



UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

AI Guiding Principles & Vision

Fostering Excellence Through Innovation

“Sparked by curiosity. Amplified by intelligence. Guided by humanity.”

CONTEXT

Artificial Intelligence is transforming the world at unprecedented speed. Utica Community Schools embraces this moment through responsible innovation, balancing creativity with accountability and keeping the human spirit at the center of every learning experience.

This document establishes our Core Philosophy and Six Strategic Pillars to guide ethical, equitable, and transformative use of AI across teaching, learning, and operations. It is grounded in the UCS Empowered vision: to empower students to positively transform their future and the world.

This is not a policy of restriction. It is a framework for empowerment.

CORE PHILOSOPHY

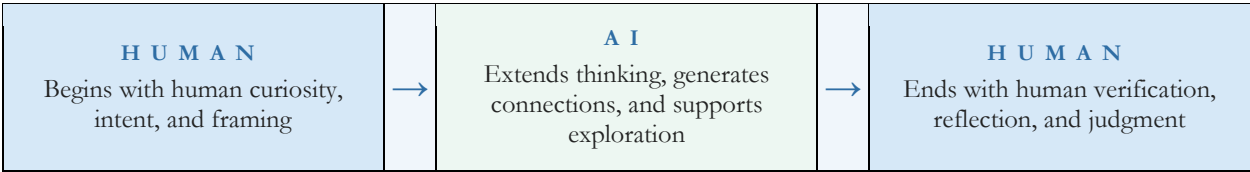
The Human-Centered Imperative

Utica Community Schools believes AI can deepen learning, expand creativity, and cultivate a culture where remarkable growth and achievement become the norm for every student. Technology must remain guided by human purpose, and human judgment must always have the final word.

We position AI as a thinking partner, present when it deepens learning and absent when it doesn't. It extends human curiosity, supports exploration, and scaffolds reflection without replacing empathy, imagination, moral reasoning, or the essential human bonds that define great teaching and learning. We approach this work as principled exploration, guided by wisdom, justice, and a deep empathy for every member of our community.

Our approach is grounded in empowerment and proactive capacity-building. We use AI to elevate original thinking, build creative confidence, and expand what every learner believes is possible. We teach frameworks, not just tools, giving students the agency, critical thinking, and ethical grounding to use AI in service of their own ideas. Our core philosophy reflects UCS's commitment to a culture of empowerment, caring, and transformation. It is this culture that cultivates the AI-Ready Graduate.

The Human-AI-Human (H-AI-H) Model — Our Governance Protocol



Key Commitments

AUGMENTATION, NOT REPLACEMENT AI enhances human capacity and creativity. Students and educators remain at the heart of every learning experience.	HUMAN OVERSIGHT A human is always in the loop. Educators retain full responsibility for instructional decisions. AI informs but never decides.	PURPOSEFUL INTEGRATION AI is applied deliberately and only where it best serves existing goals, reclaiming time for connection, creativity, and well-being when it does, and stepping aside when it doesn't.	THE AI-READY GRADUATE Our north-star: graduates with critical thinking, ethical reasoning, adaptive creativity, and technical fluency.
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STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Six Pillars of AI Guidance

Each pillar defines a domain of commitment. Detailed operational guidance, including specific tools, procedures, and classroom expectations, is maintained in supporting documents reviewed and updated regularly.

PILLAR 1 Ethical Use and Intellectual Integrity

We cultivate honest, ethical engagement with AI as a tool that strengthens genuine learning rather than substitutes for it.

- **Academic honesty:** AI use must strengthen a culture of transparency, intellectual ownership, and authentic effort. Integrity is built from the inside out, not policed from the outside in.
- **Ethical leadership:** Educators hold themselves to the same standards of transparency, disclosure, and authentic engagement they expect from students. How we use AI as professionals models the culture of integrity we are building.
- **Integrity through education:** We acknowledge that AI detection tools have significant limitations and that AI is inseparable from our students' world. Rather than relying on detection and consequences as our primary response, we invest in building the judgment, integrity, and self-awareness students need to make responsible choices independently. Where misuse occurs, clear and consistent expectations remain in place.

Operational guidance for disclosure expectations, integrity policies, and ethical use frameworks is maintained separately.

PILLAR 2 Information Integrity and Output Verification

We approach AI outputs as thoughtful, questioning thinkers. We examine before trusting, and verify before sharing.

- **Socratic skepticism:** We teach learners to use questioning as a tool for deeper understanding, not to replace AI, but to ensure it serves human reasoning rather than the other way around. Before trusting or sharing what AI produces we ask: Is this accurate? Is this complete? Whose perspective might be missing? This practice reflects our commitment to epistemic responsibility, the obligation to verify, reflect, and think critically before accepting AI outputs as truth.
- **Bias awareness:** AI systems reflect the limitations and biases of their training data. Users are taught to identify, name, and challenge these biases rather than accept outputs uncritically.
- **Agreeable inaccuracy:** AI tools are designed to be agreeable, a tendency known as AI sycophancy. They can reinforce misconceptions, flatter the user, and tell people what they want to hear. More subtly, AI can produce

content that sounds plausible and confident but is quietly inaccurate, a phenomenon called banal deception, where ordinary errors arrive without obvious warning signs. Both tendencies make critical interrogation of AI responses a core digital literacy skill at UCS. We teach learners to question what AI produces, not simply validate it.

- **Output verification:** We acknowledge the risk of hallucinations, which are confidently stated inaccuracies, and embed verification habits across all AI use in classrooms and operations.
- **Harm prevention:** The district prohibits the creation or dissemination of deepfakes, misinformation, or harmful synthetic media using AI tools.

Operational guidance for bias review processes, verification protocols, and response procedures is maintained separately.

PILLAR 3 Data Privacy, Security, and Legal Compliance

We protect every member of our community in every digital interaction.

- **Legal compliance:** Adherence to FERPA, COPPA, and Michigan state privacy laws is mandatory and non-negotiable across all AI use.
- **PII protection:** No personally identifiable information may be entered into non-vetted or public-facing AI systems without explicit authorization.
- **Vendor accountability:** All AI tools undergo rigorous vetting. Vendors must meet UCS security standards and may not repurpose student data for model training.
- **Family partnership:** Families are informed and engaged partners in understanding how AI systems interact with student data. Transparency is a commitment, not an afterthought.

Operational guidance for vendor vetting, approved-tool lists, and data-handling procedures is maintained separately.

PILLAR 4 AI Literacy and Capacity Building

We prepare our entire community, students, educators, and families, through knowledge, reflection, and durable skills.

- **Educator empowerment:** Professional learning builds ethical frameworks, instructional strategies, and technical fluency. Teachers are equipped to lead, not follow, when it comes to AI in their classrooms. The right question is not ‘how do we catch students using AI?’ but ‘how do we design learning experiences worth doing?’ UCS educators are supported in building assignments that develop genuine thinking, where AI use is either irrelevant, transparent, or instructional.
- **Curricular integration:** Instruction teaches students both about AI (how it works, its limitations, its social implications) and with AI (purposeful, responsible application).
- **Intellectual property and creative rights:** Students and educators understand that AI systems are built on human creativity. We teach responsible engagement with questions of copyright, attribution, and the rights of authors, artists, and innovators whose work informs AI tools.
- **Socratic and critical thinking:** Learners develop the habits of questioning, analyzing, and reasoning alongside AI, building digital citizenship and creative confidence. AI is a thinking partner, not a thinking replacement.
- **Cognitive sustainability:** AI integration should strengthen long-term human capacity rather than create dependency. We monitor for over-reliance, ensuring AI use builds original thinking, memory, and independent reasoning rather than eroding it.
- **The AI-Ready Graduate:** Our north-star outcome is a graduate who does more than use AI fluently. A UCS graduate is equipped to think critically about AI outputs, contribute original ideas that AI cannot replicate, communicate effectively with AI systems through skilled prompting, and make deliberate ethical choices about when and how AI serves their work. They leave UCS not dependent on any particular tool, but confident and capable in a world where those tools will keep changing.

Operational guidance for curriculum standards, professional development, and assessment alignment is maintained separately.

PILLAR 5 Equity, Access, and Inclusivity

AI must be a bridge, not a barrier. Its purpose is empowerment, not remediation.

- **Universal access:** Every student deserves equitable access to safe, high-quality, district-supported AI tools, regardless of economic circumstance. We actively prevent a digital divide from forming within our community.

- **Inclusive design:** AI tools and practices are selected and implemented to support the full range of learners, including students with disabilities and multilingual learners, as a matter of both equity and excellence.
- **Empowerment over remediation:** We reject a deficit-centered model of AI integration. Rather than using AI primarily to identify and fix what students cannot do, we use it to amplify what they can, building agency, creative confidence, and self-direction in every learner.
- **Student agency:** Students are positioned as active creators and shapers of technology, not passive consumers of it. They participate in the discourse about how AI is used in their education.

Operational guidance for access equity, accessibility standards, and inclusive implementation is maintained separately.

PILLAR 6 Governance, Transparency, and Continuous Improvement

We remain agile, accountable, and reflective. Responsible leadership in a rapidly changing landscape demands nothing less.

- **Living documents:** All AI guidelines are treated as living documents, reviewed and updated regularly to align with new technologies, evolving research, and changing legal requirements.
- **Stakeholder inclusion:** The development and revision of AI guidance requires active engagement with educators, students, families, and community partners. Student voice is not a courtesy. It is a structural commitment. UCS students participate directly in the discourse about AI in their education.
- **Transparency and accountability:** We communicate openly about AI use and evaluate its educational impact with data and honesty, celebrating what works and addressing what does not.
- **Clear escalation:** Protocols exist for addressing misuse, bias incidents, and vendor non-compliance swiftly, transparently, and in alignment with our values.

Operational guidance for review cycles, stakeholder engagement, and escalation procedures is maintained separately.

Our Commitment

Utica Community Schools has always held that excellence is not an accident. It is the result of continuous improvement, courageous decision-making, and an unwavering belief in the potential of every learner. That same conviction guides our approach to Artificial Intelligence.

We do not adopt AI because it is new. We adopt it because, used with purpose and wisdom, it can help us ignite a deeper passion for learning, honor the full humanity of every student, and realize our shared vision: to empower students to positively transform their future and the world.

These principles are our commitment to our students, our families, our educators, and our community.

“Sparked by curiosity. Amplified by intelligence. Guided by humanity.”

Excellence through innovation. Always with the human spirit at the center.