CCAE 2023 Award Winners

Congratulations to retired OTAN Coordinator Penny Pearson and CAEP TAP Coordinator Dr. Veronica Parker who were recognized for their dedication to the CCAE community at their state conference.

Penny Pearson   **Dr. Veronica Parker**

Presented with both the Robert W. Rupert and Lifetime Membership Awards, Penny's dedication to Adult Education and her visionary contributions to EdTech and distance learning advocacy were celebrated.

Additionally, Dr. Veronica Parker, celebrated with her esteemed leadership with compliance, equity, and professional development, was recognized with the Excellence in Support Services – Classified Award. Thank you for your continued work and guidance with adult education agencies.

We honor and celebrate Penny and Veronica and appreciate their dedication to our adult educators and learners. To learn more about the awards visit: https://www.ccaestate org/2023-awardees.html

Inside This Issue:

Conversational Artificial Intelligence (Chat AI)

Everyone has used an Internet search to get information. Questions like "what is the distance between two points" or "define a word" that are placed in a search tool have answers given as links to websites that may have the correct information.
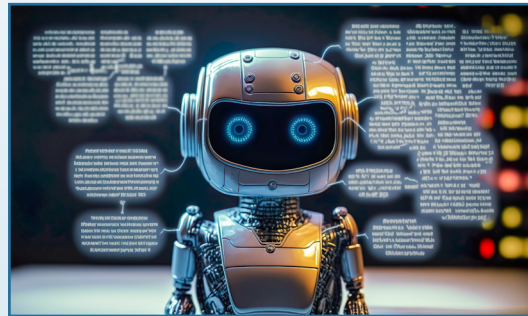
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is taking search to the next level - a conversation. When a request is placed within an online AI tool, the resulting answer describes or explains in conversation form.

How does it work? In simple terms, the tool scours the Internet's webpages, files, and other information to grab bits and pieces to give an answer. The answer given is in sentence or paragraph form (conversation) and may or may not include references. More information may be requested related to the same topic and more answers given. Voila! A conversation with a machine is born!

Although there are others, ChatGPT seems to be on the forefront of this new online technology. What is ChatGPT? We asked it to explain itself:

"ChatGPT is an AI-based chatbot that can converse with users using natural language. It is designed to understand and respond to a wide range of questions and requests in a way that resembles human conversation. ChatGPT is trained using a large dataset of text, which enables it to provide relevant and informative responses to users."

Along with ChatGPT, there are other emerging Chat AI tools. Microsoft's new Bing will cite and credit sources. Chatsonic allows 25 free "generations" a day (searches a day) and comes with different personas as well as an image generator. Google Bard (beta) is asking users to provide feedback on results to rate the responses so that a more accurate tool will be available when released to all.

As with all technologies, it is up to the user to be aware. Even ChatGPT includes a few cautions: "While we have safeguards in place, the system may occasionally generate incorrect or misleading information and produce offensive or biased content…Please don't share any sensitive information in your conversations."

OTAN is not recommending any Chat AI platform over another - we are still looking and chatting too! However, you can expect more on this exciting innovative technology in the future – maybe we'll chat!
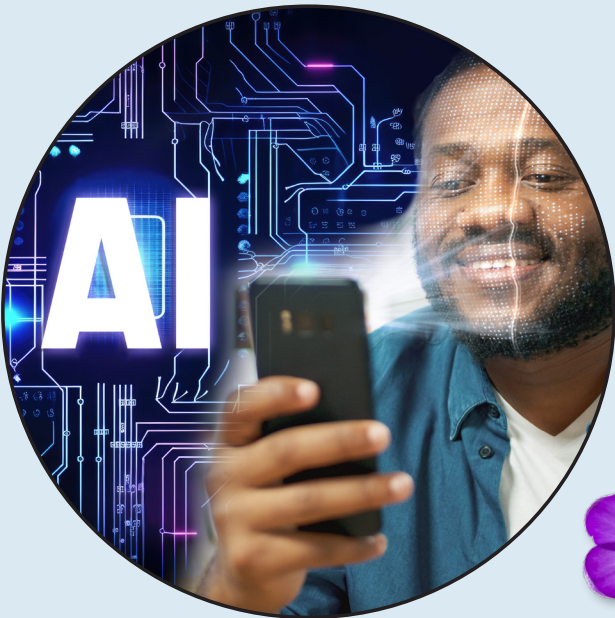
Roll with the Times: Accept and Adopt AI in your Instruction

Do you remember when teachers relented and let students use their cellphones in the classroom? Another technological transformation and accompanying ethical questions are here again with the proliferation of Artificial Intelligence tools for automation of routine tasks. Teachers are questioning the benefits of AI and pondering whether to ban it for student use.

You may not realize that you are already using AI when you use facial recognition to unlock your phone or get text suggestions that predict your next words.
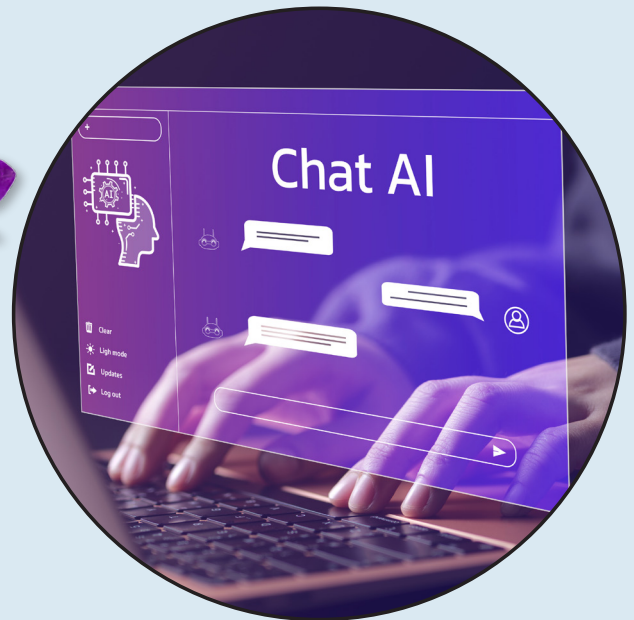
The buzz around AI in education revved up in November with ChatGPT-3, a Large Language Model (LLM) that can respond to prompts with a wide variety of texts. The number of uses for teachers is endless: generating conversation and discussion questions; creating, summarizing, and paraphrasing texts; extracting key vocabulary from texts for vocabulary lists and comprehension questions; generating model writing pieces; creating practice exercises, quizzes, and projects; writing lesson plans, syllabi, rubrics, and more.

Educators can teach students to use ChatGPT for a variety of educational and real-life purposes, from brainstorming to creating dialogs for difficult conversations to making their writing more formal or academic. ChatGPT can be helpful for students as a tutor, conversation partner, or language coach. However, it also has valuable applications outside of our classroom, such as getting a suggested starter resume, a cover letter, a letter or email to employers, kids' teachers, and others. Educators worry about students using ChatGPT

for writing assignments. Well-known plagiarism checkers claim to be able to detect ChatGPT for its formulaic writing, but to date, there are false positives. Many educators have embraced ChatGPT and even require students to use it with citations. Generative writing AI tools require writing instructors to use new methods – as the calculator did for math instructors.

ChatGPT was trained on human-generated data from 2021 and previous, so the information may not be current or accurate. Additionally, the output is not free from bias. Teaching information literacy (such as cross-checking output) is more important than ever.

ChatGPT use has grown fast, and there are alternatives, a few of which are Microsoft Bing Chat (based on GPT-3.5), Google Bard, and Chatsonia, which takes audio prompts. There are countless other AI tools and hundreds being released monthly, some specifically for education.

Can you imagine doing complicated math problems without a calculator? How about trying to get information without your cellphone? AI is the next technological wave to accept and make part of your teacher toolkit. As you start to introduce students to AI, teach information literacy and critical thinking. AI prompt engineering is the newest 21st Century skill to master! ⚙

Submitted by
Kristi Reyes, OTAN Subject Matter Expert

TDLS 2023 Hybrid Conference Highlights

OTAN's first hybrid Technology Distance Learning Symposium (TDLS) was a fantastic event! There were 369 registered adult educators and presenters representing K–12 adult education and other agencies. Attendees from all over the country, including California, Virginia, Arizona, Illinois, and many others, were able to join us for this year's TDLS. Over half of our total attendees chose to attend virtually. There were over 85 sessions on many topics. The most popular were:

- *Rock Your World: AI in AE Saves Teachers Time* - Kristi Reyes
- *Engaging Conversation and Pronunciation Activities in Zoom* - Monica Cueva
- *Four Easy Steps to Improving Student Writing Skills* - Janice Fera
- *Super Six Survival Sites for Teaching and Learning* - Devon Werble
- *Creating with Canva - It's FREE!* - Audrey Dierdorff

❝ So many great sessions as always. TDLS is one of the best conferences. There is so much there that it is hard to choose a session. I always come away with more things to try out! ❞

OTAN hosted its very first ever Augmented Reality expo, "Augmented Reality is Here and it's REAL!" presented by Farzana Cassim. Participants were able to learn and practice using a variety of AR tools and resources.

❝ Presenting in a hybrid format allowed participation by many who couldn't travel and demonstrates what the field is experiencing as students request hybrid instruction as well. ❞

Overall, 94% of attendees reported they would be able to use the knowledge learned from presentations they attended. Our keynote presenter, Dr. Cherina Betters, did an AMAZING job; 97% of those who attended and completed the symposium survey reported that the keynote presentation was valuable to them. Evaluation data shares the need to continue a hybrid conference in order to reach all educators. OTAN is always working on improving; we're already discussing how to organize and improve next year's symposium.

We are headed to the Bay Area in 2024! Be sure to visit the TDLS website for more information and your copy of the Save the Date. Fremont Adult & Continuing Education will be the TDLS 2024 host on March 1st and 2nd. ⊗

New OTANian

OTAN recently advertised and filled a newly created position: Project Specialist I, Adult Education Data and Evaluation. Ian Summers is a data fanatic with a passion for using data to support staff and students in the education sector. Ian's philosophy is, "accuracy above all," and believes that data is both an interpretation of the people and objects it represents. In this new role, he will be working with OTAN staff to identify relevant data sources, set up data gathering systems, as well as managing, auditing, interpreting, and reporting on data from identified sources. Consequently, this data collection will inform, improve, and affirm ways OTAN directly supports adult educators.

Ian possesses a strong background in gathering and using data including managing a data collection team as a research coordinator in his college years to

Ian Summers
Project Specialist I,
Adult Education Data and Evaluation

using assessment and treatment data to inform IEP goal writing as a Speech-Language Pathologist. Ian comes to OTAN from a small public charter school, where he managed and designed a variety of attendance, GPA, and other longitudinal data systems. Teachers, administrators, and service providers were able to use this data to inform student-focused teaching and policies. In one instance, Ian demonstrated that the tardy and detention policy tended to target more vulnerable and less-engaged student groups; this led to an ultimate abolishment of this policy.

Ian is very excited to bring his passion for data and be able to use his skills to support the mission of OTAN. Outside of the professional realm, Ian is an avid gamer, devoted husband, and cat dad. Welcome to the OTAN team, Ian! ⊗
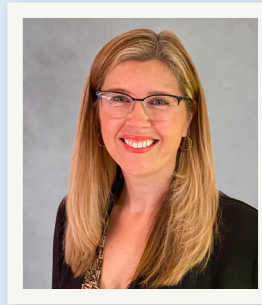
Techie's Tech Tip

Sometimes it may be necessary to take student information from the database you use and manipulate it in spreadsheet software like Excel or Google Sheets. These tips can help you get information from your database (or pretty much any source you can highlight) into a spreadsheet where you can work your magic!

- Copy and Paste: Control + C and Control + V
  You're probably familiar with the shortcuts for copying and pasting. They work for spreadsheets also! Highlight the information you want, copy with Control + C, then drop it into your spreadsheet with Control + V and get to editing. But what if you add information that is a different size, color or otherwise looks weird on your spreadsheet?

- Paste without source formatting:
  Shift + Control + V
  In Sheets and Excel Online, Shift + Control + V pastes only the content, not its size or color. This lets you copy information from any source and add it to your spreadsheet with no need to edit formats by hand. This shortcut works basically anywhere you can copy and paste information: Word, PowerPoint, Canva, whatever you want. *The desktop version of Excel is the exception*, requiring you to use the "Paste Special" option. Visit https://bit.ly/3MQ6IHX for more detail.

- Mac user? Use "Command" in place of "Control" and "Option" in place of "Alt" for these and other shortcuts you come across! ⊘

From the Adult Education Director

Congratulations to three of our adult education colleagues who are household names to many of you. Melinda Holt, Penny Pearson, and Veronica Parker have been awarded for their significant support for adult education. Recognized as a COABE champion, Melinda Holt, Project Specialist II for OTAN, is an expert in educational technology, Google Suite, technical assistance and support, and is OTAN's lead for in-person and virtual training. Recently retired OTAN Coordinator of Distance Learning Projects and current OTAN subject matter expert, Penny Pearson, received the California Council for Adult Education (CCAE) Dr. Robert Rupert Award and the CCAE Lifetime Membership Award for her noteworthy service to CCAE at the chapter, section, and state levels. Among other things, Penny has been a champion of accessibility and licensing, open education resources, technology integration, distance learning, and adult education as a whole. CCAE also recognized California Adult Education Program – Technical Assistance Project Coordinator, Dr. Veronica Parker, with the Excellence in Support Services Award – Classified. Veronica is the face of CAEP TAP and is instrumental in developing and leading professional development, guidance, technical assistance, and communications to the California adult education field. Recognition is an opportunity to say thank you and to show appreciation for those that produce and give so much to our profession.

OTAN and CAEP TAP also have recognition programs, Students Succeed and Advancing CA Adult Education, respectively. Consider reviewing and submitting nominations for these annual awards. Together we can celebrate the successes of students, our programs, and our colleagues! ⊘

Renee Collins
Adult Education Director

Scan these QR codes to learn more about these exciting OTAN resources!

The California Distance Learning Cooperative provides information and videos about the Canvas LMS. Access with this QR code.

If you are interested in finding an article published in past OTAN Digests, then this QR code will take you directly to our Digest library.