

Should Artificial Intelligence Replace Human Teachers?

College debate | Against replacement, in favour of responsible support

SPEAKER NOTE

About five minutes at a steady pace. Delivery notes and source notes are not part of the spoken speech.

An answer is not always an education

Respected judges, teachers and friends, imagine walking into class tomorrow. The board is ready. The lesson starts on time. Every question gets an instant answer. But when you say, "I don't think I can do this," there is nobody who really knows you on the other side of the screen.

Would that classroom be efficient? Probably. Would it be enough? That is the question.

I stand against the motion that artificial intelligence should replace human teachers. I am not arguing against AI. I am arguing against confusing a useful tool with the person responsible for our learning.

Let me begin with the strongest case for the other side. AI can be patient. It can explain a difficult idea again, change the example and let a student practise without feeling embarrassed. A student revising late at night does not have to wait until the next class to ask a question. Translation and text-to-speech tools can also make learning material easier to use.

Think of a college student stuck on a spreadsheet formula. An AI assistant can suggest a formula and explain each part. That is useful help. And for a teacher managing a crowded class, tools that prepare practice questions or organise routine work can save time. We should take those advantages seriously.

What the replacement argument misses

But helpful is not the same as sufficient. An AI system can produce a confident answer that is wrong. If a student cannot already judge the answer, confidence becomes a trap. The teacher's job includes checking understanding, questioning the method and deciding whether the student has actually learned anything.

In that spreadsheet example, the formula might work on one row and fail on the next. A good teacher asks, "Why did you lock that cell reference?" That small question reveals whether the student understands the logic or has merely copied a result.

Teaching also involves decisions that are not just about content. A student who stops submitting work may be confused, exhausted or facing trouble at home. A teacher can notice the change, speak privately and decide when support is needed. A machine may detect a pattern. Detection is not the same as a relationship.

There is another practical problem. A replacement plan assumes that everyone has a reliable device, a stable connection and somewhere quiet to study. That is not a safe assumption. If access fails, the students who need support most may be the first to lose it. Learning data also deserves protection; a classroom should not become a careless experiment with students' private information.

Keep the tool. Keep the teacher.

The opposition may say, "Human teachers make mistakes too." Of course they do. That is an argument for better training, fair evaluation and useful support, not for removing human responsibility. We improve hospitals with technology; we do not assume that a screen should take responsibility for every difficult decision.

They may also say AI is cheaper. But a serious comparison must count devices, maintenance, training, privacy safeguards and help when something goes wrong. A low price is not much of a saving if students are left with gaps nobody notices.

UNESCO's guidance calls for a human-centred approach to AI in education. That makes sense to me. Let AI help prepare exercises, offer another explanation and

reduce routine work. Let teachers check the output, choose how to use it and remain responsible for the class.

The future classroom does not have to choose between a caring teacher and a clever tool. It can have both. But it must know which one is in charge.

A machine can give me an answer. A good teacher helps me understand the question, challenge the answer and find the courage to ask again.

So give teachers better tools. Give students better access. But do not mistake the speed of a reply for the depth of an education. Thank you.

DELIVERY TIPS

Pause after "Would it be enough?" and before the final three sentences. Emphasise REPLACE, RESPONSIBILITY and BOTH. Keep the spreadsheet example conversational. Slow down for the conclusion; do not shout. Rehearse with a timer.

Sources (not spoken): UNESCO. (2023). Guidance for generative AI in education and research. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/guidance-generative-ai-education-and-research>

UNESCO. (2024). AI competency framework for teachers. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-competency-framework-teachers>

Rehearsal cue	What to do
Opening question	Look at the audience; pause before answering
AI advantages	Use a fair tone, not sarcasm
Spreadsheet example	Stress the word WHY
Counterargument	Acknowledge the point, then answer it
Last line	Finish slowly; leave one beat before thank you