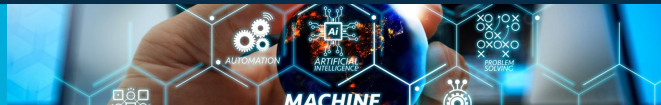




THE AI SANDWICH

authentic student learning & leading

Dave Heitman, Ed.D.



Crisis of the Short-Circuited Voice

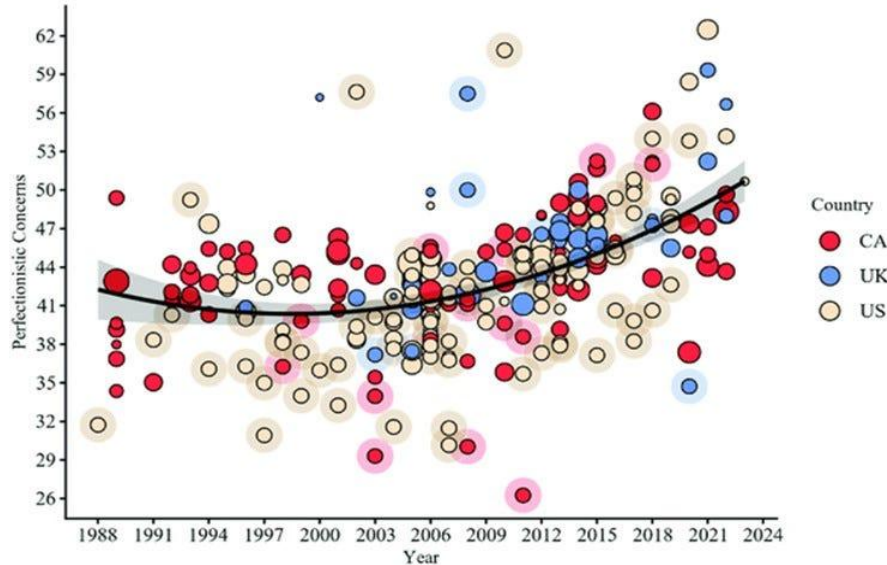
80%

The percentage of accuracy of the best AI according to the Stanford 2026 AI Index Report

(Sajadieh et al., 2026)



AI Adoption & Student Anxiety



Quadratic Model of Perfectionistic Concerns Plotted Against the Year of Data Collection. Data points represent the percent of maximum possible scores, and their size is proportional to the study weight (inverse variance). Points with a halo contain data from the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. Points without a halo contain data from the Hewitt and Flett Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. The band between the upper and lower limits of the 95% confidence interval for the predicted values is contained within the transparent gray area around the solid regression line. CA = Canada; US = United States of America; UK = United Kingdom. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Curran, T., Hill, A., & Pose, P. M. (2026). Perfectionism is accelerating over time: A cross-temporal meta-analytic review of 35 years of college student data. *Psychological Bulletin*, 152(3), 255–287. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000518>

84–95%
The number of high school and college students regularly using generative AI for their assignments and coursework.

(College Board, 2026)

Re-Framing the Problem through Empathy



Cognitive Offloading & Authentic Voice

1. Mistakes don't make you a failure. They make you a learner.
2. Achievements are not a symbol of your worth. They're a snapshot of your performance.
3. Healthy goals include two targets: an aspirational result and an acceptable outcome. If you fall anywhere between them, you haven't failed.

41%

Drop in critical thinking skills

66%

Decline in reflective thinking

21%

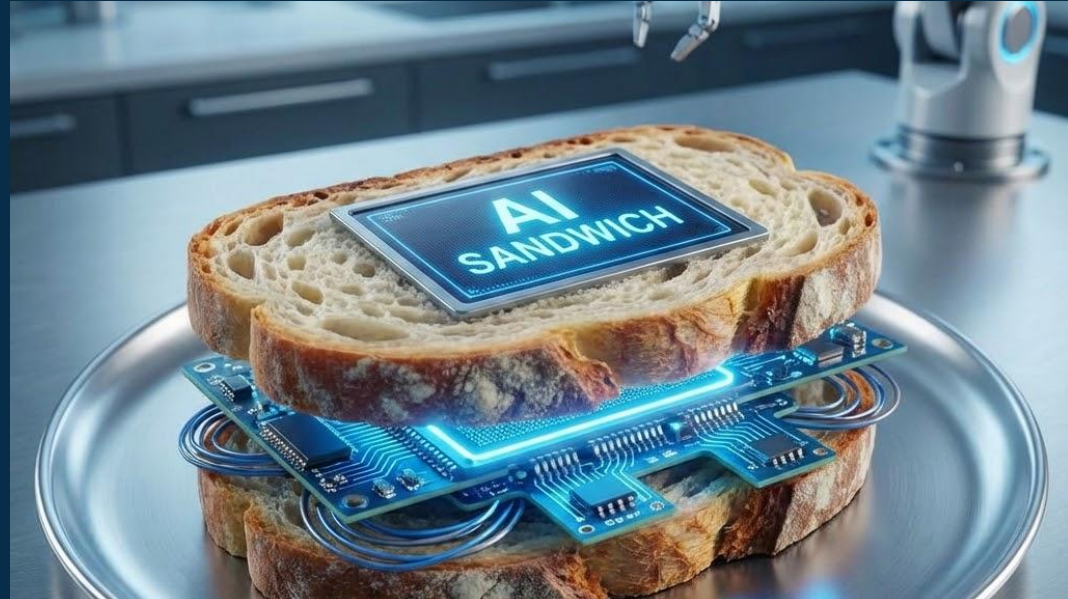
Reduction in perceived need to understand concepts

(Choudhuri et al., 2026)

(Grant, 2026)

The AI Sandwich Framework:

HUMAN
AI
HUMAN



Top Bun: Human Voice & Ideation

RULE: No tech until original thought

TOOLS: Brainstorm, Mind Map, Brainwrite

DESIGN THINKING

Empathy, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test

30 Circles

This quick, simple exercise is perfect for getting warmed up. Use it with a group as an icebreaker or on your own when you need a jolt of inspiration.

(Kelly & Kelly, 2013)

(Stanford d.school, 2026)

Filling: AI Collaborative Partner

RULE: AI not “answer generator” but
“thought partner.”

TOOLS: Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test

BOUNDARY SETTING

AI Suggests; the student chooses

Invite AI onto the Team

Generative AI can act
like a
high-performing
collaborator on team
projects, propelling
innovative thinking,
increasing quality,
and saving time.

(HBS, 2025)

(Stanford d.school, 2026)

Bottom Bun: Ownership & Accountability

RULE: Final edit must be 100% human-driven

TOOLS: Review, Revise, Verify, Own It &
Disclose It: Utilization, Discernment,
Awareness, & Impact

AI PILOTS

Everything is a pilot, GRACE, Celebrations of
Learning

(Zhand, 2026)

Structured AI
protocols
significantly stabilize
academic integrity,
boost student
confidence, and
reduce technostress.

(ICAI, 2025)

From Authentic Learners to Student Leaders



Connecting Voice to Leadership

VOICE: Authentic expression builds confidence for real-world leadership.

SHIFT: Empowerment, Modeling, Mentor

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP:
Authenticity, Inspiration, Empathy,
Innovation

(Timms, 2018)

24%

Percentage of the variance in positive behavioral changes among secondary student leaders.

(Ahumuza & Asiimwe, 2024)

Authentic Student Learning & Leading



AI = Content | Humans = Perspective

Wellness = Human Connection

AI Sandwich Empowers

Students Lead with Human Advantage

References

Ahumuza, A., & Asimwe, I. K. (2024). Student leadership and its impact on behavior change among students in secondary schools. *Metropolitan Journal of Social and Educational Research*, 3(11), 113–122

Choudhuri, R., Sanchez, C., Burnett, M., & Sarma, A. (2026). Thinking less, trusting more: GenAI's impacts on students' cognitive habits [Preprint]. *arXiv*. doi.org.

College Board (2026) New Research: Majority of High School Students Use Generative AI for Schoolwork

Curran, T., Hill, A., & Pose, P. M. (2026). Perfectionism is accelerating over time: A cross-temporal meta-analytic review of 35 years of college student data. *Psychological Bulletin*, 152(3), 255–287. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000518>

Grant, A. (2026, June 27). *There's more to the mental health crisis than smartphones and social media*. [Adam Grant's Substack](#).

Mollick, E., Mollick, L., Han, Y., Goldman, H., Nair, H., Taub, S., & Lakhani, K. R. (2025). The cybernetic teammate: A field experiment on generative AI reshaping teamwork and expertise (Working Paper No. 67197). Harvard Business School.

Kelley, T., & Kelley, D. (2013). *Creative confidence: Unleashing the creative potential within us all*. Crown Business

Oldham, C. (2025). Artificial intelligence and assessment: Are universities ready to rethink integrity? International Center for Academic Integrity

Sajadieh et al.,(2026). The AI Index 2026 annual report.

Timms, D. (2018). *Shape your world: Transformational leadership for everyday life*. Oak Tree Press.

All images are Google Nano or Google Stock Images

AI Disclaimer

Developed with Gemini as a collaborative thought partner with original ideas by the author. All content was evaluated, edited, and adapted by the author to meet session objectives.