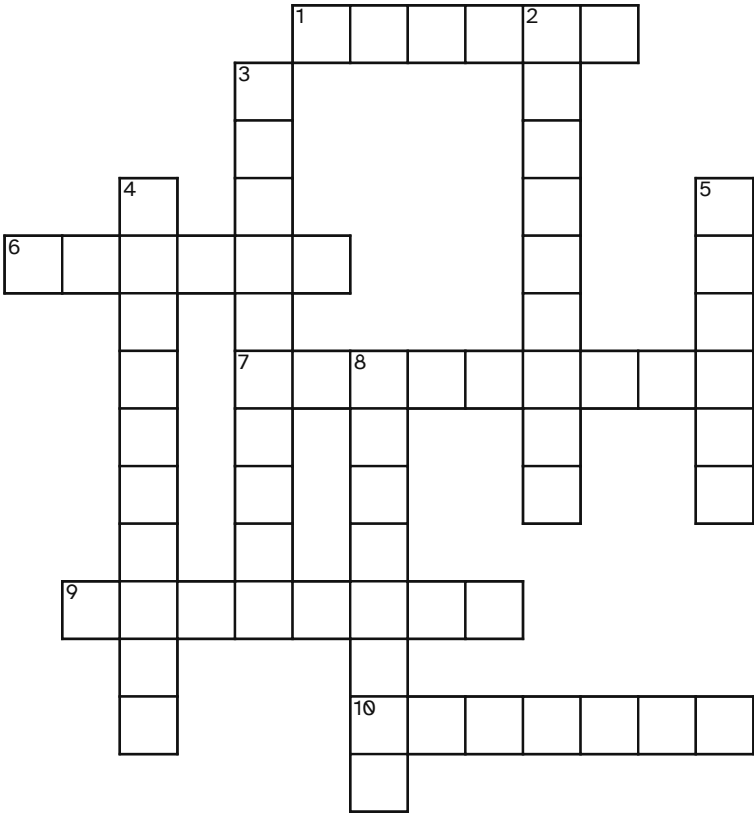
A strong answer: A strong answer should identify useful evidence, such as effects on learning, writing, attention, teacher workload, access to technology, and student well-being.

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H L E T I N O I C E T I E C O C I O
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ALGORITHM ARTIFICIAL CHATBOT COMPANION
GENERATIVE GUIDANCE LITERACY POLICY PROMPT
SCREEN

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ACROSS

- 1 Official rule or plan that guides choices and actions
- 6 Flat device surface that displays words, pictures, or videos
- 7 Step-by-step computer method for finding patterns and results
- 9 Skills and knowledge for using something responsibly
- 10 Computer program that talks with people by text or voice

DOWN

- 2 Friend or partner who spends time with someone
- 3 Able to create new content from directions
- 4 Made by people instead of found in nature
- 5 Directions or question that tells an AI tool what to do
- 8 Advice that helps someone make a good choice

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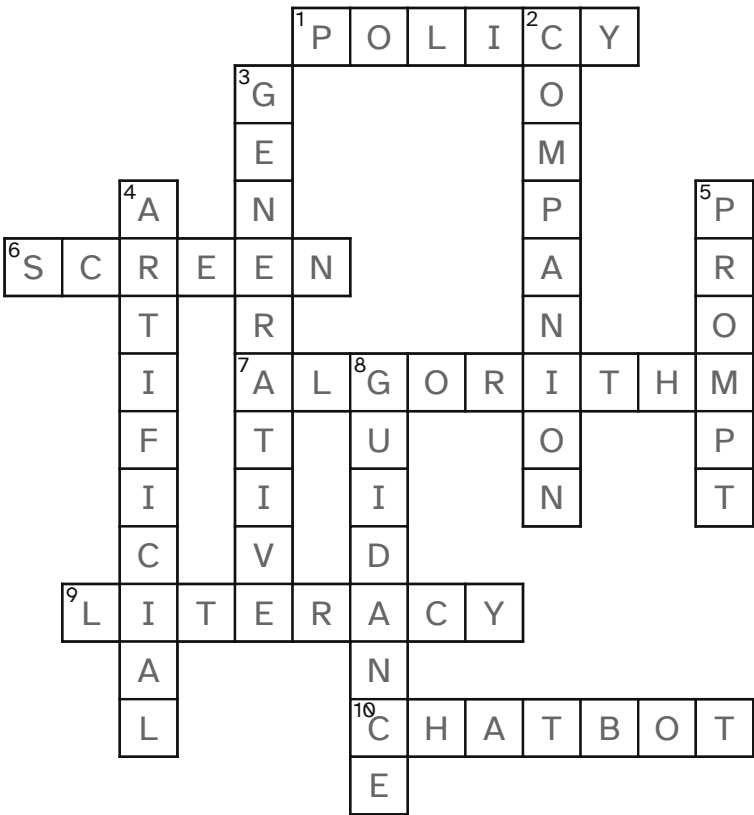
— answer key

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- SCREEN

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Where this came from

This article was written for 3andB from the reporting below. It is not a reprint — the wording is ours and the facts are theirs.

BBC Newsround

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https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/articles/crm932vwdg1o?at_medium=RSS&at_campaign=rss

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The article with a note on each question, a word search, a crossword, and the answer key to both.

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