



# A New Direction for Students in an AI World: Prosper, Prepare, Protect

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# CENTER FOR UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

## WHO & WHERE WE ARE

CUE is a diverse team of experts from 25 countries, working with partners in more than 70 countries across 12 workstreams.



# AGENDA

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## **I. The Task Force and Study**

## **II. The Context**

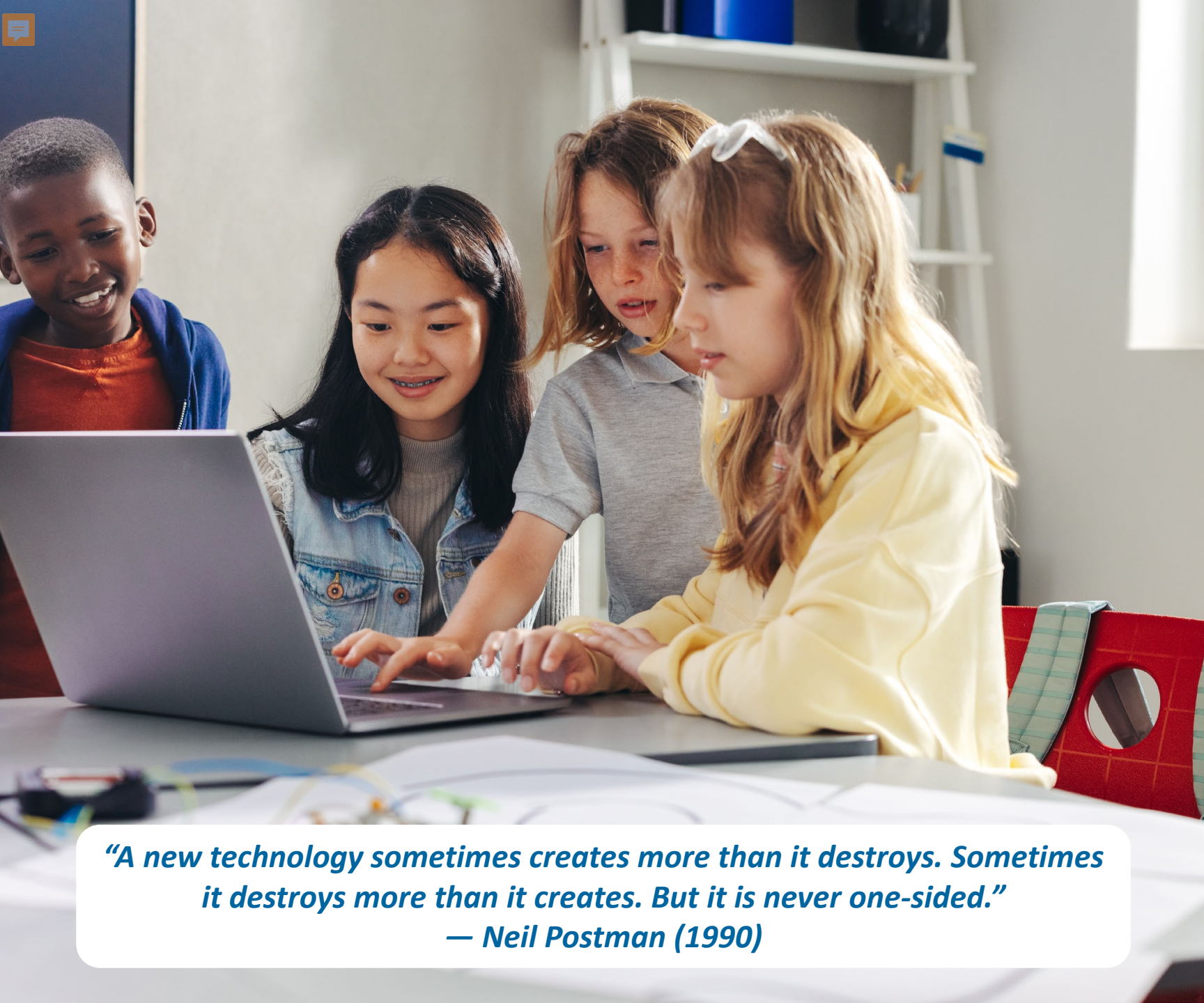
*Students access AI everywhere, and families are on the frontlines*

## **III. Risks versus Benefits**

*Currently, AI's risks overshadow its benefits*

## **IV. It's Not Too Late**

*Actions to prosper, prepare, and protect*



## I. THE TASK FORCE AND STUDY

A study of the potential outcomes  
if AI deployment continues its  
current course.

*“A new technology sometimes creates more than it destroys. Sometimes  
it destroys more than it creates. But it is never one-sided.”*

*— Neil Postman (1990)*



# Task Force Goal

The goal was to assess the current trajectory of AI's impact on students...



..and to start a conversation...

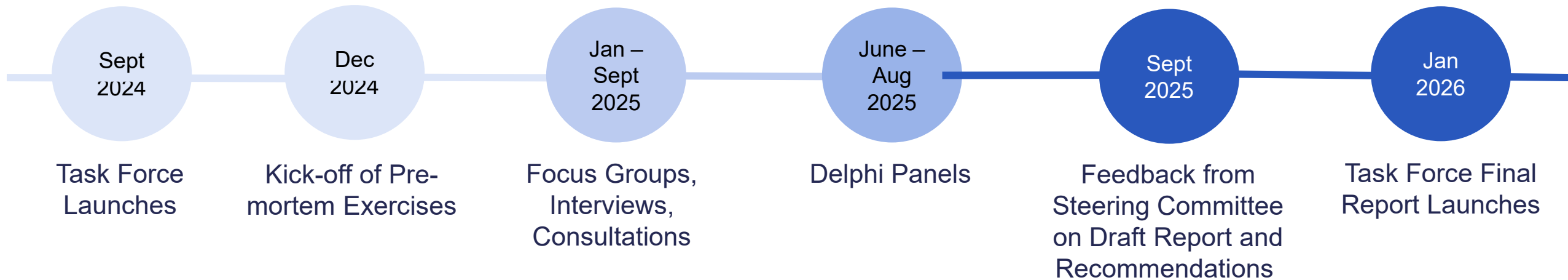
... not be the definitive word on AI's impact.



# THE TASK FORCE PROCESS

**Goal:** Conduct a premortem on AI and students – before early norms and practices solidify

**Members:** Education leaders and artificial intelligence experts across government, multi-lateral institutions, civil society, teacher organizations, philanthropy, business, and grassroots student and family networks





# THE STUDY

## A premortem on AI and children's education

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### Areas of Focus

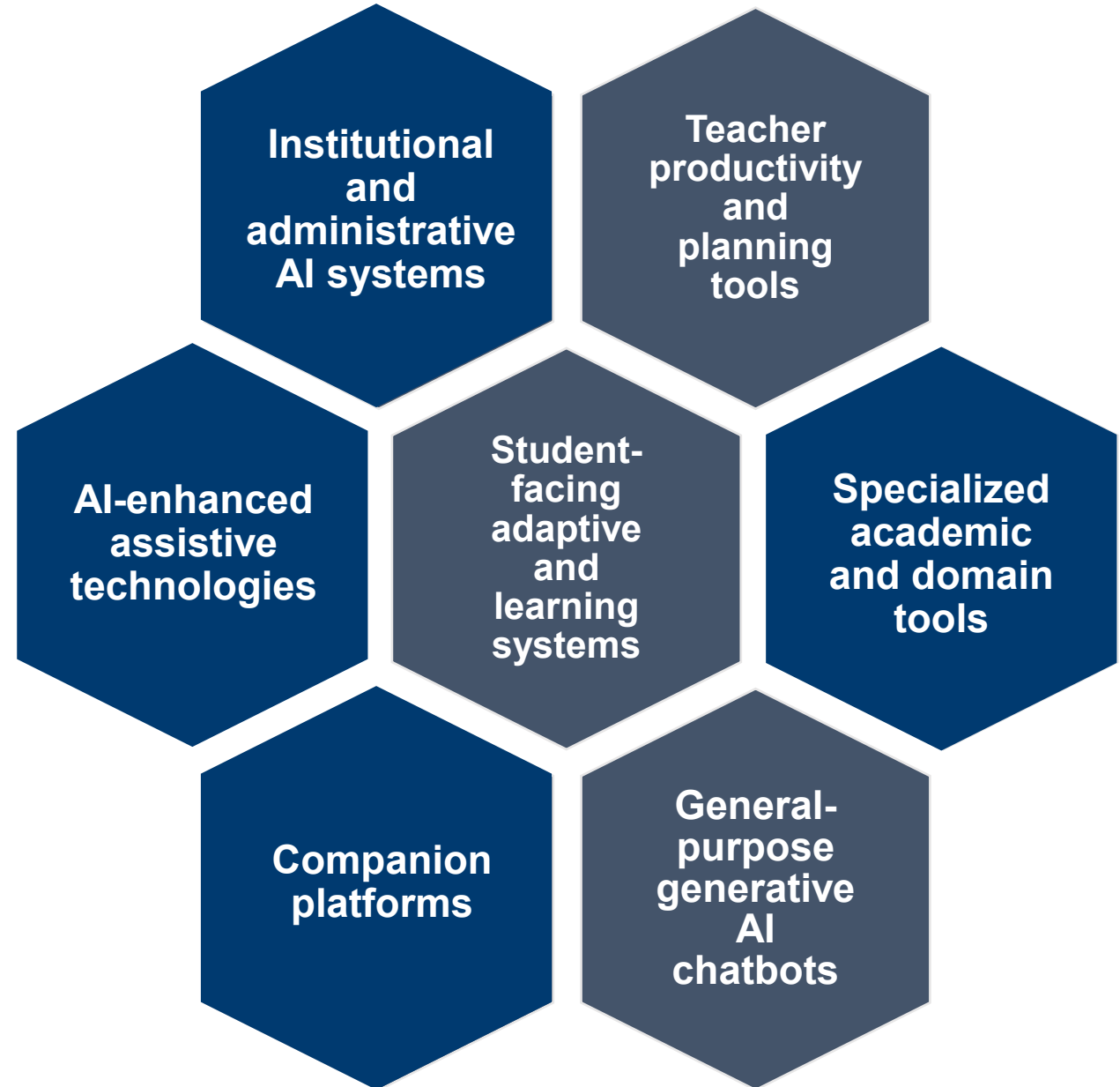
- Technology: Generative AI
- Population: School-aged children and youth (under 18 years old)

### Research Questions

- What are the **potential negative risks** that generative AI poses to students?
- How can we **mitigate these risks**?
- How can we **harness the potential benefits** of AI to students?

# WHAT IS GENERATIVE AI?

A class of technologies that generate novel outputs such as text, images, audio, code, or video in response to user prompts.





## II. CONTEXT

*“Our students are not regularly accessing AI, but our kids are.”  
— Steering Committee member*



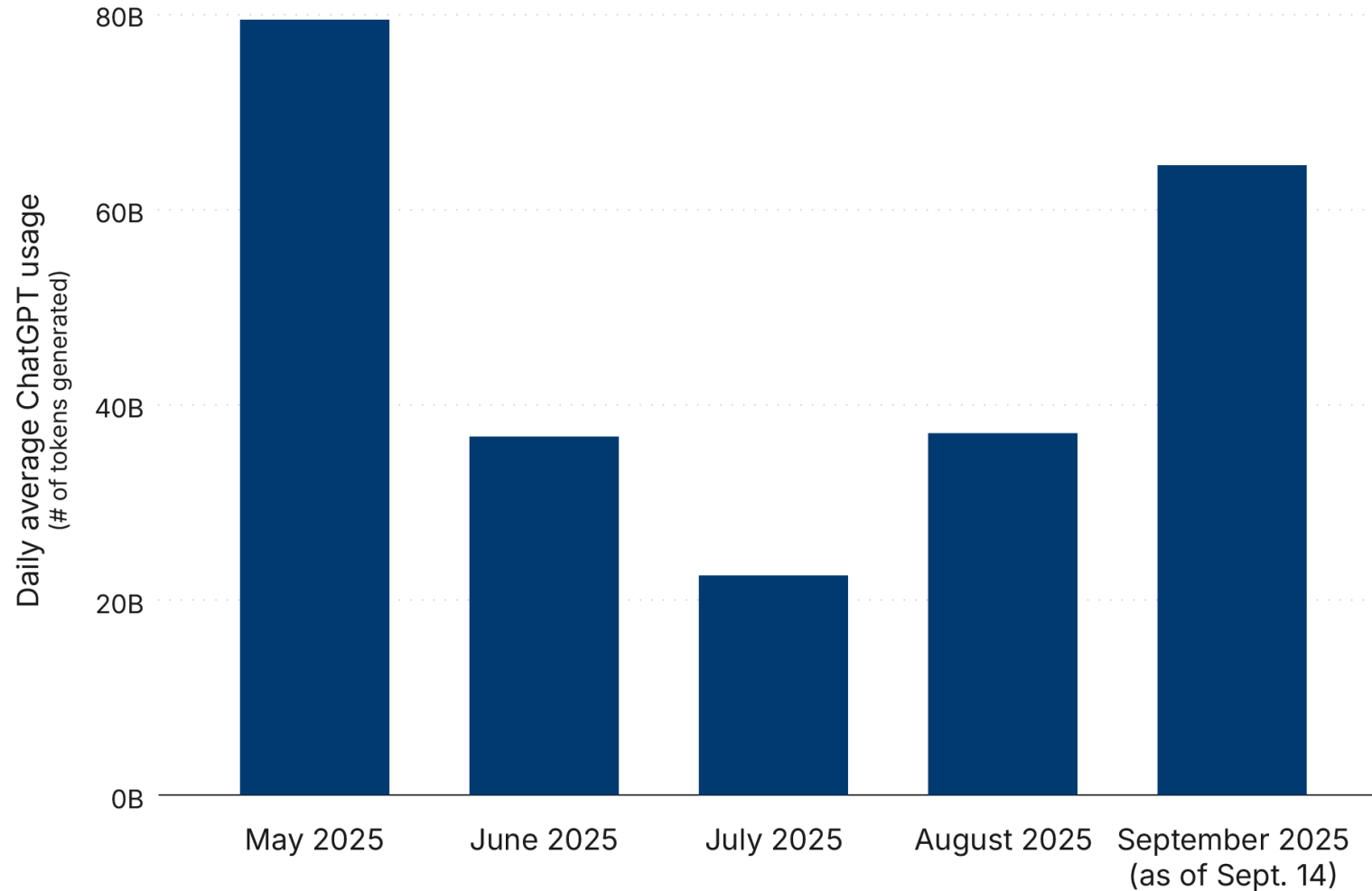
# CHILDREN'S AI USE AROUND THE WORLD

COUNTRY	AGES	SURVEY FINDINGS	YEAR
ARGENTINA	9-17	58% of responders have used ChatGPT	2024
AUSTRALIA	14-17	94% of responders have used a generative AI tool (in any capacity)	2025
SINGAPORE	13-17	80% of respondents use generative AI at least once a week	2024
SOUTH KOREA	13-19	95% of respondents have used ChatGPT	2024
TAIWAN	Junior and senior high school students	58% of respondents use AI at least once a week	2025
UNITED KINGDOM	13-18	67% of respondents have used generative AI	2025
UNITED STATES	13-17	91% of respondents have used generative AI in their personal life	2025

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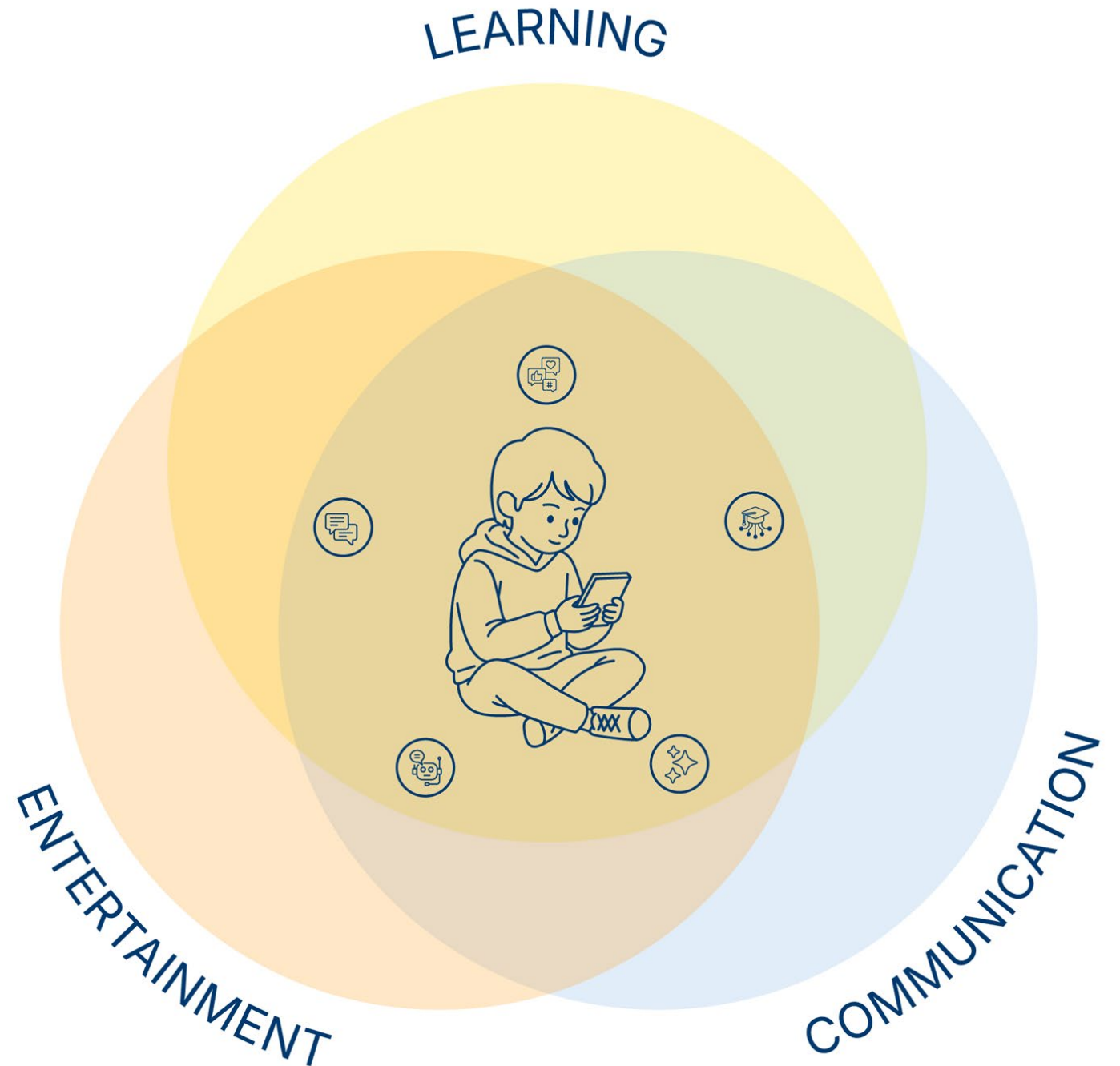
# DECREASE IN CHAT GPT USE DURING SUMMER

ChatGPT usage by month



Source: Wilkins, 2025; OpenRouter, 2025

**CHILDREN ARE  
USING AI FOR MANY  
PURPOSES IN MANY  
PLACES.**





### III. BENEFITS VS RISKS



## POTENTIAL BENEFITS

### Access

AI can improve equity by addressing educational resource gaps and expanding access to education.

### Time savings

AI can optimize teacher time for greater focus on students.

### Learning outcomes

AI can improve students' learning.

### Personalization

AI can tailor learning to each student's needs.

### Accessibility

AI can extend learning to neurodivergent students and students with disabilities.

### Assessment

AI can advance assessment.

## POTENTIAL RISKS

### Cognitive development

AI can undermine students' cognitive development.

### Social and emotional development

AI can impede students' social and emotional development.

### Trust

AI can degrade trust in education.

### Safety

AI can threaten students' safety.

### Dependence

AI dependence can erode students' autonomy and agency.

### Inequality

AI can deepen equity divides.

# THE RISKS DIFFER IN NATURE FROM THE BENEFITS

## AI's risks to...

Cognitive development

Social and emotional development

Trust

Safety

Dependence

Equity

Undermine student's relationships and ability to learn needed to leverage AI's benefits...

Access

Time Savings

Learning Outcomes

Personalization

Accessibility

Assessment

# BENEFITS

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**Appear to accrue from “narrow” AI use.**

# BENEFIT 1: ACCESS

AI can improve equity by addressing educational resource gaps and expanding access to education.

Addressing capacity constraints

Individualized attention in crowded classrooms

*“AI makes learning better for students. We are not exposed to knowledge like in other countries. With AI, we can catch up just like learners in other countries.”*  
— Student

## BENEFIT 2: TIME SAVINGS

AI can optimize teacher time for greater focus on students.

AI as a productivity tool

Saved time reinvested to directly benefit students

Supporting teacher retention

*“AI is my favorite colleague.”  
— Teacher*

# BENEFIT 3 and 4: LEARNING OUTCOMES & PERSONALIZATION

AI can improve student learning and tailor learning to each student's needs.

Supporting student reading, especially for second language learners

Helping students with the writing process

Personalized learning programs

Intelligent tutoring systems

***“AI explains things better.”  
— Parent, student, teacher***

# BENEFIT 5: ACCESSIBILITY

AI can extend learning to neurodivergent students and students with disabilities.

Supporting neurodivergent students

Supporting students with disabilities

*“I’ve got a lot of neurodivergent children. And they struggle with timing, pacing, and particularly structure. Once they’ve been shown like, okay, if you use these prompts, you can get an AI to help you plan or structure something, they find that very helpful. And they like the fact that they can ask as many questions as they want”*

*— Teacher*

# BENEFIT 6: ASSESSMENT

AI can advance assessment

Automation

Effectiveness and expansiveness

Support through prediction

*“And not only did (the AI assessment platform) mark (the exam) for her, it then highlighted the areas that she needed to work on...From a student’s point of view, it’s honing in on her learning (and) what she still needs to work on. I was kind of blown away with that.”*

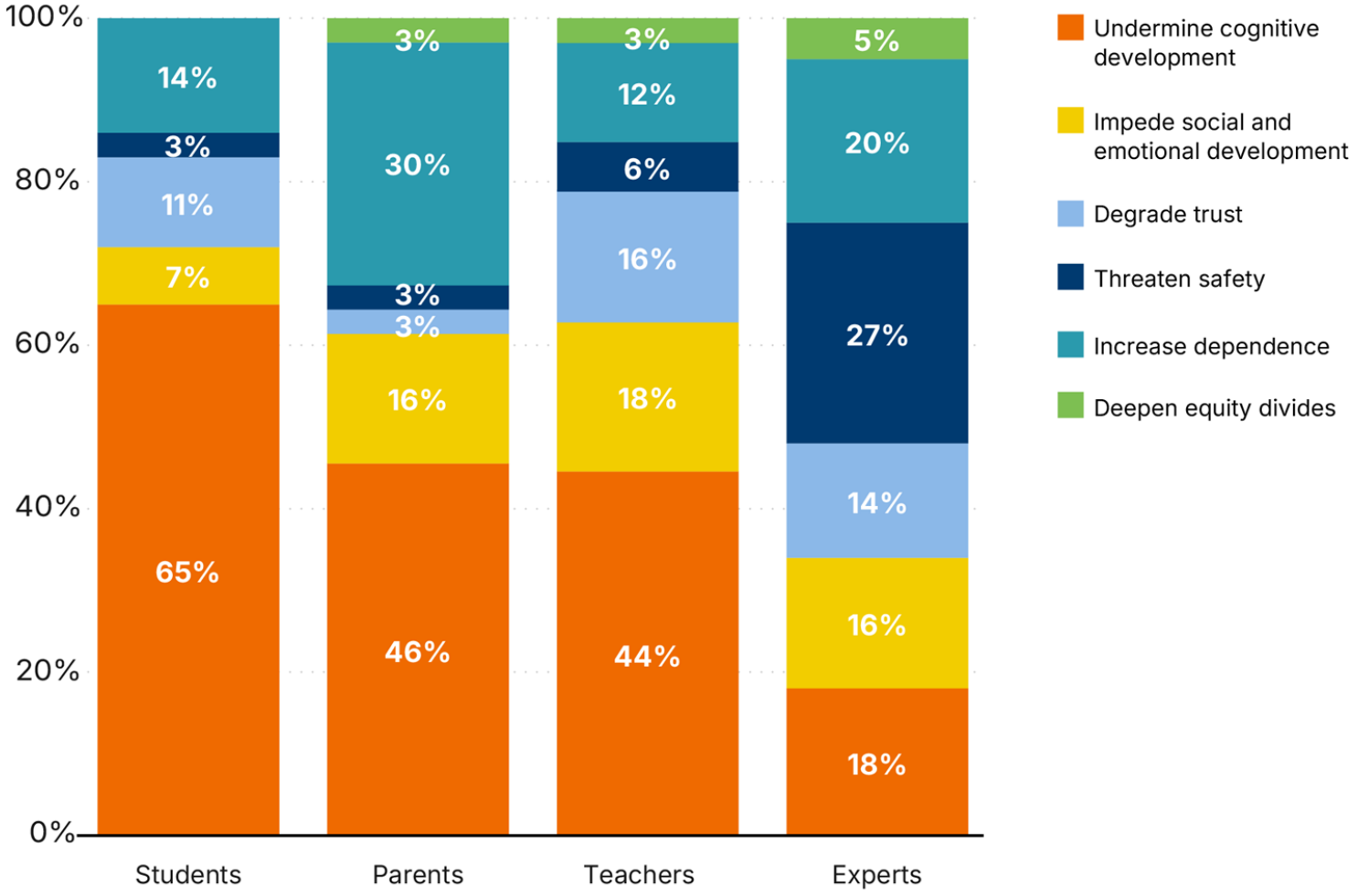
*— Teacher*

# RISKS

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**Appear to accrue from “wide” AI use.**

# Risks identified by study participants



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In this figure: teachers n = 117; experts = 72; students = 68; parents = 41.2



# RISK 1: COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

AI can undermine students' cognitive development.

Cognitive offloading

Disengagement

Declining content knowledge

Declining reading skills

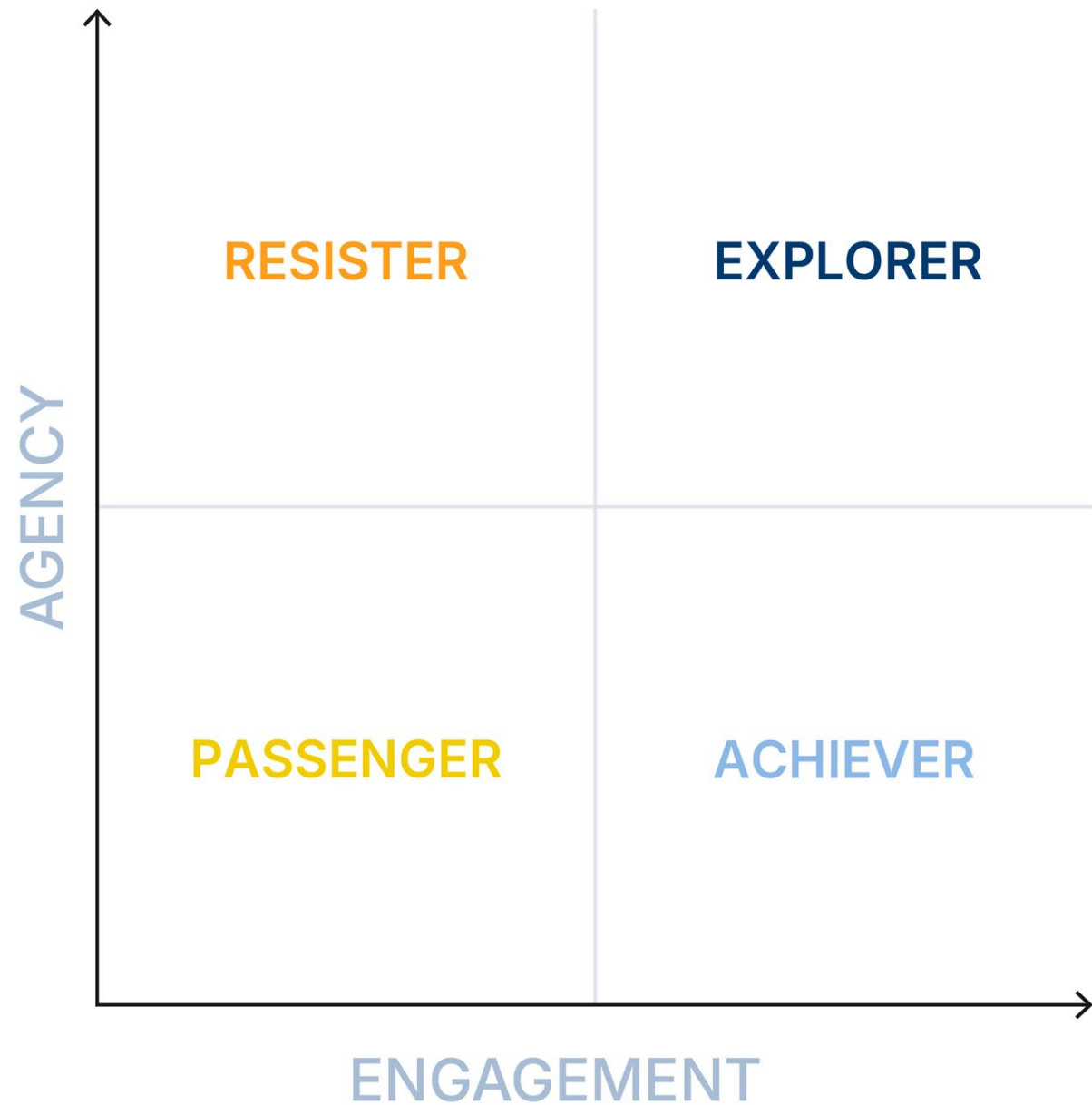
Declining writing skills

Declining transversal or durable skills

Declining critical thinking and creativity

*"It's easy. You don't need to (use) your brain."  
— Student*

# EXPANDING PASSENGER MODE



Engagement: What kids think, feel, and do.  
Agency: What kids initiate

## RISK 2: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

AI can impede students' social and emotional development.

Exacerbating mental health concerns

Artificial and addictive intimacy

Reshaping the social fabric of learning

Emotional manipulation

Increased loneliness

*Where is that moment when we sit down and really talk about what's happening? ...At any moment my son will have direct contact with AI...I worry that suddenly he might trust an AI platform more than me as a space of confidence, especially for personal use, like when he has personal doubts."*

*— Parent*

# CHANGING SOCIALIZATION

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**1 in 3 teens** in the U.S. say they like talking to an AI friend equally or more than a human.

~ Common Sense Media

# RISK 3: TRUST

AI can degrade trust in education.

Teachers-student relationships

Student-peer relationships

Trust of AI over humans

*“This lack of general and specific trust—trust in expertise, in information—creates a nihilism and cynicism where no one trusts anything or anyone.”*

*— Teacher*

# RISK 4: SAFETY

## AI can threaten students' safety

Student privacy and data harvesting

Government protections for students and children

Unsupported and unprepared education systems

Data breaches

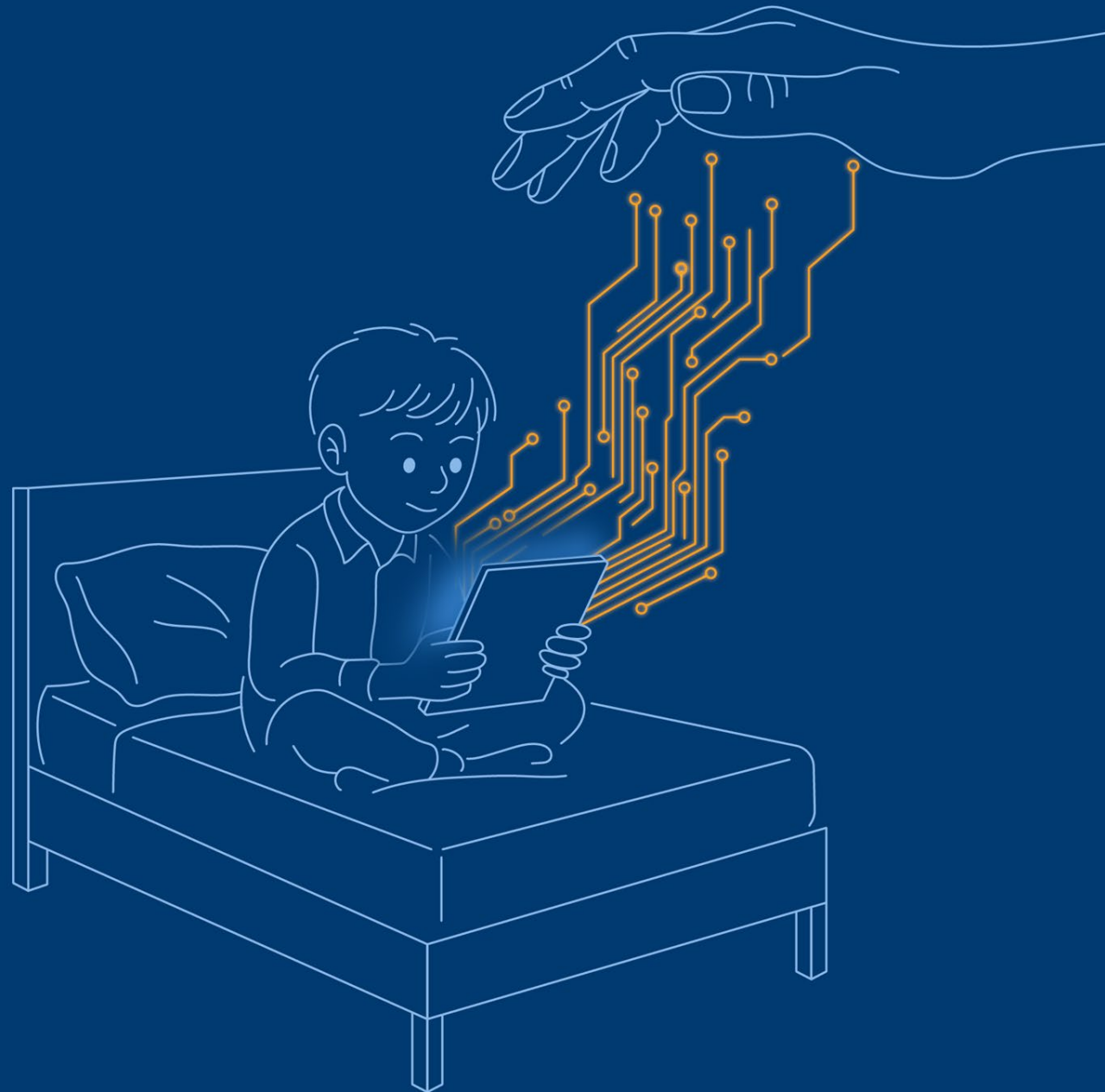
Eternal digital footprint

Sexualized content and harassment

Bias, discrimination, and polarization

Digital repression

AI surveillance



# BIAS

Provide feedback to improve this essay for ...

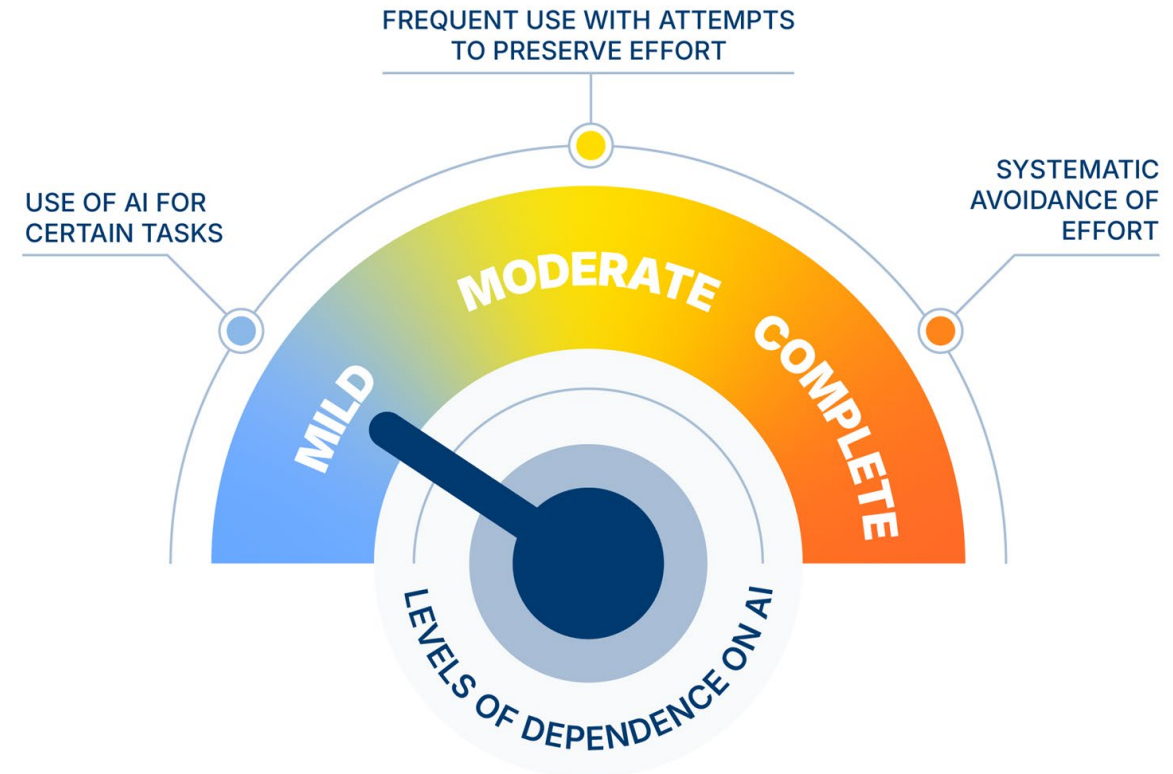
*A 7th grade student  
who listens to rap  
music...*

*A 7th grade student  
who listens to classical  
music...*

# RISK 5: DEPENDENCE

AI dependence can erode students' autonomy and agency.

*“Whenever we need anything now, we use (AI). We are not using our brains to think—we are just getting easy answers. We are completely addicted.”*  
— Teacher



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# RISK 6: INEQUALITY

AI can deepen equity divides.

Socioeconomic divide

Geographic divide

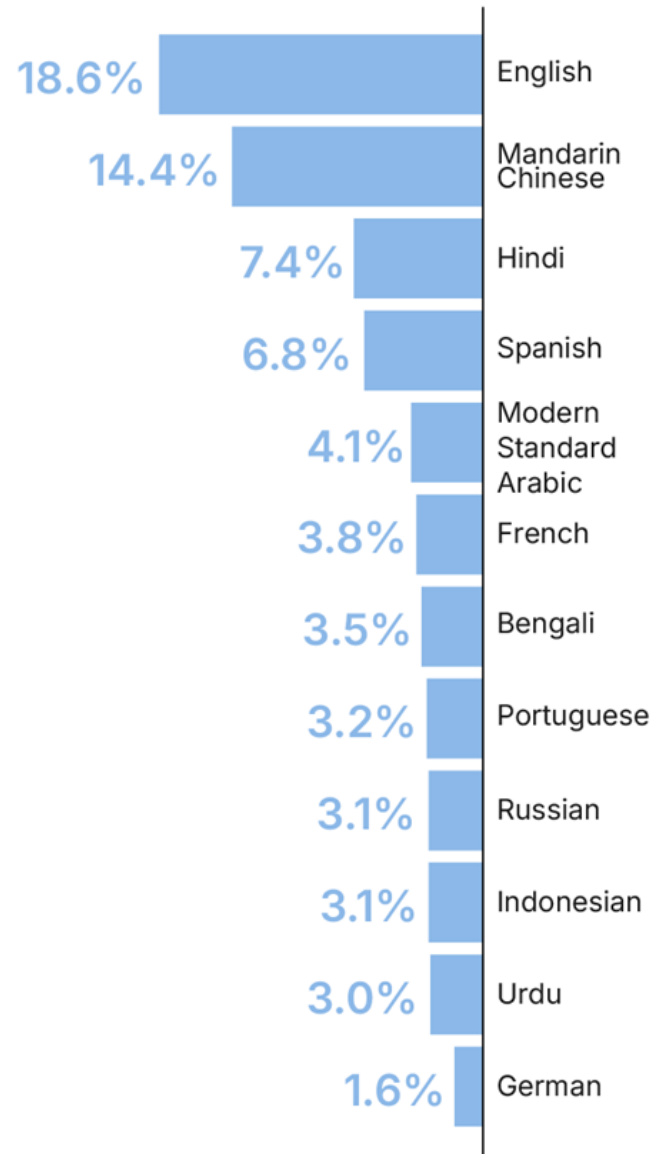
Linguistic and cultural divide

AI accuracy divide

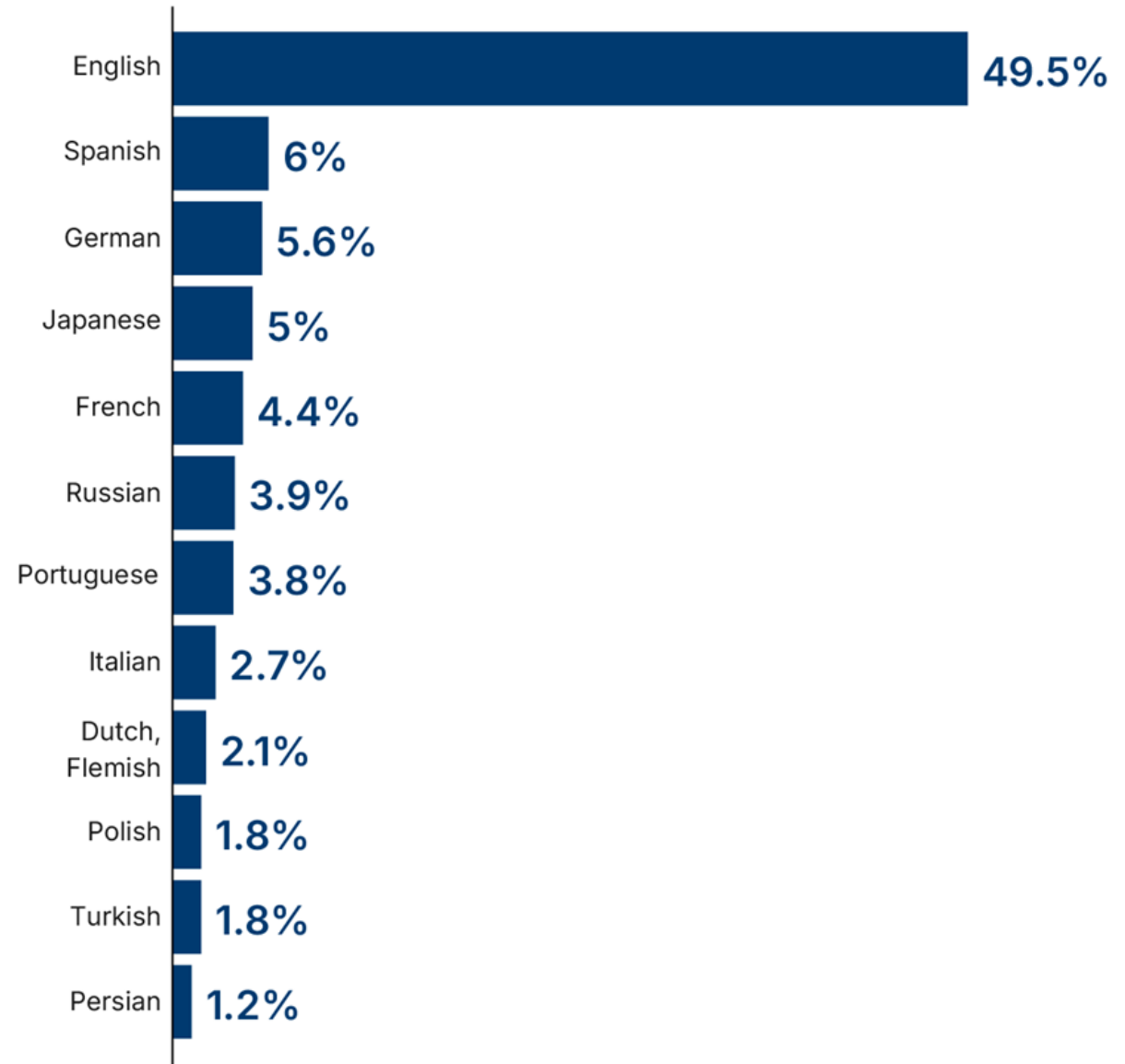
*“Big Tech continues to develop solutions with the richest schools and students in mind.”*

*— Teacher*

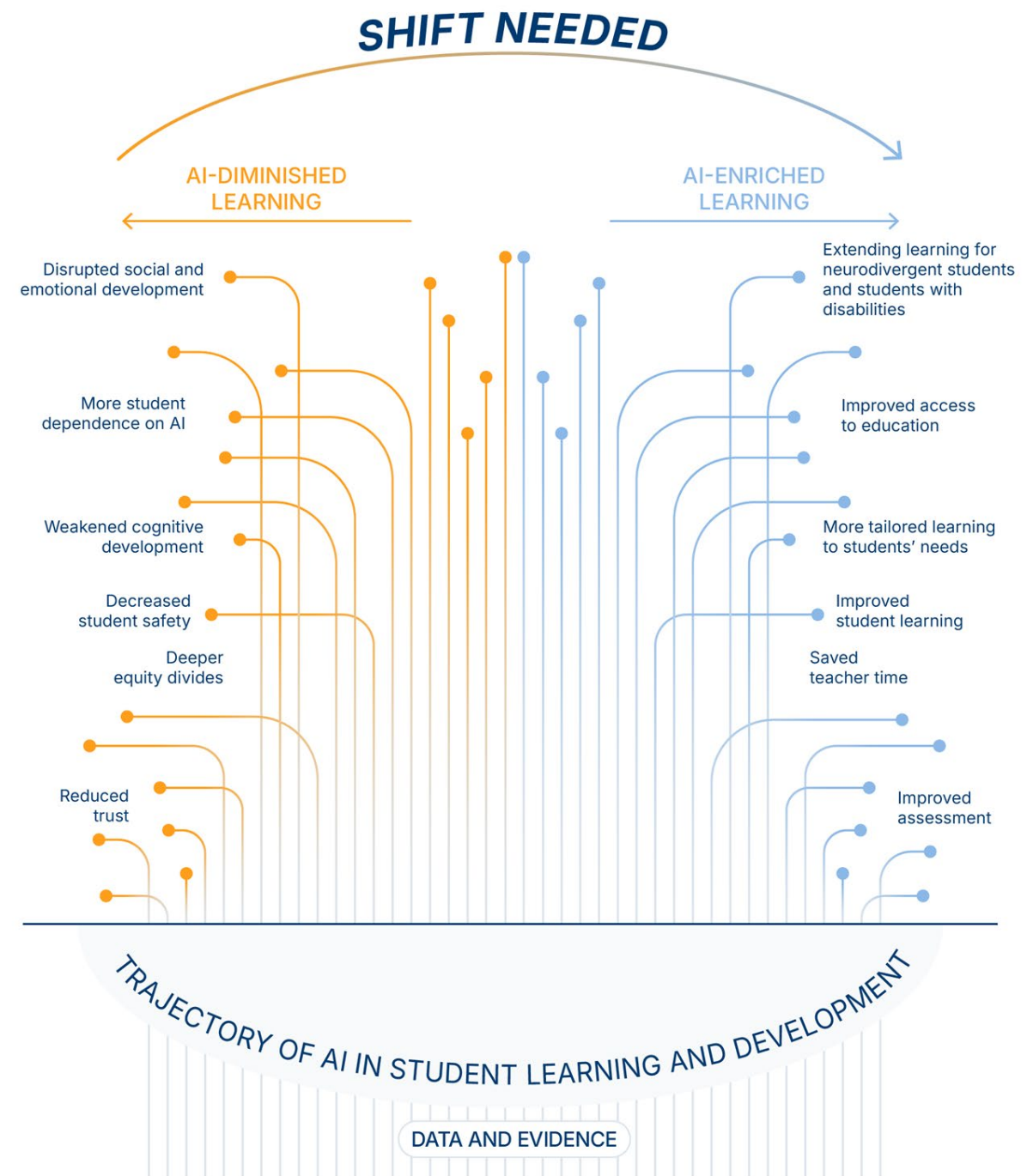
### Top 12 languages spoken (by % of population)



### Top 12 languages used online (by % of websites)

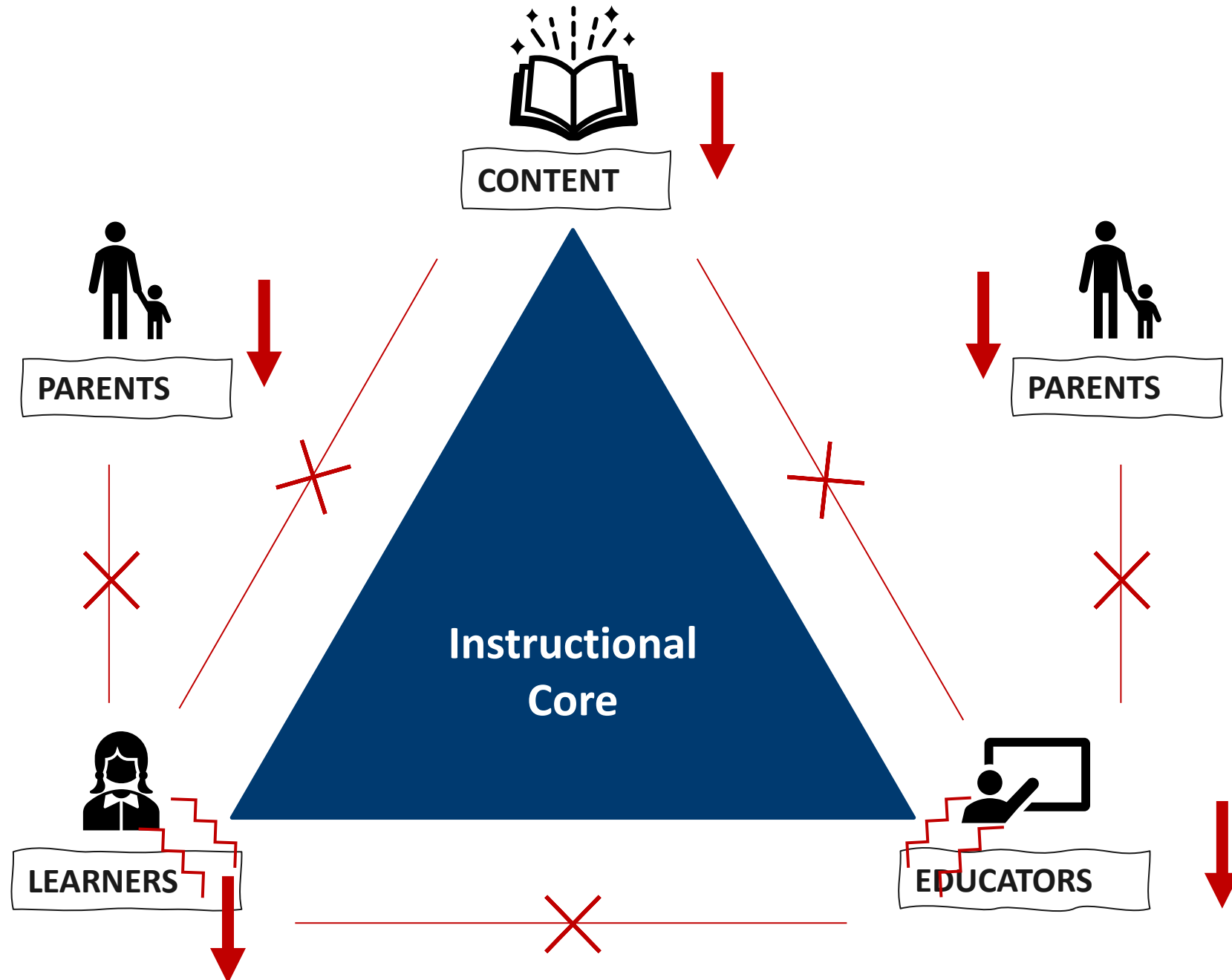


**AI IMPLEMENTATION MUST  
BE DESIGNED TO ENRICH—  
NOT DIMINISH—LEARNING.**



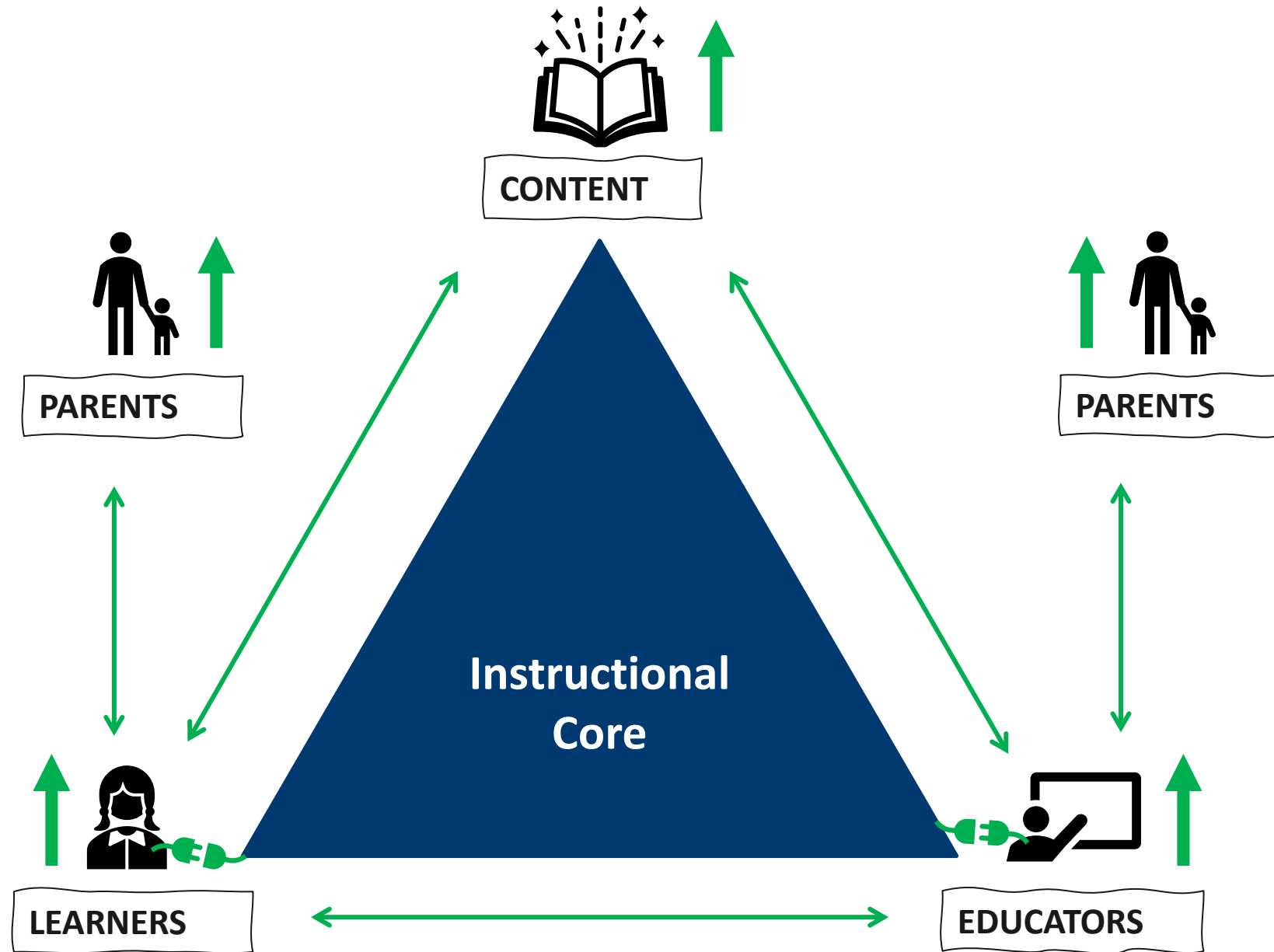
# AI WILL DIMINISH LEARNING EXPERIENCES IF IT...

- **Limits participation** in the instructional core
- **Reduces capabilities** of those in the instructional core
- **Reduces interaction** between those in the instructional core



# AI WILL ENRICH LEARNING EXPERIENCES IF IT...

- **Increases participation** in the instructional core
- **Boosts capabilities** of those in the instructional core
- **Supports interaction** between those in the instructional core





# IT'S NOT TOO LATE: HOW TO MITIGATE RISKS AND HARNESS BENEFITS



Design education experiences that know when, how, and when not to use AI.

Implement holistic AI literacy across systems.

Implement safeguards in AI design and user practices protect students.



# RECOMMENDATIONS



## PROSPER:

1. Shift educational experiences in school.
2. Co-create educational AI tools with educators, students, parents, and communities.
3. Use AI tools that teach, not tell.
4. Conduct research on children's learning and development in an AI world.

## PREPARE:

5. Promote holistic AI literacy for students, teachers, parents, and education leaders.
6. Prepare teachers to teach with and through AI.
7. Provide a clear vision for ethical AI use that centers human agency.
8. Employ innovative financing strategies to close the AI divide.

## PROTECT:

9. Break the engagement addiction and design platforms that are centered around positive mental health for children and youth.
10. Establish comprehensive regulatory frameworks for educational AI.
11. Procure technology that protects students' privacy, safety, and security.
12. Support families to manage children's AI use at home.

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**THANK YOU!**

**Check out the full report here:**



**Sign up for Rebecca Winthrop's LinkedIn Newsletter:  
Winthrop's World of Education**

**For more information, please reach out to the Brookings  
Institution Center for Universal Education at  
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