

# AI as Academic Innovation: Your Opportunity to Lead



Professor of Educational Technologies & Distance Education Coordinator, Santiago Canyon  
College | AI Fellow for the California Community College Chancellors Office

# Defining Our AI Compass

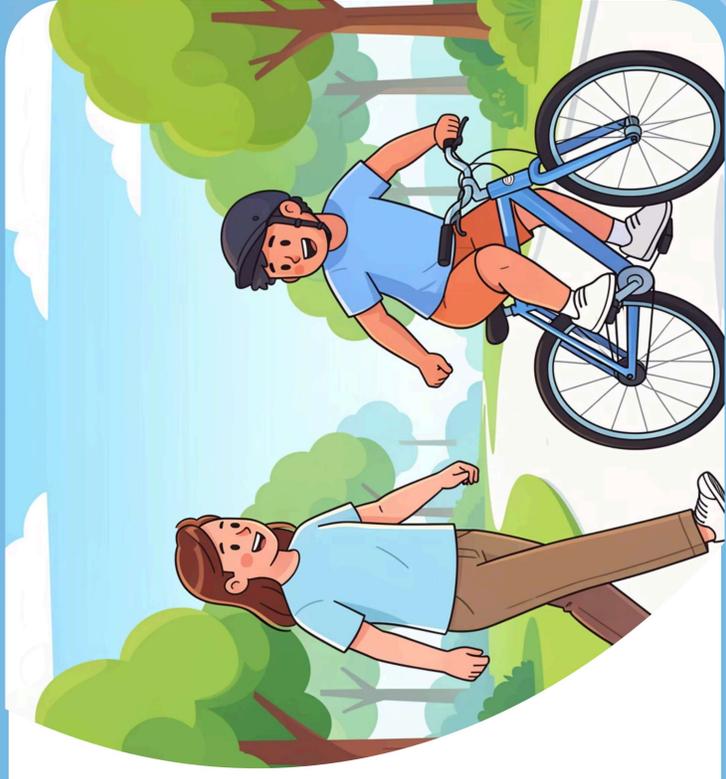
AI means many things to different people; it's often viewed through individual lenses. For our discussion, let's establish a shared understanding of what 'AI' entails.

We'll explore how these dynamic technologies can augment, not replace, our foundational skills and teaching strategies, encouraging adaptation rather than radical change.



## Mini Superpowers Are Real

Technology has the power to unlock abilities we didn't know we had. When assistive tech works at its best, it doesn't just help—it transforms what's possible.



OPENING STORY

## The Text-to-Speech Revelation

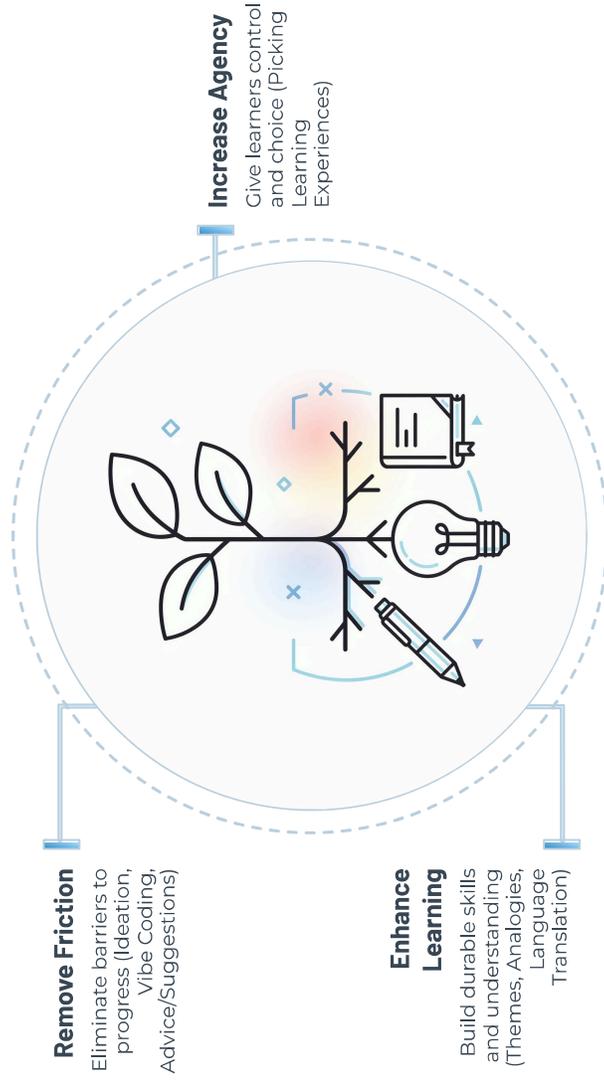


For blind and low-vision readers, text-to-speech isn't a convenience—it's independence. It enables faster reading speeds and greater autonomy over information access.

This is what ability amplification looks like: removing friction and restoring

## Text-to-Speech, Caffeinated

# What Is an "Ability Amplifier"?



## The Essential Definition

An ability amplifier removes barriers and increases learner control—it's not a shortcut or replacement.

The key distinction: amplifiers give students **more access, more control, and more learning opportunities**. They don't do the thinking for you—they make your thinking more powerful.

This framework helps us evaluate whether a tool truly serves learners or just creates dependency.

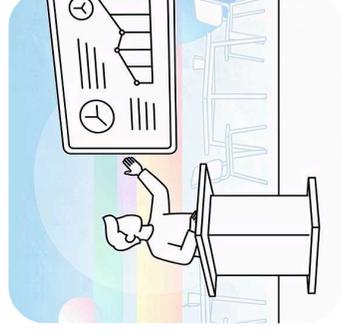
# What I Observed With Students

When custom AI chatbots became widely available, something remarkable happened: neurodiverse students showed disproportionate benefits—especially for planning, chunking complex tasks, seeking clarification, communicating, reading with text-to-speech, and building confidence.



RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

# The Neurodiversity + AI Landscape



Planning & Organization

Confidence Building

AI helps break overwhelming projects into manageable steps—critical support for executive function challenges.

Emerging research is beginning to document these GenAI supports for neurodivergent learners, though significant gaps remain in our understanding.

### **Clarification, Chunking, Vibe Coding/Creating, Speed**

Real-time explanations and concept

breakdowns provide scaffolding for neurodivergent learners, though significant gaps remain in our understanding.

Private, judgment-free practice spaces allow learners to try, fail, and iterate without anxiety.

## **The Workforce Signal**

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

# The MIT Study—and What It Misses

## The Concern Is Valid

Over-reliance and copy-paste behaviors are real risks. The MIT cognition study documents measurable effects on specific task performance.

## The Context Matters

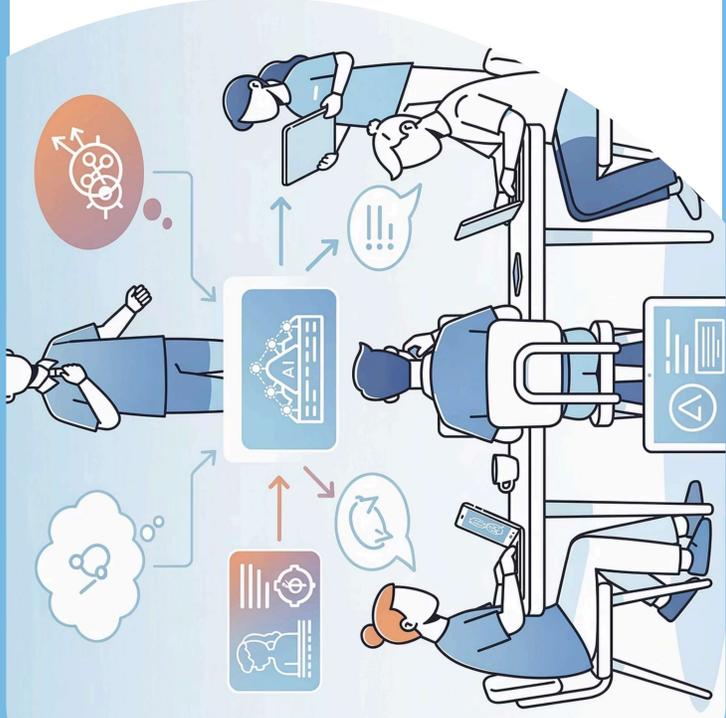
Study scope is limited: small sample, SAT-style essay tasks. In popular retellings, "AI affects learning" becomes "AI makes you dumb."

## The Real Insight

**How** you use AI determines outcomes. Is it a crutch or a coach? Ownership and process must be designed intentionally.



The nuance matters: the risk isn't AI itself—it's thoughtless implementation that bypasses thinking rather than amplifying it.



# Design for Agency and Visibility

Our challenge: create learning environments where AI amplifies student agency and accessibility—while keeping the thinking process visible and owned by learners.

This requires shifting from "did you use AI?" to "how did AI help your thinking?" It's about transparency, intentionality, and metacognition.

PLAYLAB FEATURE SHOWCASE

## Fostering Metacognition: Playlab's Conversation Review Rubric

To truly build agency and visible thinking in AI interactions, students need tools to critically evaluate their own process. Playlab's Conversation Review Rubric provides a structured framework for students to reflect on their prompts, AI responses, and the evolution of their dialogue with generative AI.

This isn't just about grading; it's about making the often-invisible process of AI prompting explicit, actionable, and open to improvement. It transforms passive consumption into active, strategic engagement.



# Conversation Review

## Configure Conversation Review

This quick setup is designed to teach our model how to review your users' conversations and what success looks like for you in order to evaluate whether they are meeting your intended goal.

To start evaluating your conversations, you'll go through the following steps:

### STEP 1

Clarify your app's goal

### STEP 2

Define what success looks like

**I am ready!**

**Maybe later**

### STEP 3

Test how we analyze conversations

[Learn more about how we use AI in conversation analysis.](#)

# Conversation Review Configuration

## Configure Conversation Review

### 1 What is the goal of your app?

The goal of this app is...

 Generate with AI

### 2 When is a conversation successful in your app?

A conversation in this app is successful if...

 Generate with AI

### 3 Review conversations

Analyze a conversation

Finish later

# Goal Met

EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	12/6/2025	13
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	11/28/2025	13
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/29/2025	17
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/26/2025	21
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/26/2025	19
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/26/2025	17
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/26/2025	13

## Conversation Review Settings

GOAL MET

### Goal Checked Against

Guide students in EDUC 235 through a structured, evidence-based discussion on whether writing is becoming a rote skill that can be automated, or remains an essential human endeavor, fostering critical thinking and reflection.

### Key Finding

The conversation aligns with the goal, meets the success criteria, and demonstrates a structured discussion on the topic.

### Success Criteria Used

- ✓ The conversation achieved ≥10 turns with ≥5 student messages, meeting the quantity requirement.
- ✓ The student stated and refined their position, provided real-world examples, and explored benefits and drawbacks of automating writing with AI.
- ✓ The student received Socratic-style follow-ups and culminated in a reflection prompt with a transcript to support the 150–250 word reflection.



Reanalyze Conversation

# Goal Not Met

EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/26/2025	17
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/25/2025	19
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/25/2025	15
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/24/2025	3
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/24/2025	13
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/24/2025	15
EDUC 235 Intro Debate Chatbot	10/23/2025	

### Conversation Review Settings

GOAL NOT MET

#### Goal Checked Against

Guide students in EDUC 235 through a structured, evidence-based discussion on whether writing is becoming a rote skill that can be automated, or remains an essential human endeavor, fostering critical thinking and reflection.

#### Key Finding

Conversation is on track but hasn't reached  $\geq 10$  turns yet

#### Success Criteria Used

- ✓ Student stated and refined their position on whether writing is becoming a rote skill
- ✗ Conversation achieved  $\geq 10$  turns with  $\geq 5$  student messages
- ✓ Student received Socratic-style follow-ups and explored benefits and drawbacks



Reanalyze Conversation