

Helping kids find, and trust, their own voice

Why kids expressing their own ideas matters more than ever

Tips for parents



Did you know?

In school, kids learn how to develop their “voice.” A kid’s voice is the way they express their ideas, personality, and perspective. A kid’s voice shows up in their word choice, tone, structure, and style. As kids move through adolescence, developing their voice is part of developing their sense of self. It’s important that they have many opportunities to figure out what they think, feel, and believe, and how they want to communicate with others.

Overuse of AI can shape how kids see themselves as thinkers and authors of their own ideas. When AI helps complete assignments, it can blur the line between what is a kid’s idea and what isn’t. This may cause kids to feel ownership over ideas that AI generated, or conversely, to feel disconnected from work they didn’t fully create themselves.

AI use can make it harder for kids to develop their own voice in writing.

Research suggests that when students use AI as a writing assistance tool, they are less creative,* and they risk AI writing for them, rather than learning and improving their own writing skills with AI.** But if kids do their own thinking, brainstorming, and writing first, AI can help polish writing.

School is one of the main spaces where kids practice expressing who they are.

At school, kids try to figure out how to “stand out to fit in”—how to be themselves while still belonging. Through assignments, discussions, relationships, and choice in how they approach their work, kids can practice expressing who they are and what they think.

*Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task by Nataliya Kosmyna and team, 2025

**Impact of AI assistance on student agency by Ali Darvishi et al., 2024

What to notice

If your kids seem detached from their work.

If your kids don't feel proud of what they submit or can't clearly explain the decisions they made while completing their work, you might check how much of the work was done by AI.

If your kids rely on AI to shape their opinions. When kids ask AI what they should think about something rather than

forming their own viewpoint, they are not developing their own perspective, conclusions, voice, and ultimately, identity.

If kids light up when they share something they made themselves. Notice when kids are excited about a school assignment, art project, or other creation that they made independently. Lean into this enthusiasm and celebrate it!

What you can do: Conversations to help kids find their voice

With your kids:

We recommend these activities for kids ages 10-14. But you know your kid best! If these are relevant to you, use them!

– **Conversation starter:** What do you think about _____? Ask your kid their opinion about a new topic—something they probably haven't already discussed with friends or at home. Ask them to share their initial thoughts without using AI or hearing anyone else's opinion.

– **Activity:** With your kids, point out people whom you really admire for their approach to life, their contribution to the world, or their artistry. Discuss what stands out to you about them. Ask your kids for their own examples. Then ask: If these people used AI to make what they created or influence how they spoke or acted, would it change how you viewed them or their contributions?

– **Don't stop the daydreaming:** When you notice your kid staring into space, don't interrupt them right away. Sometimes, daydreaming helps kids explore their own ideas, feelings, and questions. Those quiet moments can help them figure out what they care about and what they think. If they're spending time thinking to themselves without a screen in front of them, let them!***

– **Praise originality:** Celebrate your kid when they come up with new ideas or create something new (even when their essay/project/idea isn't technically perfect).

In your school or community:

– Pay attention to how student voice and choice are supported in classrooms and extracurriculars and raise questions in parent forums about how students are encouraged to develop their own ideas.

***The Disengaged Teen, by Jenny Anderson and Rebecca Winthrop, 2025



Find more in our Parent Tip Sheet Library! For more detailed information, including data sources, check out the full report: A new direction for students in an AI world: Prosper, Prepare, Protect.