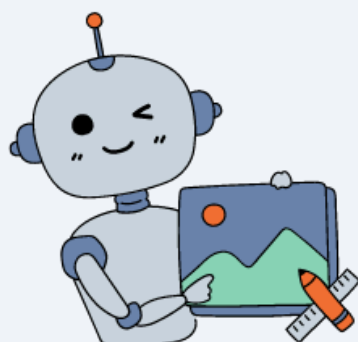


# SmartStart Newsletter

Latest news from the SmartStart Teacher Academy



## smart start

ERASMUS+  
Teacher Academy

## Project Updates

### Dissemination Strategy Paper

Our Deliverable D7.2, the Dissemination Strategy Paper in English, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Norwegian and Slovakian, was uploaded as planned, submitted, and confirmed – a big thanks to Janaina (URV), Laila (URV) and Barbara (KUEI) for their efforts of putting the paper together. The final version can be viewed/downloaded in/from the Funding&Tenders portal.

## We are social!

Check out our Social Media Presence on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#)!

## Research Inside

### Title:

Finnish Primary School Students' Conceptions of Machine Learning

### Authors:

Pekka Mertala, Aino Ahlqvist, Sanna Pöntinen

### Year:

2024

### Available at:

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2402.09582>

### Did you know?

A 2024 study from Finland asked 197 primary school students how they imagine machine learning works – without any prior instruction. About one-third of the children described it as “teaching or training machines,” showing an intuitive grasp of the idea that AI learns from examples.

The researchers found that young learners can already form basic – though sometimes not perfect – ideas about how AI works.

This suggests that AI literacy can meaningfully begin in primary education.



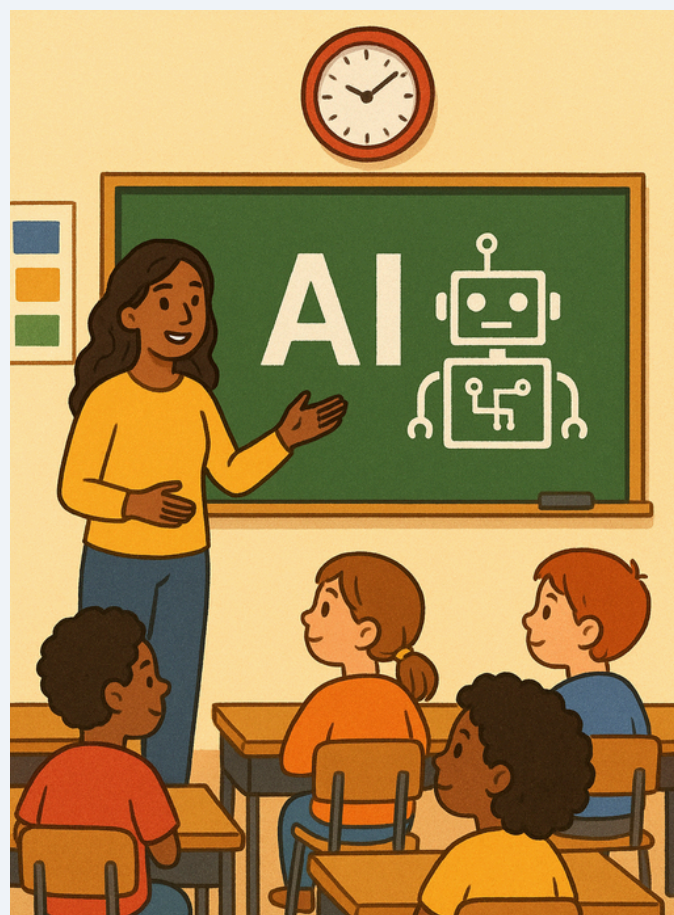
## A look back

Just a few months ago, the SmartStart journey began in Eichstätt with a shared vision: to empower Europe's primary teachers with the knowledge and confidence to teach AI literacy. What started as an ambitious idea at the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt has already evolved into a vibrant, cross-European collaboration. The success of the May 2025 kickoff meeting set the stage for innovative partnerships, meaningful dialogue, and a united commitment to preparing teachers — and their students — for a digital future.

## A Glimpse into Work Package 1: Building the Theoretical Foundation

October marks an exciting milestone for SmartStart — the first Expert Panels are about to begin! Under the leadership of Thiago Freires from the University of Porto, experts from teacher education, AI research, psychology, and educational policy will come together to discuss how artificial intelligence and digital media can be meaningfully integrated into primary education.

At the same time, Thiago and his team are preparing a Systematic Literature Report that explores current research on AI in education. This report will provide a strong scientific foundation for the upcoming phases of the project and support the development of the SmartStart Teacher Academy.



## Teacher Voices



**Dr. Carina Hartmann,  
Deputy Headmistress,  
Pfronten Elementary  
School**



Do you see AI as more of an opportunity or a challenge for elementary school education?

*I see AI primarily as a great opportunity for teaching. It can relieve teachers and create time for individual support. At the same time, it opens up opportunities to link subject content with current AI topics, thus creating exciting learning opportunities. The main challenges lie in data protection and the still limited availability of useful, approved tools.*

What experience have you had with AI tools in a school context?

*I like to use AI tools to prepare for lessons – it is important to have a precise prompt and to evaluate the results from a subject-specific and didactic perspective. In class, children find AI a fascinating tool and often approach it with a critical eye. However, some tools, such as writing feedback, can quickly overwhelm elementary school children.*

What skills do teachers need to work effectively with AI?

*Teachers need openness and a willingness to actively engage with AI. Knowledge of data protection, ethics, and the targeted formulation of prompts is important. Equally crucial is the pedagogical and professional judgment to correctly classify AI results. It's important to just try things out and keep an open mind. It's crucial to reflect critically on AI and always keep the educational added value in mind.*

Can you give an example of how AI could make everyday teaching more enriching?

*For the topic "Inventions with Electricity," I used AI to generate imaginative images such as "the vacuum-cleaning knight." The children discussed what inventions already existed at that time and then researched their own topics. Finally, they were allowed to use AI to create images showing their invention in 200 years. This combines AI-related (prompting, fake news) and subject-related (e.g., checking facts and fiction in image "sources," historical awareness) goals.*

Are there any areas where you would deliberately avoid using AI?

*I avoid using AI for sensitive topics or in performance assessments. AI should also not replace children's ideas in creative processes such as writing. Data protection always plays a central role for me in this regard.*

Do you feel well prepared to use AI in the classroom, or do you still need support?

*Personally, I feel well prepared because I also spend a lot of time studying the topic in my free time. However, many of my colleagues still feel uncertain and would like to see more practical training courses. They often lack a basic understanding of how AI works, how to select the right tools, and how to formulate suitable prompts.*

If you had to give a colleague a tip on how to get started with AI, what would you say?

*It's best to start small — for example, with lesson planning or ideas for starting a lesson. If you add the prompt "Ask if you need more information," you will be guided step by step through the prompting process. In class, I would first ask the children what they already know about AI in order to assess their preconceptions, and then watch short explanatory films (e.g., Sendung mit der Maus).*