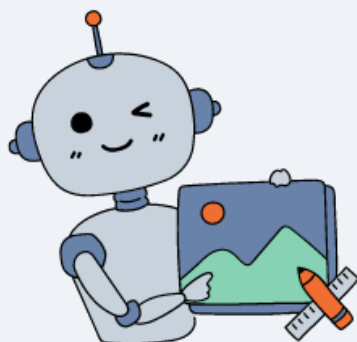


SmartStart Newsletter

Latest news from the SmartStart Teacher Academy



smart start

ERASMUS+
Teacher Academy

Project Updates

Progress in 2025: The AI-based translation tool and Pedagogical Framework Take Shape

The year 2025 marks an important milestone for the SmartStart project, particularly for Work Package 2 (WP2), where the conceptualization and development of the AI-based translation tool are anchored. The University of Applied Sciences Mittweida and the NGO Indicia are working closely together to create an innovative tool designed to support teachers in the classroom.

While the University of Applied Sciences Mittweida focused on the prototype of the AI-based translation tool and user surveys, Indicia assembled a team of five expert teachers dedicated to the creation of the project's pedagogical content.

Teacher Voices

Teacher to Teacher: Is AI reshaping education for the better?

"We need to model how to use these tools well; otherwise, we're setting our students up for failure."

Ms Laura Friday, Secondary School English Teacher, and Mr Kevin Mount, Secondary School Mathematics Department Lead had a talk about AI

UNESCO webpage:

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/artificial-intelligence-education-unesco-advances-key-competencies-teachers-and-learners>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEbGYRW7feM>

Early Prototyping and Preparing for the Users:

Two overarching goal for the University of Applied Sciences Mittweida is the development of an initial functional application that can be used for project evaluation. To achieve this goal in a structured manner, several intermediate objectives were defined within WP2. Two main tasks were at the center of the work in 2025. The first step involved a detailed analysis of the existing project descriptions. Based on this analysis, the team derived initial prototypical requirements and objectives. These served as the foundation for developing a first rudimentary prototype. This early prototype enables the team to test various technologies and evaluate how they interact, a crucial step for identifying technical risks early on and uncovering potential opportunities.

Since this prototype is not yet tailored to the needs of the target group, primarily teachers, the second major task focused on systematically integrating user perspectives. To reach a broad and diverse group of potential users, the team decided to develop an extensive survey. Created iteratively over several weeks, the survey aims to gather essential information about the expectations, needs, and challenges of the target audience. The results will play a key role in guiding the user-centered development of the AI-based translation tool.

Indicia focused on the creation of a comprehensive portfolio of 50 lesson plans intended for future classroom use. The development of these lesson plans is guided by a specific philosophy:

AI is viewed not as a source of ready-made content, but as a tool for comparison, reflection, and discussion.

We believe that the process matters more than the result; research indicates that when students struggle with a task independently before using AI for support, they achieve better long-term retention.

Our framework emphasizes several core principles:

- **AI as a Mirror, Not a Substitute:** AI should help children reflect on their own achievements rather than replacing their thinking.
- **The Value of Unique Perspectives:** By comparing their own creative work to generic AI outputs, students learn to value their personal, irreplaceable contributions.
- **Critical Awareness:** Every lesson plan includes peer reflection to help children develop an "inner compass" regarding when AI supports their learning and when it hinders it.
- **Nurturing Autonomy:** The goal is to help children understand when AI is useful and when it is not, moving AI away from being seen as an authority and toward being seen as a tool to be used wisely and critically.

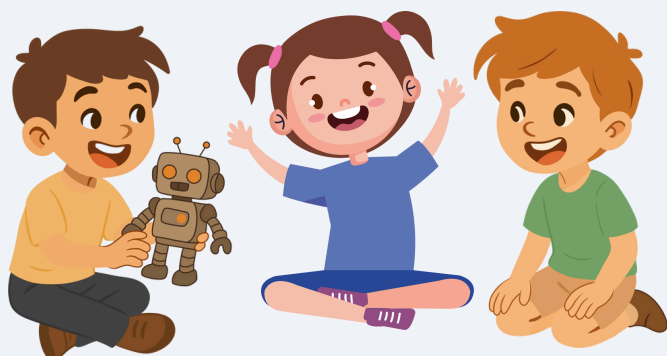
Current Status and Milestones

As of January 7, 2026, we have made significant headway in translating this philosophy into practice:

- **Pilot Phase:** 3 lesson plans are currently being piloted in classrooms to gather real-world feedback.
- **Development:** 7 additional lesson plans are currently in the development stage.
- **Immediate Target:** We are on track to have the first 10 lesson plans fully ready by the end of February 2026.
- **Tool Research:** Our team has already identified 25 specific AI tools that are highly effective for various classroom scenarios.

Through these lesson plans, we aim to ensure that while AI supports the classroom, the true value remains centered on the students' own thinking, effort, and creativity.

With these achievements, the WP2 team looks ahead to the coming year with confidence. The insights gained so far form a solid basis for further expanding the AI-based translation tool and gradually transforming it into a practical, classroom-ready solution.



Training & Events

Upcoming Conferences:

AI+Education Summit 2026 - The AI Inflection Point: What, How, and Why We Learn

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

Website: [AI+Education Summit 2026 • Stanford Accelerator for Learning](#)
[Top AI in Education Conferences to Attend in 2026](#)

Panoramic 2026: Panorama's Virtual Summit on AI in K-12

Thursday, February 26, 2026

Website: [Panoramic Summit 26](#)

International Conference on Education and Learning with Artificial Intelligence

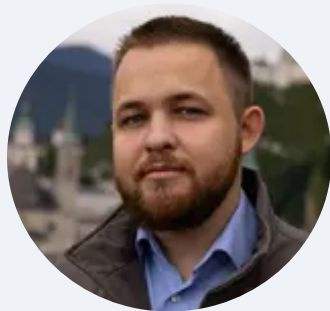
Monday, February 2, 2026

Website: [conferences and seminars about AI and primary education in February, 2026 - Search](#)

Research Insights



**Maximilian Stark,
Research Assistant**



Research Spotlight: Proper, prepare, protect

The core goal of the SmartStart project is to enable teachers to use the right kinds of AI tools for the right educational goals in the right way. However, it is not only teachers (and students, and parents ...) who struggle with the question of what this entails; researchers, too, need to navigate their way through a web of contradictory claims, opinions, and results to find out what the “right way” is.

This month, the Center for Universal Education at the highly influential Brookings Think Tank in Washington jumped into the fray with an extensive report called “A new direction for students in an AI world: Prosper, prepare, protect” (Burns et al., 2026). The authors set themselves the goal of developing a comprehensive overview of the potential risks and benefits of AI in education as well as deriving recommendations for minimizing these risks and maximizing the benefits. To this end, they interviewed hundreds of students, teachers, parents, technology experts etc. in 50 countries, reviewed over 400 academic studies, and consulted a Delphi panel of experts.

The core conclusion of their study is sobering. The report claims that currently, the risks of AI in education outweigh its benefits, in part because these risks threaten children’s foundational development, which cannot be offset by any potential advantages down the line. However, this does not mean that they think AI should be banned from schools; rather, the report does see a path towards AI-enriched learning wherein well-designed AI tools can help students learn as part of a well thought-out teaching strategy. However, the authors stress the crucial importance of avoiding, at all costs, a situation of “AI-diminished learning,” in which an overreliance on AI tools undermines children’s development and deprives them of crucial opportunities to learn basic academic, social-emotional, and relational skills.

The report then makes twelve core recommendations to ensure a future in which AI can be a benefit to children’s learning instead of stifling their development. The (condensed) core recommendations are:

1. Use suitable AI learning opportunities intentionally and responsibly.
2. Develop educational AI tools in collaboration with educators, students, and learning experts.
3. Use child-suitable AI tools that don’t simply answer questions, but challenge students.



4. Conduct high-quality research in how children learn in environments influenced by AI, and rigorously identify potential risks and benefits.
5. Promote holistic AI literacy for teachers, students, parents, and decision-makers.
6. Educate teachers on teaching with AI at every stage of their professional development.
7. Provide a clear vision for ethical use of AI, focusing on the importance of students' own thinking and agency.
8. Employ financing strategies that ensure disadvantaged students and communities have equal access to AI-based learning opportunities.
9. Require AI tools that children can access to have safety standards which e.g. prevent them from using addictive user engagement strategies, thus potentially sabotaging students' social development.
10. Create suitable whole-of-government regulation of educational AI tools, including data protection standards.
11. Use child-friendly procurement criteria to prioritize students' privacy, safety, and security when using AI tools.
12. Support families in ensuring children use AI safely at home.

The full report is certainly worth a read; its conclusions, particularly in recommendation number 6, strengthen the case for the importance of the SmartStart project's approach.

Finally, its strong focus on protecting children from a broad range of thus far hard to quantify risks inherent to the rapid societal adoption of AI serves as a reminder that where children's foundational development is at risk, caution and prudence must come first.

Literature

Burns, M., Winthrop, R., Luther, N., Venetis, E., & Karim, R. (2026). A new direction for students in an AI world: Prosper, prepare, protect. Brookings Center for Universal Education.
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-new-direction-for-students-in-an-ai-world-prosper-prepare-protect/>

We are social!

Check out our Social Media Presence on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to stay updated on project insights, teacher training activities, and the latest developments in AI in education. Join the conversation and discover how SmartStart is shaping innovative and responsible teaching practices.

