Philosophy of Technology for Education

Updated professional philosophy on technology, AI, accessibility, ethics, and human-centered learning.

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Introduction

I did not come to instruction via traditional means. Instead, my career began as a technical service specialist, teaching the public how to use their phones and handheld devices. That experience morphed my role into a mentor, then a facilitator, then a content developer, or instructional designer. I learned the value of a good ticketing system, search options, phone systems, and remote connections as a tech. Then, I learned to appreciate remote learning platforms, simple designs, lesson plans that allowed for personality, and “subject experts.” Ultimately, I learned that technology deeply influences nearly every aspect of my work, and if this is true for me, it is likely true for others.

Now, that technology conversation also has to include artificial intelligence. AI is no longer a future-state issue. It is already part of search, writing, accessibility tools, translation, tutoring, image generation, data analysis, and workplace productivity. Because of that, I do not think the question is whether AI belongs in education. The better question is how AI can be integrated into education, when educators should use it, and when they should refrain from using it.

Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical Magnifica Humanitas gives language to this tension. He does not describe technology as inherently evil, but he also does not treat it as neutral. Instead, he explains that technology can heal, connect, educate, and protect, but it can also divide, exclude, and create new forms of injustice (Leo XIV, 2026, para. 9). That aligns closely with my philosophy of technology: technology should serve the human person, not replace or reduce the human person.

Purpose of Technology

During every class I teach, I always remind my students, “Technology is the bridge between what we want to do and what we do. When it breaks, our job is not to fix the technology; it is to get the person back to what they were doing. A password reset is a fix, but it doesn’t get them to the software they were trying to download.” This explanation is my ingrained belief in technology. In the words of Tim Cook, “Tech should be used to serve humanity, and not the other way around” (Thier, 2021). In other words, technology’s purpose is to work for humanity to do the things it wishes to do as a tool or bridge.

AI does not change that belief. It sharpens it. AI may be faster, more flexible, and more impressive than earlier tools, but it is still a tool. Pope Leo XIV warns against confusing artificial intelligence with human intelligence. AI systems can imitate some functions of human thought,

but they do not have experiences, bodies, relationships, moral conscience, love, responsibility, or wisdom (Leo XIV, 2026, para. 99). That distinction matters in education because education is not just the movement of information. Education involves judgment, formation, relationships, practice, feedback, and growth.

So, my philosophy is not anti-AI. It is pro-human. AI can be a useful bridge, but it should not become the destination.

Technology in Education

Technology as a gateway or a tool serves education in four ways:

- Accessibility enablement
- Avenue to information
- Annex to other people
- Accessory to the facilitator

AI can support all four areas, but only if people use it with purpose, limits, and human oversight.

Accessibility Enablement

All accessibility tools are technology—from the wheelchair to the screen reader, accessibility levels the playing field by modifying the world around the differently abled. When a student cannot hear, there is text available as captions, visual notifications, or hearing aid-enhanced speakers. When a student cannot write, there are keyboards, switches, and even retinal scanners to control assistive technology.

AI can expand this work in meaningful ways. AI can support live captions, speech-to-text, text-to-speech, translation, image descriptions, reading support, and writing help. For some learners, this is not a convenience. It is the difference between being left out and being able to take part.

It is the job of an instructional designer to facilitate not only accessibility but also usability. Accessibility means that something is designed with the goal of being available, but usability means that it is feasible to use (Edyburn, 2015, p. 5). Designers should focus on adaptive web design, online tools, apps, and universal design across all media so that people have access anywhere and anyhow they attempt to interact with the material.

That said, AI accessibility tools still require discernment. An AI-generated caption, translation, or description can be helpful, but it can also be wrong. If the goal is human dignity, then “close enough” is not always good enough. Accessibility should not become a checkbox. We should test whether real people can actually use the material.

Avenue to Information

Michael Moore in his 1989 editorial states the learner-content interaction “is a defining characteristic of education” because “without it there cannot be education.” Students are

students only because there is some sort of knowledge to impart from one to another.

But access is not our primary responsibility. The World Wide Web introduced us to the “information age,” and Merriam-Webster defines this as “the modern age regarded as a time in which information has become a commodity that is quickly and widely disseminated and easily available, especially through the use of computer technology” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Instead, as instructional designers and educators, it is our job to teach our students how to harness the deluge and focus it for their good. R. E. Mayer introduced several principles aimed at reducing extraneous processing in order to promote academic learning, and that describes exactly how we are to act as educators in the information age (Mayer, 2017).

AI makes this even more important. Students can now receive summaries, outlines, answers, explanations, and even full papers in seconds. That can be helpful when AI is used to support brainstorming, simplify complex topics, or guide practice. But it can also shortcut the exact part of learning students most need: asking questions, sitting with difficulty, checking sources, and forming judgments.

Pope Leo XIV makes this point directly when he says that education in AI must include teaching people “when and for what purpose it ought not to be used” (Leo XIV, 2026, para. 140). That statement fits my view exactly. Teaching students to use AI is not enough. We also have to teach them when not to use it, how to question it, how to verify it, and how to recognize when it is weakening their own thinking.

AI should be an avenue to information, not a replacement for understanding.

Annex to Other People

As a Xennial, a micro-generation from 1975 to 1985, my earliest memories of the internet were internet chat rooms and instant messengers. The internet was immediately a gateway to people I’d never have access to any other way. In this way, students have access not just to information but also to informants and educators that they’d never have access to otherwise.

The world is awfully hard to interact with if you don’t have a way to get to it. Technology can ease resource deserts such as the one I currently live in. When my son couldn’t find a reading tutor, we found both learning programs and a tutor online. My daughter needed speech therapy during COVID, and we found it via a remote therapist.

When COVID shut down the world, technology allowed us to remote in to classrooms, take part in healthy discussions, and facilitate collaborations.

AI may add another layer to this. It can help match learners to resources, translate conversations, summarize group discussions, generate practice activities, and support students outside normal classroom hours. Used well, AI can help people get to people, support, and resources faster.

But AI is not a person. Pope Leo XIV warns AI can simulate human communication, empathy, and support, but simulated words do not build genuine relationships (Leo XIV, 2026, paras. 100–101). This is an important limit. A chatbot may help a student practice, review, or brainstorm, but it cannot replace the encouragement of a teacher, the correction of a mentor, or the shared struggle of a learning community.

It is then our responsibility to seek ways to connect people to people for furthering education. AI should support that connection, not replace it.

An Accessory to the Facilitator

The Secretary of the Department of Education published a guide on the role of technology, and in it, he points out that the digital divide is not about access any longer. Instead, he says, "… a digital use divide separates many students who use technology in ways that transform their learning from those who use the tools to complete the same activities but now with an electronic device (e.g., digital worksheets, online multiple-choice tests)" (King, 2017). Even the CEO of Apple worries about "endless, mindless scrolling" because it can cause mental health issues (Fathi, 2021). When the Department of Education and the CEO of one of the largest tech companies agree, there's something to it.

AI brings the same risks in a newer form. A poorly designed AI activity is still poor instruction. A worksheet generated by AI is still a worksheet. A chatbot used as a shortcut is still a shortcut. Technology does not become transformational just because it is newer, faster, or more impressive.

Simply put, technology cannot create an education, nor replace an educator. Technology unharnessed is just noise; composed, curated, and orchestrated? Technology becomes a magical combination of real learning and plugged-in students. Mayer talks about how even computer-based instruction requires spoken words and graphics rather than graphics alone, and a specifically human voice rather than a computer-generated one (Mayer, 2017).

This is where AI has to remain an accessory to the facilitator. It can help draft examples, adjust reading levels, create practice scenarios, summarize feedback, build rubrics, and support individualized learning paths. But the facilitator still has to decide what matters, what is accurate, what is ethical, what is developmentally appropriate, and what actually helps the learner grow.

Pope Leo XIV says schools should help students use new technologies responsibly, critically, and creatively, rather than passively giving in to their influence (Leo XIV, 2026, para. 145). That is the line for instructional design too. AI should not make educators passive. It should make us more thoughtful about design, purpose, and human impact.

Educators and instructional designers should use technology as a tool to foster education, not just to create busy work. Extraneous use of technology for the sole purpose of using technology is a waste of time and resources for all involved. However, when technology enhances learning as an accessory that serves a purpose, it is valuable and can have an extensive return on investment.

AI belongs in that same category. It is valuable when it increases access, reduces barriers, supports feedback, helps learners practice, and gives educators more time for the work only humans can do. It is harmful when it replaces thinking, weakens relationships, hides bias, creates dependence, or treats the learner as a data point instead of a person.

Technology is still the bridge. AI may be a stronger bridge than many tools before it, but it still has to lead somewhere human.

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