

The Jay

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The SMUS Term System: A Solution or Source of Stress?

by Byrdie Fisher-Franke

Commonly known as the hexameter system, SMUS' six term, six week schedule has been a prominent part of student life since the first signs of COVID-19. Helping lessen course load by allowing students to only juggle a handful of subjects, it has supposedly brought endless joy to those struggling from burnout. Its ability to bring peace to students who take AP tests at the beginning of May could be seen as successful but its ways of wreaking havoc for every single person who has to experience the endless work that comes along with cramming a course into six week incremental windows, is a failure.

Just before winter break at SMUS, students and teachers alike scramble to learn, test, teach, and grade. The school turns into a funnel for stress and exhaustion as people are emotionally taxed and assured with the fact that it's only a two week long stretch before a well deserved break. This break would be accurate

if everyone wasn't clearly aware that after that break was over, finals would be looming right around the corner, leading to a lack of mental rest before being thrust into work and pressure once more.



The relief amidst this stressful time of year lies in the fact that after the midterms and AP mock exams are completed, a new term rises and with that comes a change and a transition into another set of learning goals. Although, with term four starting right after term three ends, there isn't any time to decompress at all before you're thrown into new classes, forcing a continuation of an infinitely fast-paced environment.

Not only is the hexameter system mentally taxing for all involved, it strips students of their abilities to gain proper social connection with their teachers and their peers. School should be a time to make valuable connections with other people your age, but is instead a place where you get to know someone well for weeks, and then lose contact once more. In addition to this, as students don't get the time to foster a proper connection with their educators and feel safe in their learning environments, they lose the motivation to come to class and fully invest in their education. This lack of connection can cause consistent stress and anxiety that is only heightened by having midterms and finals within 2 weeks of each other. All of a sudden, many students in grades 10, 11, and 12 are walking into classrooms that are associated more with pressure than with learning. If this system was actually helping students, it wouldn't highlight the same problems it was meant to fix.

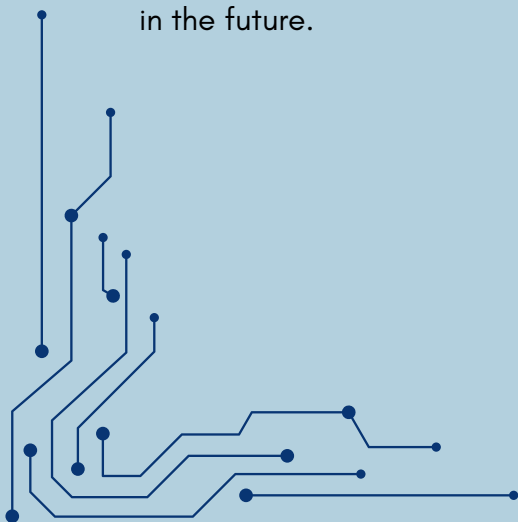
If this term system were to help the student body, it wouldn't emphasise all of the key issues it was implicated to eliminate. School isn't a place where students' grades should be a measure of success, it's an environment to learn what you love, and foster meaningful connections through long-term classroom environments. However, the frantic term system catalyzes a widespread feeling of panic during regular exam seasons where student connection disappears eliminating a sense of wellbeing that should be automatically included amongst school life.

AI in the Realm of Creativity

by Yuhe Pan

As generative AI models become increasingly advanced, so have conversations surrounding the technology and its capacity for creation. Work generated by these models have already invaded the online space through social media algorithms, and companies such as Disney have let go of alarming numbers of their staff in favor of AI's capabilities to produce content. But does AI's invasion into these spaces truly indicate a capability for creativity, rivaling that of human ingenuity?

It is no secret that generative AI models possess the power to create ideas based on user prompts. However, this ability still differs drastically from being creative. According to Cambridge Dictionary, creativity is defined as "the ability to produce or use original and unusual ideas". Given that generative AI produces work based on training data - or existing ideas - it is not able to meet the prerequisite of originality that defines creativity. The deficit of novel ideas becomes even more apparent when generative AI is used within a creative context. The results of a study by Lennart Meincke and colleagues from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in July 2025 found that participants using ChatGPT to complete creative tasks "were more likely to produce overlapping responses" with "strikingly similar language", where only 6% were considered novel. By contrast, the ideas of a separate group of participants who completed the same task without the use of generative AI were found to be 100% unique. These results not only illustrate the extent of AI's ability to exhibit creativity, but also cements that the fundamental nature of its generative model makes it incapable of originality. However, this isn't to say that AI is incapable of creation - it has innovative abilities that can still benefit society in various ways. But, in the context of creative disciplines such as the arts, its generative abilities cannot be equated to the products of human imagination. AI may be able to create, but that does not mean that it is capable of creativity. This crucial distinction is one that should be kept in mind as this technology continues to evolve and grow in the future.



In Regards to the AI Restoration of The Night Watch by Rembrandt

by Cici Song

Created in 520 BCE, the Peplos Kore has lost a fair amount to time. With chipped edges along the drapery that collapse into a pronounced hollow, abrasions on an upper lip pulled into a genteel archaic smile, rugged marble exposed behind a sheared-off nose and partial hairline, darkened spots of oxidation running up her dress, and a bleached white marble surface in complete disagreement with its vibrant former self, she stands, a vision of beauty, untouched by restorators.

Fine arts restoration, at its best, is not to return a work to a hypothetical state of perfection and virginity present at creation, but rather to preserve the history, culture, integrity, and beauty of an artwork with minimal intrusion. One of the most compelling techniques developed within this philosophy is *Tratteggio*, where thin vertical lines are used to reintegrate areas of loss by loosely matching the color and texture of the surrounding painting. This



approach allows for the aesthetic appreciation of the work from afar, and visual preservation of its material history when analyzed closely. In contrast, the Rijksmuseum displaying AI-generated reimaginings of the *The Night Watch* in such close proximity to the original is a curated erasure of the painting's material history.

As an institution dedicated to the preservation of art, history, and culture, Rijksmuseum's new pivot into AI use in the process of "restoration" is, for me, disappointing and, for the institution, utterly at odds with what they should strive for. I am writing this article in good faith as an attempt to convey why the new AI-generated panels attached beside Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* should be taken down.

My issue with this decision is not focused on the use of AI, although that is a controversial aspect of this project. Instead, the preliminary question of why these additional panels were needed in the first place has to be addressed. Whilst the Rijksmuseum states that "It is not [their] intention to incorporate the lost pieces in the actual restoration of *The Night Watch*", display is never passive, and the curatorial choice of mounting the panels in such close proximity to the original work communicates a different intent. One that is more tied to monetary gain or notoriety than pure education.

Alternatively, a 17th century copy of the original painted by Grettis Ludens displays what the whole composition would have looked like. Despite the copy being housed in the National Gallery of London and significantly smaller than the original, it would have served the same purpose if the AI reimagining is just to display what the original composition was. This painting could be shown on a screen next to the original as supplemental material for curious viewers, acting as a fun fact about this painting instead of interrupting the viewing of the masterpiece.

All in all, I sincerely hope that the Rijksmuseum will reconsider their decision and remove the AI-reimagined panels in favor of preserving visual history. Many alternatives, like the one suggested above, serve the same purpose without intruding on the visual experience. By continuing with the AI panels despite alternatives, the Rijksmuseum pushes one to speculate on the motive: whether this project is a sponsorship by an AI tech company or a desperate attempt to appeal to what they perceive as the "new generation".

Iran-US-Israel Conflict

by Bronwyn Ellis

On February 28th, the United States and Israel initiated 'Operation Epic Fury' which launched 900 missiles in the first 12 hours alone. Targets included Iranian missiles and air defense, military and civilian infrastructure, and Iranian leadership. In the attacks, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed, putting the country in much uncertainty. The council of religious experts, who appoints the next Supreme leader, eventually chose the son of Ali Khamenei, Mojtaba Khamenei. It is worth mentioning that he is only the third Supreme Leader in history and that Iran is not a monarchy, but rather a theocracy. The US and Israel also attacked critical Iranian oil infrastructure. As Iran is a rentier state that relies on oil as a major part of their economy, this attack further impacted citizens and the Iranian economy.

In response to the US and Israel's attacks, Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off a vital oil transport to the rest of the world. Iran also launched drone attacks targeting Israel which further escalated the conflict. US President Donald Trump declared on April 7th on Twitter that "a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again" if Iran did not re-open the Strait of Hormuz and cease their attacks on Israel. In response, Pakistan brokered a two-week ceasefire and since then, there has been relative peace.



The tensions between Iran and the United States will likely never be resolved; there is too much history and conflict present. The near future remains uncertain but one thing is clear: the United States has underestimated Iran's power and should be more cautious in the future. If an event like this were to happen again, it is possible that it will end in nuclear disaster.

Formula 1: Lights Out and Away We Go!

by Dev Wirk

The 2026 Formula One season is still in its early days, but already there's been some major storylines!

Formula One welcomed two new teams to the 'grid' - Audi and Cadillac. Sauber was re-branded to Audi and Cadillac joined as an expansion team, increasing the number of teams from 10 to 11.

The engines of F1 have had major changes. They now use more electric power. The cars operate on a 50/50 split between the traditional internal combustion engine and an electric motor. As well, the cars run on 100% sustainable fuel. Overtaking now happens with electric bursts of power. While environmentalists are probably happy with these changes, many people have had the opposite reaction. Charging batteries mid-race by intentionally slowing down and passing cars through power bursts have not captured the imagination of fans, racers, and most normal people, who want powerful V10 engines you can hear and feel from the next time zone, burning environmentally unfriendly fuel. Under these new rules, Mercedes got off to a very strong lead over the field in March.

Finally, for some reason, the two scheduled April races, in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, were cancelled! I'm not sure why but I understand there is an article in this edition of the Jag that will explain why. Anyhow, this extra long break allowed other teams to re-engineer their cars to close the distance with Mercedes, which they did this last weekend in Miami. McLaren finished second and third, while Red Bull's Max Verstappen finished fifth, all of which were major improvements over their early March results. International events have legitimately impacted the early season!

L'Albatros de Baudelaire

by Csenger Luka

Dans une de ses œuvres les plus connues, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire représente dans son poème « L'Albatros » la place du poète dans la société de son temps, à l'aise dans l'air, maladroit sur terre. Tout cela nous pousse à nous demander : « En quoi le prince des Mers reflète-t-il la place du poète dans la société ? »

Tout d'abord, l'albatros plane au loin, suivant le navire à son rythme. Arrivant sur le vaisseau, l'histoire change. Ses ailes trop grandes et disproportionnées, il trébuche et n'arrive plus à marcher. Le poète est confiant lorsqu'il écrit ses thèses, ou idées, isolé dans sa chambre, un chevalier sur le champ de bataille, un roi sur son trône, ou encore un albatros dans l'air.

Mais arrivant de retour dans la société, le poète diffère. Il semble timide, gêné, ou encore malheureux. Les gens ne le comprennent pas et il ne les comprend pas non plus. Et c'est là qu'un trait très important, revu chez beaucoup de poète ou philosophes, ressort : être rejeté par la société. La plupart des grandes figures poétiques et philosophes ont été vues comme des personnes étranges ou encore dérangeantes. Ce n'est que lorsqu'on les a comprises qu'elles ont été incluses dans la société. Mais tout cela fait du sens : pour penser, il faut être accompagné par la solitude, et pour qu'elle apparaisse, il faut se plonger dans l'isolement.

En revanche, les marins critiquent et maltraitent l'oiseau, comme s'il était un monstre. Un d'eux même brûlé le bec du pauvre albatros avec un brûle-bec. Mais ce vers est bien plus profond que l'on pense. Le marin armé du brûle-bec est une représentation d'un homme ayant du pouvoir dans la société. Mais avec son arme, il brûle le bec de l'oiseau. En d'autres mots, il censure la voix du poète. Pendant que cela se produit, les autres marins l'imitent, se moquent de lui. L'albatros est différent, alors il est marrant, bizarre, bête.

Cependant, les marins ne réalisent pas que ce prince des Mers n'est pas censé marcher mais voler. Le poète a une autre manière de voir le monde, il le voit à vue d'oiseau avec une nouvelle perspective. Il voit ce qui se cache au-dessus des cieux et en dessous des vagues. De là, à mon sens, son utilité dans la société d'autrefois comme dans la société d'aujourd'hui.

Cinco de Mayo

by Valentina and Isabel

Se aproxima el Cinco de Mayo en el cual se celebra la batalla de Puebla, un evento histórico para México. Ocurrió en 1862, cuando el ejército mexicano logró vencer al ejército francés en la ciudad de Puebla.

En ese momento, México estaba pasando por dificultades económicas y había suspendido el pago de deudas a países europeos. Como respuesta, Francia decidió invadir el país con la intención de establecer un imperio. Sin embargo, el Cinco de Mayo, el general Ignacio



Zaragoza lideró a un ejército mexicano más pequeño y menos equipado, y aun así logró derrotar a las fuerzas francesas, que eran consideradas de las más poderosas del mundo.

Aunque la victoria no detuvo por completo la invasión francesa, fue muy significativa porque levantó la moral del pueblo mexicano y se convirtió en un símbolo de resistencia, valentía y unidad nacional.

Es importante aclarar que el Cinco de Mayo no es el Día de la Independencia de México (que se celebra el 16 de septiembre), sino una conmemoración de esta batalla. En México, se celebra principalmente en Puebla con desfiles, recreaciones históricas y eventos culturales. Mucha gente fuera de México los puede llegar a confundir.

Curiosamente, en Estados Unidos, el Cinco de Mayo se ha popularizado mucho más y se celebra como una fiesta de la cultura mexicana, con comida típica, música y tradiciones.

化茧成蝶

by Yina Ding

一切都始于同一个梦。

梦里，我独自站在一个由无尽楼梯构成的迷宫中。四周是冰冷的石灰墙壁，空气里弥漫着压迫，寂静无声……每一级台阶都通向另一个转角，每一个转角背后又是新的通道，层层叠叠，像一个永远没有答案的谜题。头顶昏暗的灯光在破损的墙面上忽明忽暗，没有天空，只有阴影；没有出口，只有无尽的徘徊。那种感觉既陌生又熟悉，像被困在某种无法言说的重压里，挣扎，却始终找不到方向。

我开始把这个梦画了下来。

我用深色调和强烈的明暗对比，描绘那种沉重与窒息：一条条看似相同却通往虚无的路径，一个不断延伸却没有尽头的迷宫。那不仅是我的梦，更映射着我的内心世界。我画下的是刚到加拿大时自己的心境。

初到加拿大时，生活就像那个梦一样——仿佛一直在向前走，却总是走错方向。那时我是一个“用笑容掩盖自己英语障碍”的新生。每一句想用英语说出口的话都显得断断续续，笨拙而无力。我坐在教室里，假装自己听懂了一切，害怕老师突然提问，也害怕别人看穿我内心的迷茫与不安。可是在来到这里之前，我并不是这样的人。在家乡的学校里，我总是那个冲在最前面的人。我会主动请缨组织活动，会站在台上主持演出，会在表演和演讲中自信地表达自己。我习惯成为那个领头的人，习惯发光，也知道自己前进的方向。可是来到一个陌生的国家之后，语言和环境像一道无形的墙把我曾经的自信一点点隔开。曾经脱口而出的话语变得磕磕绊绊，曾经熟悉的舞台仿佛一下子离我很远。我努力适应，却像被困在迷宫里，找不到出口。那段时间，我的成绩单上几乎都是 C。课堂讨论时，我不敢举手；走进人群时，我总想缩到最角落的位置。无论我多努力完成作业，我看到的似乎总是自己与别人之间的差距。那种无力感一点点堆积，压得我几乎喘不过气来。也是在那时，我重新翻开了自己的速写本。绘画一直是我表达自我的窗口。当语言无法准确说出我的感受时，线条和色彩替我开了口。

我在纸上反复描绘交错重叠的线条，就像脑海里缠绕不清的思绪。那段时期，我的作品几乎都是灰色、蓝色和黑色，冷色调被阴影和墨迹覆盖，显得压抑而不安。它们映照出我当时的内心：渺小，敏感、迷失。

但我没有停留在那里，我开始一点点改变。

故事真正的转折来自一句“你做的非常好”，这简短的话语并不轰轰烈烈，却像一道光落进了我长期封闭的世界。我第一次意识到也许我并不是透明的，也许别人真的能看见我的每一点努力。从那以后，我开始有意识地挑战自己。即使声音发抖，我依然逼自己在课堂上举手；即使表达并不完美，我也尝试在小组合作中主动发起讨论；我学着允许自己犯错，而不是因为语言不够熟练就胆怯地不敢开口。我至今记得第一次用英语完成演讲时，双手紧张得几乎拿不稳演讲稿。可结束后，老师对我说：“你真勇敢。”那一刻，我忽然发现即使害怕我也依然愿意向前迈出一大步。

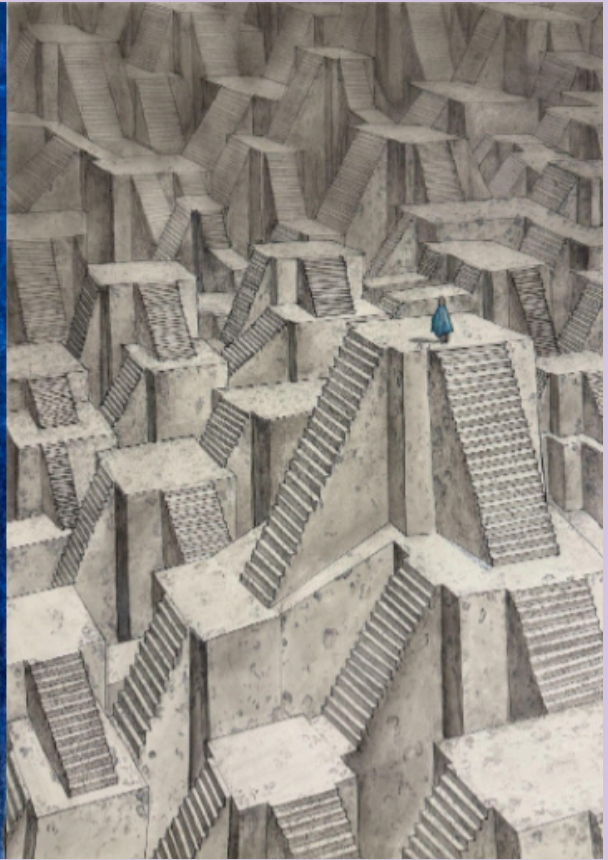
我的画也随之改变，色彩开始跃然纸上。

鲜艳的红与冷峻的蓝碰撞，橙色点缀在深黑之上，像黑暗里突然燃起的火焰。我开始尝试更大胆的构图、更强烈的对比、更复杂的空间关系。我的作品不再只是压抑和困顿，它们开始有了力量，有了某种不愿屈服的生命力。

你开始在我《蜕变》这幅画中看到一个小女孩正挣脱绣有敦煌纹样的丝茧。那些纹样象征着我的文化根源，也象征着我无法割舍的来处。女孩从茧中升起，鲜红的双翼在黑暗中展开。她的身体向上挺起，双翼奋力拍打，像是在挣脱束缚，也像是在重新定义自己。那不是个轻松的瞬间，而是一场真正的搏斗。她不是天生会飞，她是在疼痛中学会展开翅膀。后来我明白，那幅画画的是我自己已经化茧成蝶。每一次说不完整的句子，每一次深夜独自努力补课，每一次在失败和挫折中反复怀疑自己，都在改变着我。成长从来不是悄无声息、顺理成章地发生的，它更像是一场持续的攀登，明明疲惫，明明害怕，明明可以停下来接受现状，却还是选择再往上一步。而今天的我，已经可以站上讲台发言，可以在集会上表达自己的观点，也可以带领社团开展新的项目。虽然有时候，我依然会感到紧张，依然会在开口前感到胸口发紧，但我已经不再因为恐惧而停下脚步。因为我知道，真正的勇气不是没有恐惧，而是带着恐惧继续前行。

在我最新的画作里，那个长着红色翅膀的女孩终于飞了起来。她脚下的楼梯并没有消失，它们依然存在，只是不再是困住她的迷宫，而成为她飞翔时俯瞰的风景。那些曾经让我迷失、让我跌倒、让我怀疑自己的楼梯，如今都变成了塑造我的一部分。

一切都始于同一个梦，但它没有停留在梦里。我曾经以为，成长意味着找到出口；可后来我才明白，真正的成长并不是逃离迷宫，而是在迷宫中学会飞翔。因为真正的力量，往往不是来自一帆风顺，而是来自荆棘满途时依然选择展开翅膀。



Teacher Interview: Mr. Hlannon and the Engineering Department

by Claire Ru

For this issue, I interviewed Mr. Hlannon, the Director of Educational Technology at SMUS. As a student who has, surprisingly, never taken any courses from the Engineering, Technology, and Design Department, this interview was my first time stepping into the engineering classroom on the third floor of Crothall.

However, whether you are already taking courses from the department or are someone like me, who has never stepped into the classroom, this interview may take you a little bit further into this world filled with attempts, hands-on experiences, and no correct answers.

Could you briefly describe the engineering department to students who are unfamiliar with it?

Officially, it is called the engineering, technology, and design department, and that last word is probably the key that holds us all together—the design aspect.

There are courses in engineering in grades 9 and 10, and we're adding grade 11 and grade 12 engineering next year. We've got computer science all the way through. And robotics in grades 9 and 10. We have some offerings in media design, graphic design, and film. All those courses have some design aspect to them. Students are creating, they're failing along the way, they're learning from their failures, and they're iterating their designs. [There are] lots of different ways of exploring it, but design and technology are at the core of [everything].

Why should students take classes in the engineering department?

It's a different way of learning. Students sometimes are uncomfortable being asked to explore and build something, because the teacher knows how to build them, but it's not the essence of what we're all doing.

There's no right answer. There are just designs that you make. Then, you reflect on them and realize if they work the way you wish or not. Ultimately, students get to figure out ways to improve on them. So it's different from an AP multiple-choice exam, in which if you learn how to provide the right answers, you get 100%. Nothing like that exists in our space.

Just digging into that kind of iterative, [there is] always some way to improve it and no clear way to do it. [Students] take on really hard, challenging problems that don't have clear answers...It's a different learning setup than exists in most of the rest of the school. This is also why I think [these courses] are valuable in the real world—they give kids a chance to explore.

Advanced Topics in Computer Science is a relatively new course at SMUS. What makes this course stand out as “advanced”?

It looks at evolving areas of computer science that AP Computer Science and the other computer science classes in our school and other schools just don't touch.

For instance, machine learning and artificial intelligence are very different ways of understanding computer science and building computers. Quantum computing is another emerging area. It's a completely different hardware, a completely different way of thinking about computing. That's going to have huge impacts on the world of technology.

The jobs that students are going to be walking into are more likely to be in these areas of machine learning, quantum computing, or blockchain technology.

We want to open the door for the students and show them what newly emerging fields look like. We don't go terribly far into any of these areas, but we give them some languages and understandings of what these fields are all about, so when they get to university, they can keep their eyes open for those opportunities.

What do you think is the aim of engineering education in high school?

Practical, hands-on, problem-solving, collaborating, design thinking, making things, breaking things, and learning by doing all those things.

It should be very application-based, very product-based, and no test is really needed in an engineering project, because the students will have some challenges that they each face, and then they can self-assess. The teacher doesn't need to assess.

They can see from their own success and failure at the task how well they're doing. From that, they're motivated to go and then improve.

And so I think if we could stay in that space, providing the authentic experiences of what the real world needs from our students, it would be beneficial as they go on and graduate and go off and do jobs. There, they're not going to be getting multiple-choice questions from their employers. They're going to be given problems that people don't know the answer to or how to solve, because if they knew how to solve it, they wouldn't have hired you in the first place. Getting our students more comfortable working in that space is going to give them skills for the future.

In the AI era, what are some often-neglected impacts on students choosing to learn engineering, computer science, and design?

It's an amazingly powerful and useful tool for learning if it's used in that way, and it's also this really intoxicating shortcut to help avoid learning, which can be harmful for students.

I almost think of it like, when you're going to the gym, or you're doing some exercise, you have a physical feeling of what it is like to push yourself and improve your physical fitness, and I think when you're studying, you should be feeling something analogous: an exhaustion, a push, a frustration level.

You should be in that space, and if you are using AI well, you're still in that space. If you're using AI poorly, it's like you've gotten a robot to lift the weights for you. You're not going to feel the effects of the gym, and you won't be feeling exhausted and feeling like your physical health is improving.

I think it's something you have to just sort of develop a good, keen sense of how you are feeling in the process of doing the activity you're doing, because it's really easy to say you should only use AI when you're doing advanced stuff, not foundational stuff. But, in practice, it is much more difficult. AI can help you get through a bunch of tasks and skip the foundational learning; however, this is going to hurt you down the line when you need to apply [those skills] later on.

For these reasons, it's really hard for teachers in the school to make guardrails to safeguard students and protect them, and ultimately, that has to fall on the students' shoulders to be able to distinguish and self-assess. I think that's a skill that we have to help students develop throughout high school, but eventually, by the time they graduate, students need to own that themselves. It's really just being truthful to yourself, and knowing when you're getting the robot to lift the weights for you, or when you're lifting the weights yourself.

What attitude do you think we should have to approach new technology?

I think we should be curious and suspicious in equal measure.

Every technology has amazing potential and amazing risks. We've seen that with smartphones, cars, nuclear power...We've seen that all over the place. AI is no different.

There's amazing potential for all kinds of progress in medicine, energy, climate change, and public policy. There are so many places where AI can help us. It can also exacerbate problems that already exist with income disparity, class disparity, and access to technologies. It can cause problems for young learners as well as social-emotional problems for kids as they fail to make attachments to other humans, instead making attachments to technology.

That's why I think it's important to be both skeptical and curious about how we can use AI to help.

Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?

(Ms. Hann joined for this part. The two teachers responded simultaneously)

We like to have fun. We encourage creativity and exploration.

Failure is not a bad word in our department. You learn more from a failure than you learn from a success. We don't want to overdo the failure, but failure is not a course grade. Failure is the thing that didn't work. It's "what can I do to make it better?" And that's a good thing.

This is a place to learn that.

Tenacity. Fun. Hard fun.

We like that. Hard fun.