Secondary Language Arts AI Classroom Policy

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Context:

The goal of this policy statement is to serve as a model for most high school language arts classrooms in Minnesota. The skills focused on in the Minnesota language arts high school standards revolve mainly around critical analysis and understanding of texts, the ability to prepare for and speak publicly, and the writing and presenting process for creative, persuasive, and informative texts (Otherwise phrased as "reading, writing, and speaking, viewing & listening"). Many school districts lack an overarching AI policy or leave the policy vague to allow for teacher and administrator interpretation. While this can be useful, it can also lead to frustration from educators due to lack of specific direction, confusion from students due to inconsistency, and impatience from administrators because of failure to effectively implement their policy. The hope of this essay is to provide a clear--but flexible--teacher-level policy that can be applied consistently to all secondary ELA classrooms in Minnesota. This policy advocates for an open, integrated, and modeling-driven classroom experience that situates AI as a drafting and outlining tool with a focus on the writing process rather than the final product.

Policy Statement:

As stated in the context section this paper, This policy advocates for an open, integrated, and modeling-driven classroom experience that situates AI as a drafting and outlining tool with a focus on the writing process rather than the final product. This section serves to expand on what "open," "integrated," and "modeling-driven" means, and how it helps achieve the goal of a process-centered AI-use experience.

- **Open:**

  An important term to know in education is the concept of the "least restrictive environment." This term is mostly used in special education as a way to advocate for

students to be implemented into general-education classes. In Gen-ed, I apply this term to mean that the role of education is not to railroad students into a single correct response or way of thinking. To create the least restrictive environment, teachers need to create assignments that are open-ended, allow for multiple interpretations, spark discussion, or ask students to create something new. An "open" AI policy is one that brings AI tools into the least restrictive environment by allowing exploration, use, and transformation of assignments using said tools. This also involves honest and in-depth conversations about how AI works, what it can and cannot do, what it should and should not be used for in class, and how to cite AI use both from the teacher and student perspective. The MLA-CCCC's joint task force paper highlights a few key areas of focus for educators and administrators looking to implement AI into their curriculum. Specifically, they mark the importance of an "ethic of transparency," a focus on "collaborative rather than adversarial relationship between teachers and students," and "prioritiz[ing] the development of critical AI literacy in faculty leaders and higher education administrators" (Byrd, et. al, 2023). All of these points advocate for more discussion, transparency, and literacy surrounding AI use in the classroom, supporting this policy's focus on openness.

- **Integrated:**

AI integration means including the use-- or the possibility of use-- of AI tools into multiple facets of a student's education. Units should always start with backwards design, or the process of building a unit around a skill. This involves asking what the skill being focused on is, what assessment will show that skill, and what texts or tools will help develop those skills? For this final question, AI tools should be considered alongside other educational tools for their benefits and deficits. Consider what AI tools can do that

others cannot. Integrating AI means not only *allowing* for its use, but teaching *new* uses of the tool to students. Just as students become more proficient with Microsoft Word or a graphing calculator as their education goes on, so too should they become more proficient with LLMs. Again, the MLA-CCCC offers guidance to educators and administrators. In their article, "Building a Culture for Generative AI Literacy in College Language, Literature, and Writing," the authors recommend that teachers begin by educating themselves about AI. They suggest that teachers and administrators experiment on their own with AI tools, learn about AI by reading current and historical nonfiction about the subject, and seek out professional development (Adisa et. al. 2024). A teacher who feels more confident with their own AI use will be more open to including and teaching the use of AI in their classroom.

With integration comes the responsibility of conscientious use, not only for the students but also for the educator. Educators have a responsibility not only to allow the use of AI tools, but to show students how to use them to enhance their learning. AI tools, like any new technology, require experimentation and exploration to discover their uses, and it is the duty of educators to show students how to tread carefully into this new territory. Aguilar (2024) offers useful recommendations for educators to help them take up this responsibility and incorporate AI into their classroom thoughtfully. His recommendations include, (1) teaching to contextualize, which means educating students how to position their text within a course, thus framing them as the experts teaching the AI how to work with the information; (2) teaching to write ethically, which means teaching students how to draft prompts and ask reflexive questions intentionally and with the purpose of developing a socio-politically aware AI response; (3) teaching to

recognize problematic output, which means working with students to understand when AI outputs may be harmful, either because of misinformation or biased output, and showing students how to revise and reframe AI responses through directed prompting; and (4) giving grace to AI answers, which means understanding that using AI in drafting is an imperfect science and that students, while using AI will produce imperfect or imprecise answers.

- **Modeling-Driven:**

  Modeling, in educational terms, is the act of doing things for or with students to show them how to do something. The importance of seeing a teacher do something is incalculable in assisting student understanding. The MLA-CCCC (2023) article says that teaching through modeling shows students much more effectively how to access AI tools. When I say that a class should be modeling-driven, I mean that each lesson should include a literacy model wherein the teacher works with the AI in a way visible to students --whether through live projection, screen sharing, or post-modeling screenshots. Teachers should not only model their own examples, but walk with students through their personal work. The importance of modeling is that it allows teachers to show new content or ways of using AI tools to students in a controlled environment. There is, of course, something to be said for open-ended student experimentation, but students do not know what they do not know. This emphasis on modeling also places a responsibility on educators to familiarize themselves with AI tools so as to make them more able to teach students, but also to preempt new ways of using AI tools incorrectly.

The goal of creating an open, integrated, and modeling-driven AI policy in a language arts classroom is to encourage students to use AI like they would a calculator in math class. The

purpose of AI in language arts is to assist with the more tedious aspects of writing in order to free up students' mental capacity for higher-level thinking. The recommendations below list considerations for educators to help them integrate AI into their classrooms.

Recommendations for Educators:

Teachers should, to the best of their abilities, try and accommodate the thesis stated earlier; that is, focusing on an open, integrated, and modeling-driven approach to AI in the secondary language arts classroom. To that end, language arts educators should try their best to include the following recommendations into their curricula and classroom practices:

1. Focus on writing instruction through the lens of a process. Writing is a valuable tool for learning, exploring, and sharing knowledge, and its mastery should be the central focus of language arts classrooms.
2. Build AI tools into your curricula design. Consider how it can be a part of your summative assessments and how you can build literacy through guided practice on formative assessments. Frank and Johnson (2023) make a similar claim in their draft of UCSB's writing program AI policy, stating educators should, "Inform students of AI's wide range of potential applications that fall along a spectrum of authorship. AI might be prompted to serve as co-author, editor, formatter, paraphraser, phrase-level thesaurus, word-level thesaurus, grammar aid, peer brainstorming partner, audience member, tutor, etc." Integrating these applications means building one's own skill in using AI tools for said applications.
3. Practice viewing AI as an assistive tool rather than a nefarious one. Consider how it can positively affect student outcomes rather than hinder them. A tool becomes a weapon through improper use!

4. Create an atmosphere of transparency about AI use in the classroom. Model use of the tool for students on different types of assignments and include disclaimers for students when AI was used in the creation of work. Ask that students make visible whether AI was used in their own work.
5. Focus on developing students' skills in understanding and using AI for everyday tasks. Develop their critical AI literacy by teaching them how to critically analyze AI outputs and to develop thoughtful prompts. Frank and Johnson(2023) further inform this point by suggesting that educators, "Encourage student creativity and curiosity by leveraging AI writing technology to create prompts, topics, or questions for exploration. Challenge students to interrogate how AI writing technology can help them compose pieces across various genres, styles, and perspectives." The development of AI literacy can be a process shared by both teachers and students. Educators should ask questions of AI that they and students can explore together.

Recommendations for Students:

AI is a rapidly evolving technology which will have a great impact on the future of the world. For students, AI may seem confusing, daunting, or unclear in its motives. It is okay to ask for help understanding AI. Below are some recommendations for students who may wish to use AI tools in their learning experience:

1. Review your school's policy for AI use, as well as your teacher's if they have one.
2. Ask your teachers about what level of AI use they find appropriate in class, and what kind of AI surveillance tools they use, if any.

3. Create an atmosphere of transparency with your teacher and classmates. Be open and honest about when you use AI and what you use it for.
4. Discuss your use of AI with other students to increase your own understanding of different ways of using the tool.
5. Be critical of AI responses. Educate yourself on what AI is and how it works, as well as its weaknesses before using it. Remember that all AI tools are products first, and are programmed to get you to continue using them, to trust them, and to answer using a code of conduct trained into it by a private company. AI is prone to hallucinating information and to inaccurate readings of given material. Always read through and analyze AI responses and double check them against a secondary source, as you would with any research.
6. Do not give control of your writing to the machine. Decisions about voice, rhetoric, sentence structure, and other style-based decisions should be controlled by you, the author. Be careful not to surrender your creative or rhetorical control of your writing to the AI. AI should never be something that replaces your thinking, only supplements it.

Counterarguments & Concerns:

This policy advocates for the open use of AI to assist in student learning. There are benefits and drawbacks to this method of integration. AI tools are still new and widely untested, they evolve quickly and their ability to replicate human text is nearing a level indistinguishable from actual humans. Students at the high school level are often less concerned about what they are learning and more concerned with getting a passing grade or completing work quickly to do something preferable outside of school. An open-use policy approaches AI from a good-faith standpoint, one that may be easily taken advantage of by students who wish to earn a good grade

for minimum effort. This section of the policy explores some of the policy weaknesses of this policy and attempts to offer solutions to these problems.

The Ease of Ease:

One of the goals of any new technology is to ease some burden on humanity by replacing or enhancing the amount of work that a human can do. This holds true for AI writing tools. As LLMs develop and become more advanced, they become better at replicating human writing patterns and thus more useful as writing tools. One concern to be had about any AI policy advocating for integration is that the use of LLMs will inevitably entice struggling writers to simply replace their own writing with that of the AI. In a high school setting specifically, this can become a problem because students are supposed to be developing the skills of good writing. Open access to AI means that many students will simply become good prompters rather than good writers. Cummings, Monroe, and Watkins (2024) counter this concern by pointing out that many students, when given the option to use AI writing assistants (at a post-secondary level) choose not to use AI for various reasons. Some of those reasons include:

- Students lack an understanding of how LLMs work.
- Students do not trust AI to effectively encompass their own ideas, or fear that AI will inject its own beliefs and biases into their work.
- Students feel that AI is less authentic than their own writing.
- Students fear becoming dependent on the AI to do their writing if they begin using it.
- In terms of feedback, students generally prefer human feedback to AI suggestions.

- Hallucinations and difficulty in learning to engineer prompts leads to students feeling frustrated with AI tools.

These concerns point to the idea that AI may be easy to use casually, but to attempt to have it create professional-level writing, or even writing of high school level quality, is often just as much work as writing the answer oneself. Students who wish to do well in school recognize the more visible pitfalls of AI just as well as educators do, and choose instead to avoid the tool. If educators would show students the current limitations of AI through controlled experimentation and practice, students may feel more safe to use LLMs to assist in their writing.

Thinking Replacement:

Similar to issues of ease, and mentioned specifically by Cummings, Monroe, and Watkins (2024), one of the concerns about AI use in classrooms is that it will replace student thinking by injecting its own biases and ideas into student writing. Students do not need to produce their own opinions about a given topic if the AI can produce an effective answer for them. In a secondary classroom, teachers are focused specifically on developing the skills of creative and critical thinking. AI may very quickly become a hindrance to these goals by making it easier for students to create a product without going through the process. To alleviate this issue, educators should focus on what Aguilar (2023) recommends, namely, teaching to contextualize, or educating students how to position their text within a course, and thus framing them as the experts who will teach the AI how to work with the information. Students are the idea-makers, and AI are the processors putting the ideas together. This will center student ideas as the focus of the writing.

Process versus Product:

One of the concerns brought up by Fernandes & McIntyre (2025) is that use of AI surveillance tools creates a focus on the product that students present instead of the process of creation. This is a valid concern for secondary LA classrooms because oftentimes teachers produce rubrics and outlines that students follow and grade solely on the outcome of those outlines and rubrics, rather than the effort put into that thinking, planning, and drafting. One way to alleviate this concern is to emphasize the human aspect of student writing, and to grade things like having a distinct and professional author's voice, having students orally explain or present their ideas rather than simply writing them down, or grading outlines themselves.

Flattening of Student Voice:

Another concern raised by Fernandes & McIntyre (2025) is the homogenization of English writing through AI standardization. LLMs function based on the averages of its training data, and so tools like Grammarly push students to use a more white, academic, and Euro-American style of English in their writing. This reduces student voice in writing and changes how the writing's message may be received. It removes part of humanity from the text and minimizes non-dominant forms of English leading to a separation between written and spoken language and forcing students to effectively code-switch between the two types of language. This is difficult to alleviate, as prescriptive grammar rules that AI is trained to follow often contradict local or non-standard Englishes. In cases where students write and speak a non-American/British style of English, consider having students review each other's work rather than including AI. Part of AI literacy is knowing when *not* to use the tool!

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