

What is equity in education?

Equitable education systems are those that ensure the achievement of educational potential regardless of personal and social circumstances*

Ways that AI may enhance educational equity:



Expanded access to educational resources

AI can facilitate access to educational resources in underserved and remote areas, reducing barriers to learning equity in systems with teacher shortages or limited funding.



Personalized learning support

Some AI tools offer personalized, 24/7 educational support, adapting content, pace, and difficulty levels to meet different students' learning needs in ways that may help to reduce educational gaps.



Improved accessibility

AI tools can make learning materials more accessible for students with diverse learning needs through resources like speech-to-text/text-to-speech, automatic captioning, translation, and reading simplification. These supports can enhance equity and increase participation for students who face barriers in traditional classrooms.

How does the use of AI impact equity in education?

Equity is a core value of the TVDSB. The integration of AI into educational settings may support this value by helping to reduce educational gaps. However, research suggests that AI tools may also exacerbate inequities in education.

Further resources on AI and equity in education:



Ways that AI may threaten educational equity:



Digital divide

Different students may have varying degrees of access to AI. Paid versions of AI tools often produce higher quality results than free versions, and the use of these tools typically requires access to certain digital resources (e.g., access to devices, adequate internet connection).

Given that schools with high shares of socio-economically disadvantaged students already report inadequate access to digital resources, the use of AI tools may exacerbate socioeconomic inequities in education.



Privacy and data protection

Many AI tools gather and store significant amounts of student data, raising concerns about surveillance, privacy violations, and misuse of personal information. These concerns contribute to inequity in education, as the students who rely on AI most (due to additional support needs, lack of access to other recourses, etc.) are at greater risk of violation.



Biases

AI programs can reflect biases found in the data used to train them, which may lead to unfair treatment of some students. For example, educational AI tools have been shown to favour certain writing styles, languages, and cultural references, leading to lower-quality support and unfair assessment of students from underrepresented or marginalized backgrounds.

AI can both enhance and threaten equity in education

These benefits and harms can even come from the *same features* of AI tools (e.g., AI's ability to personalize learning can help students get targeted support, but data-driven personalization can also reduce privacy and introduce bias).

Recognizing this complex relationship between AI and equity in education can help us make better decisions about the use of these tools and avoid worsening inequities in educational contexts.

* Definition from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on "The Potential Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Equity and Inclusion in Education" (2024).