



Education | Healthcare | Public Services

# NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR AI INSTRUCTION

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## THE AI ACADEMY BRIEF MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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April 2026 · Issue #2

*Insights, educator voices, and practical ideas from the National Academy for AI Instruction.*

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# Opening Message

Artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming part of how students learn and how educators teach. But as its use grows, so does an important question: are these tools helping us think more deeply, or helping us avoid thinking altogether?

Too often, the conversation is framed as a choice: adopt AI or restrict it. Teaching and learning have never worked that way. What matters is not just whether AI is used, but how it is used. In classrooms, learning depends on students engaging in critical thinking, grappling with ideas, making meaning, and building understanding over time.

When students rely on AI to generate answers, complete assignments, or shortcut problem-solving, they risk missing that work. The concern is not the tool itself, but the possibility that it can replace the cognitive effort learning requires.

As AI becomes more present in classrooms, the central challenge is not access to the technology but ensuring it is used in ways that preserve and strengthen thinking. That challenge does not stop at the classroom door. As students use AI at home, schools and educators must help set clear expectations so that learning is reinforced, not undone, outside of it.

# Where we Stand

At the Academy, our position is clear: AI must support student thinking, not replace it.

The Academy is focused on educator use of AI: helping teachers reduce workload, plan instruction, and support students more effectively. That focus is intentional. Educators need the time, space, and training to understand these tools before they are widely placed in students' hands.

At the same time, we recognize the reality that students are already using AI. That makes it essential for educators to set clear boundaries for use of AI in the classroom and beyond. Students need to learn what appropriate use looks like in school, and families need clear guidance so that supervision at home reinforces, rather than undermines, those expectations.

Cognitive offloading, when AI does the thinking for the user, poses a direct challenge to learning. Writing, problem-solving, analysis, and reflection are how students build knowledge and independence. When that work is outsourced, learning is diminished.

This is where educator leadership matters most. Teachers are best positioned to decide when AI can support learning and when it risks undermining it. That includes setting boundaries for student use, designing assignments that prioritize thinking and process, and helping students distinguish between using AI as a support and using it as a substitute.

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# Rob's Reflections

One of the most common concerns about AI in schools is that students will use it to complete their work without learning the fundamentals, a phenomenon researchers call “cognitive offloading,” which many teachers refer to as cheating or plagiarism.

Given the power and versatility of AI, this concern is both real and pressing. We've all heard stories of struggling student writers suddenly submitting PhD-level papers. But before placing too much blame on students, it's worth taking a step back. Way back.

In 1536, William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English, used the printing press to spread his work. He wasn't executed for “cognitive offloading” in the modern sense, but for challenging institutional control over knowledge. His story shows that new ways of distributing knowledge can drive progress, even when they're initially resisted and sometimes punished.

It should not be surprising that unsupervised use of AI can lead to poor outcomes, even moving students backwards. While today's students have access to more powerful tools than ever before, the desire to find shortcuts is nothing new, it's as old as teaching itself. As educators, our responsibility is not just to recognize this reality, but to design learning experiences that adjust for it. In many ways, this moment is no different from when calculators first entered the classroom, or when the printing press made the Bible available in English. It simply demands that we address reality and where necessary, adapt.

To be clear, there is productive offloading and unproductive offloading. Our role as educators is to guide students through thoughtful instructional design and high expectations, toward the kind that moves their thinking forward. That is the work we strive to do every day at the National Academy. When necessary, we adapt to progress and shape it into a force that strengthens what we do for and with students. Cognitive offloading is not a modern phenomenon brought on by AI. It has always been a fundamental part of human progress for thousands of years. We create tools to relieve cognitive and physical burdens so we can focus on higher-order thinking and creation. Each generation shifts certain tasks onto new tools, and that shift is not a sign of laziness, it is adaptation. Done well, offloading is not a departure from what makes us human, but an expression of what makes us most human.

I hope you consider attending, either in-person or online, one of our courses that directly address cognitive offloading. The first is our “Critical Thinking in the Age of AI” session and the second is “Teaching for Thinking in the Age of AI.”

I know it will be well worth the time.

— Rob Weil, Chief Executive Officer of the National Academy for AI Instruction

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# Voices from the Academy

*This April, the National Academy for AI Instruction had the pleasure of hosting Critical Thinking in the Age of AI to some of the Instructional Coaches at the UFT Teachers Center. This session emphasized the importance of questioning, verifying, and refining AI-generated content before it reaches students—because while AI can be an incredible thought partner, it doesn't always get it right. Here's what participants had to say:*

"I recently spent two hours in an AI Academy professional learning session about critical thinking and AI. We specifically looked at how we as teachers can be more thoughtful about using these tools in our work. A big part of the training was about how to actually fact-check AI-generated info. We talked about how to spot gaps or errors in its answers and how to write prompts that force the AI to provide real sources and evidence. The session really pushed the idea that we shouldn't just take AI content at face value. Instead, we need to model that questioning mindset for our students.

Another big takeaway for me was the need for total transparency. It is important to be open with our students about the fact that we use these tools and that we know they exist too. Moving forward, I want to be much more intentional with how I use technology and make sure I am giving my students real opportunities to double-check and verify what they see online."

— Lauren Pennock, UFTTC Instructional Coach, P811X: The Academy for Career and Living Skills



"I was deeply moved by the way this professional learning session framed critical thinking as a skill we must actively protect in the age of AI. Our discussion around cognitive offloading really stuck with me and served as an important reminder that AI should enhance thinking, not replace it. Students still need intentional moments of productive struggle without AI support.

I'm returning to my school building with a commitment to helping teachers, students, and our entire school community view AI as a thinking partner rather than as a final destination. It genuinely feels like part of our civic duty to model and teach responsible use of this powerful tool."

— Sarah McLaughlin, UFTTC Site Coach, PS 14Q: The Fairview School

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On April 18, 2026, I had the opportunity to participate in Critical Thinking in the Age of AI, a professional learning experience presented by the National Academy for AI Instruction. As an educator, this session was both affirming and transformative. It reshaped how I think about AI in education, not as a shortcut or replacement for thinking, but as a meaningful partner that, when used intentionally, can deepen understanding and strengthen critical thinking.

What resonated with me most was how clearly the session connected AI use to our civic and professional responsibilities as educators. The Academy emphasized that understanding and engaging with AI is no longer optional. As teaching and learning continue to evolve at an incredibly fast pace, staying informed and adapting our practice is part of our responsibility to students. AI, when used ethically and thoughtfully, has the potential to support differentiation for all learners, from educators engaging in professional growth to students developing their own skills as thinkers, questioners, and informed citizens.

A key takeaway from the session was the reminder that real learning does not come from quick answers. AI should not be used as an easy way to complete tasks, but as an inquiry tool that we actively question and challenge. As educators, we must model this mindset for our students and teach them how to engage with AI responsibly. This means helping students understand that AI can support their thinking, but it should never replace it. That shift, from using AI for completion to using it for inquiry, was powerful and validating for me.

Learning about the C.I.V.I.C. routine was especially impactful. This process provided a clear, practical framework for challenging AI responses rather than accepting them at face value. It encourages users to slow down, verify information, research further, and analyze responses critically. Through this routine, I gained a deeper understanding of how AI can actually help strengthen human thinking when used with intention. It mirrors the same skills we aim to build in our classrooms every day: questioning sources, evaluating information, and reflecting before drawing conclusions.

This professional learning experience brought clarity to something many educators are still navigating: how to use AI ethically, purposefully, and in ways that truly benefit teaching and learning. While I could share much more about the C.I.V.I.C. routine and its impact, this type of learning is best experienced firsthand. I strongly encourage other educators to attend professional learning sessions offered by the National Academy for AI Instruction. They are leading the way in helping educators understand not just how to use AI, but how to teach students to engage with it thoughtfully and responsibly.

Ultimately, this experience reaffirmed for me that when educators are given the right tools, language, and understanding, we can confidently guide our students into the future. AI, when used as a thinking partner, has the potential to support deeper learning, stronger critical thinking, and more informed students and that is work worth embracing.

— Ketty Carrion, UFTTC Site Coach, PS111: Seton Falls

# Academy Highlights



Transforming Teaching & Planning: Clarity and Confidence in the Age of AI  
Bronx, NY • April 14 and April 21, 2026



Critical Thinking in the Age of AI  
Sleepy Hollow, NY • April 18, 2026



Transforming Teaching & Planning: Clarity and Confidence in the Age of AI  
New York, NY • April 28, 2026

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# Upcoming Sessions

The Academy offers both in-person and virtual sessions so educators can participate in the way that works best for them. We offer beginner and more advanced courses, so no matter your experience with AI, there is a training designed for you. Each session focuses on practical strategies you can apply right away.



[aiinstruction.org](https://aiinstruction.org)

## **In-Person:**

### **5/19/26 & 6/11/26- THE THINKING CLASSROOM: NAVIGATING CRITICAL THINKING AND COGNITIVE OFFLOADING IN THE AGE OF AI**

Examine how to evaluate AI-generated content and address cognitive offloading — helping educators design learning experiences that keep students thinking critically while using AI responsibly.

*MORE IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL SESSIONS ARE COMING SOON. ON-DEMAND SESSIONS CAN ALSO BE FOUND HERE, ALONG WITH A WEALTH OF OTHER FREE AI RESOURCES: [WWW.SHAREMYLESSON.COM/NAI.I](https://www.sharemylesson.com/naaii). TO REGISTER OR VISIT THE AI ACADEMY WEBSITE, SCAN THE QR CODE ABOVE. THE NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR AI INSTRUCTION COURSES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT POINTS.*

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# Upcoming Sessions

## **Virtual:**

### **5/11/26- WHO'S DOING THE THINKING? AI, COGNITIVE OFFLOADING, AND WHAT'S AT STAKE**

Explore cognitive offloading in the age of AI and its impact on student thinking — helping educators design learning experiences that keep students engaged in genuine struggle, original thought, and independent judgment.

### **5/26/26- AI FOR EDUCATORS: A FOUNDATIONAL GUIDE**

Learn practical ways to use AI to streamline planning, spark creativity, and support instruction — while keeping teacher voice, safety, and responsible use at the center.

### **6/16/2026- CRITICAL THINKING IN THE AGE OF AI**

Discover how to strengthen critical thinking in the age of AI by questioning claims, evaluating sources, and refining prompts — helping educators model responsible AI use in the classroom.

### **6/23/26- AGENTS IN ACTION: BUILDING CLASSROOM PARTNERS WITH AI**

Discover how to design custom classroom AI agents that support planning, feedback, and instruction — while prioritizing safety, privacy, and teacher control.

### **6/30/26- SMART SUPPORTS: USING AI TO SCAFFOLD AND DIFFERENTIATE FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS**

Learn how to use AI to differentiate instruction and scaffold grade-level content for English Learners — supporting language development and equitable access across proficiency levels.

Each issue, we spotlight one practical AI tool, explain what it does, and show how educators can use it responsibly. This month:

## My Favorite AI Tool .... NotebookLM

As a teacher, NotebookLM can take your content material and generate personalized, multimodal learning resources. As a student, it can be your interactive study companion helping you understand complex content. Upload virtually any type of resource to create podcasts, videos, flash cards, quizzes, slide decks and more. Learn how to use my favorite (and safe) AI tool effectively and responsibly by clicking [here](#).

## Cranston Coaches Corner (CCC)

Ideas You Can Actually Use

Pete Guyon is the Instructional Coach Coordinator for Cranston Public Schools (RI), where he leads district efforts in blended and personalized learning and artificial intelligence. As a national trainer for the AI academy, he supports educators nationally in integrating innovative practices into teaching and learning through his Cranston Coaches Corner (CCC) newsletter. Subscribers receive updates on AI implementation, effective prompting examples, technology tips, and Google updates along with a professional learning certificate. It's completely free to sign up, [click here](#).

