

VISTA CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

601 North Fairview Street
Santa Ana, CA 92703
T: (714) 881-7407 | F: (714) 988-2747
www.vistacharterpublicschools.org

Collin Felch, Ed.D., Superintendent
Karen Amaya, Assistant Superintendent



VCPS Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

1. Policy Statement

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers Vista Charter Public Schools (VCPS) meaningful opportunities to expand access, personalize instruction, and streamline operations. Like a GPS, AI should serve as a supportive guide — control and judgment remain with the person using it, whether a student, teacher, or staff member. AI use at VCPS must strengthen human teaching, learning, and decision-making; it may never substitute for the professional judgment, critical thinking, or accountability of the people it is meant to support. Ultimately, the use of AI and learning effective ways to use AI is premised on preparing students for the world they will live in and supporting them to become future leaders.

AI is increasingly part of how people write, research, code, analyze, and make decisions in the world; teaching students to avoid AI entirely would prepare them no better than letting AI think for them. VCPS therefore measures success not by how little AI a student uses, but by whether that student becomes a stronger thinker and a capable, judicious user of AI — able to explain, verify, defend, and take responsibility for any work AI helped produce.

AI also carries real risk: inaccurate or fabricated information, academic dishonesty, privacy exposure, algorithmic bias, and harm through manipulated media. This Policy establishes the rules, roles, and safeguards VCPS uses to capture AI's benefits while managing these risks responsibly and in compliance with applicable law.

The Vista AI North Star

In transforming the school experience AI should build thinking, not bypass it. Before using AI for any task, our stakeholders ask: "Is AI doing the thinking this task exists to build?" If yes, they don't use it there. If AI can widen access, spark ideas, give feedback, or handle a routine step in administration, stakeholders are encouraged to use AI and share their learning/findings.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all VCPS students, teachers, instructional leaders, administrators, and other staff ("VCPS Stakeholders") whenever they use AI in connection with school activities, devices, networks, accounts, or online environments — whether for instruction, coursework, curriculum, communication, or administration. It covers all AI-enabled tools, including generative AI, chatbots, embedded AI features, and AI-assisted editing, analysis, or decision-support tools.

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Stakeholder	Core responsibility
Students	Use AI only as authorized per assignment and/or to support one's learning (e.g., practice questions, feedback on writing); remain accountable for their own thinking and work.
Teachers & Instructional Staff	Set AI expectations per assignment; verify all AI output before relying on or sharing it; uphold privacy expectations.
Administrators & Operations Staff	Vet and approve AI tools; enforce data-privacy and disclosure rules; own incident response.
Families & Caregivers	Are informed of School AI expectations and support responsible use at home; not directly bound by this Policy.

3. Definitions

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** computer-based systems that generate text, images, audio, video, recommendations, or decisions from user inputs (“prompts”), aligned to California Education Code §33328.5.
- **Open AI system:** a general-purpose AI service not vetted or configured for School use; it may store and reuse prompts and outputs beyond VCPS's control.
- **Closed AI system:** a School-approved AI tool configured and governed for School use with appropriate safeguards.
- **Student PII / Staff PII:** personally identifiable information — direct or indirect — that could reasonably identify a student or employee or reveal protected information about them.

4. Governance and Approved Tools

Approval of vetted AI tools requires review for data privacy, security, instructional or operational fit, and legal compliance, coordinated among VCPS instructional leadership, IT, and — for contracts, novel data use, or compliance questions — legal counsel. Open AI systems may never be used with Student PII or Staff PII. Vendor agreements for Closed AI systems must include data-protection terms consistent with FERPA, COPPA, and applicable California law.

5. Student Use of AI

- Students, with the support of their teachers, may use AI for support (research, feedback, translation) to support their learning, following our North Star: AI should build thinking, not bypass it.

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- The standard for any AI-assisted work is simple: a student should be able to explain what AI did, verify whether it is correct, defend the reasoning behind it, and take responsibility for the result. Using AI to find a bug and then fixing it yourself is different from submitting code you cannot explain — the same standard applies to writing, math, research, and every other subject.
- Students shall disclose work completed with the use of AI, consistent with their teacher's expectations for that assignment. Disclosure is not itself evidence of a violation — a student who discloses AI use and can demonstrate understanding of the result has met this Policy's standard. Students remain fully accountable for their own learning and conduct, and must be able to explain and defend their work at any time.
- Prohibited: submitting AI-generated work as one's own without disclosure; using AI during an assessment without permission; fabricating citations, quotes, or facts; using AI to bully, harass, impersonate, or create deepfakes or sexually explicit content; and bypassing School technology protections.

6. Staff and Educator Use of AI

- Staff may use AI tools to draft instructional materials, differentiate instruction, analyze de-identified data, and streamline routine administrative work — subject to professional review before anything is finalized, shared, or acted upon.
- Staff must not enter Student PII or Staff PII into any AI system other than one contracted by VCPS as a Closed AI system.
- Staff must independently verify any AI-generated fact, citation, or recommendation before relying on or sharing it, and must screen AI output for bias consistent with the VCPS Nondiscrimination Policy.
- Staff may use AI to make Board-adopted curriculum more relatable to students while maintaining the level of rigor and consistency with pacing plans.
- The use of AI for scoring of student work or feedback should always include teacher/staff review.

7. No Delegation of Consequential Decisions

This is the core safeguard of this Policy.

AI may inform, but must never solely determine, any decision affecting a student's grade, placement, discipline, or special education services or eligibility, or a staff member's evaluation, discipline, or employment status. A qualified human decision-maker must independently review the matter and take ultimate responsibility for the outcome. AI-detection tools may supplement — but may never serve as the sole basis for — an academic integrity or personnel finding.

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8. Privacy, Security, and Legal Compliance

VCPS Stakeholders must comply with FERPA, COPPA, and applicable California student- and employee-privacy law whenever using AI. No Student PII or Staff PII may be entered into an Open AI system under any circumstance. Anyone who inadvertently enters personal information into an AI tool must report it immediately to a teacher, supervisor, or the School office so VCPS can take protective steps. School devices, accounts, and networks are monitored consistent with School technology and safety policy; no VCPS Stakeholder should expect private communications on School systems that conflict with that policy.

9. Incident Reporting and Enforcement

Students and staff must promptly report: entry of personal information into an AI tool; exposure to AI-generated content involving self-harm, sexual content, hate speech, threats, or unsafe advice; suspected deepfakes, impersonation, or AI-based harassment; or use of an unapproved AI tool with School data. VCPS will respond under its existing incident-response procedures, which may include restricting tool access, preserving evidence, notifying affected individuals, and applying discipline consistent with the Student Handbook or applicable personnel policies.

Violations by students are addressed under the Student Handbook and applicable School discipline policies; violations by staff are addressed under applicable VCPS personnel policies. Nothing in this Policy limits VCPS's discretion to respond to a violation as it determines appropriate, including immediate administrative action for violations involving harassment, threats, sexually explicit content, or unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.

10. Reservation of Rights

AI tools can produce inaccurate, biased, or fabricated output, and third-party vendors may change, suspend, or discontinue their tools at any time. VCPS makes no warranty regarding the accuracy or availability of any AI tool and is not responsible for consequences arising from a Stakeholder's failure to independently verify AI-generated content as required by this Policy. This Policy states VCPS administrative practice; it does not create contractual rights for any student, employee, or third party. VCPS reserves the right to amend, suspend, or discontinue this Policy or access to any AI tool at any time.

11. Annual Review

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Superintendent or designee, in consultation with instructional leadership, IT, and legal counsel, to reflect changes in technology, law, and School practice.

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Related Policies and Resources

- VCPS Student Handbook
- VCPS Personnel Policies
- VCPS Nondiscrimination Policy
- VCPS Data Governance and Records Retention Policy
- VCPS AI Classroom Playbook (grade-band implementing guidance)