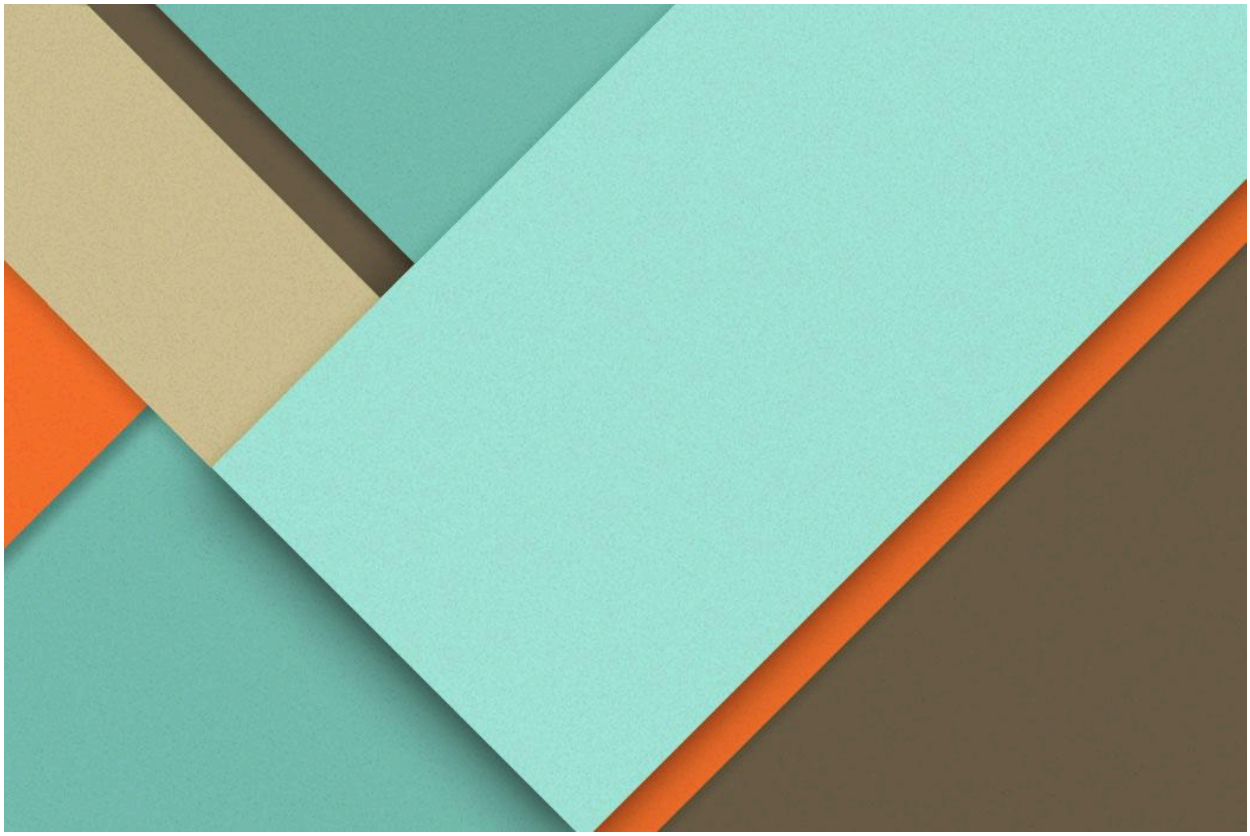

AI Code of Ethics - Draft

Updated 10-19-2025

Westport Public Schools

Overview

Westport Public Schools believe that the adoption of AI models should take into consideration their ethical and responsible use. The following is an AI Code of Ethics for the district, including our Ethical Statements, the Ethical Challenges associated with those Ethical Statements, and finally the WPS response.

Ethical Statements

At Westport Public Schools, we believe that AI should be:

1. **Human-Centered**
2. **Robust and Safe**
3. **Representative and Inclusive**
4. **Transparent and Explainable**
5. **Clear and Accountable**
6. **Secure and Private**
7. **Sustainable**

Human-Centered

I. Ethical Challenge

The most immediate ethical challenge posed by artificial intelligence is its influence on human life and work. As the AI industry expands, it is rapidly automating activities that were once the domain of human creativity and labor, a process that is already causing significant employment disruption in fields such as art, literature, and software development. The central question we face is whether this trend will ultimately benefit humanity. How can we ensure that AI serves as a positive force for society, rather than a disruptive one that erodes the value of human contributions?

II. WPS Response

We will adopt a human-centered approach to AI, ensuring these tools are utilized to make our lives better, streamline workflows, and boost efficiency. Our strategy is

simple: AI must collaborate with humans, not replace them. We will develop and deploy programs that enhance human capabilities, with responsible use as our guiding principle. By doing this, we can maximize the benefits of AI.

Robust and Safe

III. Ethical Challenge

The use of AI, like any powerful tool, must be evaluated based on its intended purpose and its inherent safety and resilience. The increasing adoption of AI naturally expands the scope for disruption from malevolent actors, outages, or other external influences. Consequently, we cannot allow students to have unregulated access to AI tools. Clear safety mechanisms must be in place to ensure a controlled and secure environment, mirroring the safeguards we already implement for internet access.

IV. WPS Response

Ensuring robustness and safety in any AI system utilized by the district is paramount. A robust system must have contingency plans and fallbacks to prevent interruptions to teaching tools and critical educational systems. Safety protocols for AI tools are crucial, particularly in an educational setting. These tools must prevent students from being exposed to age-inappropriate material or generating content that violates the Code of Conduct. We must treat AI tools with the same level of scrutiny as any other educational resource, carefully considering all applicable laws and regulations pertaining to minors and their behavior. We must also monitor and address concerns about mental and emotional health related to the use of AI systems.

Representative and Inclusive

V. Ethical Challenge

Artificial intelligence systems are trained on vast amounts of human-generated data, which naturally reflect the perspectives and assumptions embedded in those data sources. When this information lacks balance or diversity, it can lead to unintentional bias in how AI tools interpret, generate, or prioritize content. These biases can appear across many dimensions, such as language, culture, gender, geography, or socioeconomic background, and may influence outcomes in subtle

but important ways. Recognizing and addressing these limitations is essential to maintaining fairness and integrity in education.

VI. WPS Response

AI systems considered for use in the district will be carefully reviewed to identify and minimize potential bias related to language, culture, gender, ability, and access. Because no system is entirely free of bias, we will focus on developing awareness and critical thinking among students and staff. As part of our broader media literacy efforts, educators and learners will be trained to evaluate AI-generated content thoughtfully, evaluating; where data comes from, whose perspectives might be missing, and how information can be interpreted responsibly.

AI will not be viewed as a substitute for human judgment or as a solution to social or cultural challenges. Instead, it will be used to enhance fairness, accuracy, and understanding in all educational contexts, supporting the district's commitment to responsible, AI Powered, Human Centered learning

Transparent and Explainable

VII. Ethical Challenge

The "black box" nature of AI tools is a significant concern. A "black box" is a system where users can see the inputs and outputs, but the internal processes that generate the results are hidden. Because of this, it can be difficult to trust the information they produce. AI systems, despite their ability to learn and recognize patterns, can consistently provide incorrect or misleading information. The "black box" makes it nearly impossible for a user to understand why an answer is wrong or how the system arrived at a particular conclusion. When a conclusion needs to be verified, the user has no way to trace the AI's reasoning, which makes verifying its accuracy a difficult task.

VIII. WPS Response

AI's capabilities and limitations must be transparent to all members of the district. We can't rely solely on information from AI tools, and any decisions made with them must be fully explainable and justifiable. Every decision made with AI must be clearly explained: how, when, and why the tool was used, and how its information was verified. It is crucial to remember that AI is simply a tool, and we must be aware of its limitations. To ensure auditability and accountability, students and educators working with AI systems in a professional capacity will document their usage.

Clear and Accountable

IX. Ethical Challenge

While often seen negatively, accountability is the act of acknowledging and taking ownership, which implies a willingness to be judged for one's actions. This poses a distinct challenge when it comes to AI tools, because they can abstract accountability—both positively and negatively. When an AI system is used to make a decision that results in harm, who is accountable? The programmer? The end-user? The company? The lines of responsibility become blurred. Conversely, if an AI is used to create a great work of art or to professional acclaim, who gets the credit? The use of AI can significantly complicate the process of assigning accountability to a person or group of people. This abstraction of responsibility raises critical questions that must be addressed, both in our professional and academic lives. It also highlights the need for a clear understanding of who is responsible for the inputs and outputs of AI systems.

X. WPS Response

Humans should always have the final say in what is created, implemented, and considered for accountability. No decision should be made solely on AI input, nor should the impacts of any decision be "blamed" on AI. We will clearly identify all AI tools and programs as what they are: tools to be used in the decision-making process, not the decision-makers themselves. At every level, we must expect and prioritize human agency and accountability.

Secure and Private

XI. Ethical Challenge

The proliferation of AI tools and AI integration into everyday digital life belies a related risk - personal data protection and exposure. In the past, personal data stored on the internet might have been as simple as your name, address, or telephone number. Nowadays, advanced AI tools might record your voice, your facial features, or track personal medical information you may or may not be aware of. While these AI tools might provide a useful function, they are not without risk. Seemingly anonymized data might not be anonymous. Consumers frequently sign away their personal data via lengthy user agreements that obscure what rights and

protections they are entitled to. Even good stewards of personal data can fall victim to data leaks, fraud, negligence, or any other manner or unintended consequence. AI tools' ability to collect, sort, and magnify vast amounts of data creates a paradox: the very features that make it so useful also make it dangerous, exposing personal information to potential misuse.

XII. WPS Response

AI and data protection are not mutually exclusive. We can ensure both by taking appropriate cybersecurity and privacy measures. The district will inform all stakeholders, via annual notification and the district website, of the AI tools that have been approved for use with student data. WPS will continuously train staff on how to evaluate how AI tools use data and on best practices for using those tools to protect student privacy.

Sustainable

XIII. Ethical Challenge

AI centers consume vast amounts of resources, posing a significant sustainability challenge. By 2030, the International Energy Agency estimates that data centers and AI could account for around 20% of the world's energy usage. In addition to high energy consumption, AI data centers use billions of gallons of fresh water for temperature management and cooling, further straining an already limited global resource. The building and management of data centers around the country have become increasingly important political and ecological issues for those communities.

XIV. WPS Response

Our school district is committed to the responsible and sustainable integration of AI, prioritizing its ethical and environmental impact. We will ensure that AI tools take into account sustainability goals as part of our district mission. According to the UNESCO World Heritage program, AI tools should be assessed on their impacts toward sustainability as a constantly evolving goal.