Details

What Administrators Should Know about AI in Schools with Dr. Kristan Rodriguez - 227
In this episode, Dr. Kristan Rodriguez, Founder of Commonwealth Consulting Agency, joins to discuss artificial intelligence in schools, emphasizing its role as an education-enhancing tool. You'll also hear practical examples of AI in classrooms and administrative tasks and tips for fostering a receptive AI culture in schools.

Link to live show notes: https://classtechtips.com/2023/08/08/ai-in-schools-227/
*AI in Schools

Introduction

Hello there, my name is Monica Burns and welcome to today's episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast!

I'm a former NYC public school teacher and started the Easy EdTech Podcast in 2019 to share my favorite tips, tricks and strategies for technology integration. You'll hear stories from my time in the classroom, the work I do now with schools and districts, and my travels to different EdTech events.

Each episode is designed to give you ideas you can try yourself, share with a colleague, or bookmark for later in the school year — so don't forget to head to my website classtechtips.com/podcast for all of the show notes and resources from today's episode.

If you're listening to this episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Podcasts, or another podcast player you'll see the show notes link in the description, too.

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This episode is brought to you by Jotform, a powerful online forms tool for teachers. I'm so excited to partner with them to bring affordable online forms and other productivity tools to help you manage student data.

Jotform is excellent for permission forms, quizzes, assessments, parent feedback, and more. They also offer a handful of other free products to help teachers, such as Tables, Sign, and PDF Editor. Jotform helps teachers automate their work and be more productive.

Check it out today at jotform.com.

Today's Intro

This week's episode is titled: What Administrators Should Know about AI in Schools with Dr. Kristan Rodriguez. I'm very excited to dive into a topic that has come up a lot in

conversations this spring; what do we do about artificial intelligence, how should we think about its place, especially if you are making decisions interacting with AI tools or even answering questions that families might have about AI. So Kristan shares a lot of things to think about and I'm excited for you to hear her perspective and the resources and suggestions that she has. There's a lot here in today's episode and I can't wait for you to listen. Let's go ahead and dive in.

Episode Transcript

Monica Burns:

Welcome to the podcast. I am so excited to chat with you today about enhancing access to AI technology in your school, which is more than just a, a hot topic, but something that's really important for folks as they're heading into the new school year. So, would love to hear from you first a bit about your role in education. What does your day-to-day look like?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

So we spend the majority of our day working with educators, both teachers and leaders, to make sure that the environments that they set for our students are accessible, that all students are able to succeed in their school. So, prior I was a principal, superintendent and teacher. And so my day-to-day now is working with those folks who are boots on the ground, really meeting the needs of our learners. So we do professional development and guided systems design so different every single day, which is exciting. It's like being in the classroom, I guess.

Monica Burns:

Well, I love that because it gives you such a nice perspective, you know, for our conversation with what you're hearing from people in different roles, what you are seeing in your day-to-day. And today we're talking about AI technology and how administrators can help enhance access to AI tools. But first, can you tell us a bit about the state of AI, of artificial intelligence in schools? What are you seeing in the field?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

So I think AI to some people is a scary term. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and they see that as a replacement of us as educators and as our, of our schools and traditional census. And so that's not really what we're gonna be focusing on. Nor do I focus on, I look at AI as a tool that

we as professionals utilize and the tools to which we utilize in the work that we do. And so to that degree, we've been using AI for the past couple of years. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> anytime an administrator or a teacher uses Calendly mm-hmm. <Affirmative> to set up their calendar and send a Zoom invite, that is AI. And so I think some Grammarly you are using Grammarly. That is a, so I think there are instances of artificial intelligence that are being used on a regular basis that people don't even realize.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

And so we are already using it in our environments. However, the speech to which AI is growing is exponential. And lots has, has happened even over the summer months from when we left schools in the spring to the fall. And so we'll talk a little bit today about how we can utilize that and, and maybe even combat some of the fear around the use of tools like ChatGPT for writing instruction in our classrooms. Those types of things I think, really are stressful for educators. How are students using this? We know our students are technologically agile, more so than most of us. And so how do we make sure that we stay ahead of that in the work we do?

Monica Burns:

Yeah. It's interesting that you, you know, you share those emotions, right? It's a lot of what I am hearing from people when I think for many of us, we're holding all of these emotions at the same time. We're hesitant, we're fearful, we're excited, we're curious, we're interested. And I think it's okay to have all of those feelings, but like you said, there's a world of possibility in a lot of this, whether it's even the predictive text we use when we're sending a message to someone, right? Has been here in, in different capacities. So, you know, what are some of the ways in which administrators can even learn how to effectively utilize AI tools in their school? And, and how can they support their teachers in this learning process?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

You know, there's a lot of different blogs and websites out there that will kind of share the resources and tools. So I'm gonna share a couple of examples of that, and folks that are listening can do additional research and see what those tools are are available to them. So there's a few things that they can kind of look at. One is, how do we make our day feel more purposeful? How are we being thoughtful about the use of our time during the day? And how do we use AI to take away some of those tasks Yeah. That we do, that take up our time, and instead allow us maybe to be more in the classrooms to be overseeing some of the systems level work that we wanna do. So for example, if we're looking at data use, right? We should

not no longer, I was literally just left a meeting with a, a, a team, an administrative team in a public school who said, because we don't have our, our designation of cohort students tagged in our data system, we just spent three hours pulling out for 195 students their performance on these indicators, right?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

We should be using data systems in our schools to address opportunity gaps by looking at how do we track attendance for our students? What kind of data dashboards do we have so that we can organize the disaggregate the data by subgroup, look at data over time, cross grade levels in schools with that data. There's things like the map accelerator, right? So we can think about using that to, to, to help us designate intervention groups for our students. And then there's these like adaptive assessment platforms that we could actually use to create targeted skills and groups of students. So we can really use data for purposes of addressing things like opportunity gaps with the use of AI. So that's like one way that, that could be helpful. Another, I think really important one is how do we use AI as a means of communication?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

Not to replace our voice, but to enhance our voice. So do we use something like ChatGPT? That's something that everyone's a little concerned or afraid about, but something that most of us have played with by now is how do we use ChatGPT to help us draft monthly newsletters to parents to create social media posts, to design a weekly email template for us? In other words, we spend so much time doing that kind of stuff when we can be in classrooms so we can be looking at data and thinking about our systems. So again, how can we utilize that to capture time back? And then let's say we wanna address some drivers in our system, like our scheduling system mm-hmm. <Affirmative>, how can we use AI to help us generate schedules that meet the needs of our learners that are really learner centered as opposed to that's how we always did it.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

Or this particular educator, we have to get this class in and we're not going to. And so we can kind of generate our our schedules. There's this one called, I think it's called Docendo Zen. And it allows, it's like an intuitive scheduling software program, and it allows you, and again, I'm not endorsing any of these, I don't get paid for any of this. Just trying to think of some examples of what I'm seeing, right? Yeah. But I, what I find about traditional scheduling software, 'cause lots of us use it, is it happens once a year mm-hmm. <Affirmative> what's

different about something like that versus an AI one is it's, it allows you to manipulate the schedule. So if you're looking at like a, what I need block for kids intervention blocks for kids throughout the course of the year, that is, that adapts and change either quarterly semester wise after nine weeks of intervention.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

An intuitive scheduling software program would help with something like that. You could even use ChatGPT to help you create schedules with some specific prompts that would actually help you design a baseline for schedule that you and your team can then refine. And in addition, you can use scheduling software like for example, Calendly or whatnot to free up you or as an administrator or the principal or the administrative assistance time to do that. Why not create a chat box that answers frequently asked questions that someone is constantly calling the school on? And, and the administrative assistant is using that time to answer a question. School day ends on this half days are here, you can create a quick chat box that you know, your families that you input the, the questions and answers to, to save time. So there's a lot of time saving techniques that, that we can provide to our administrators so that they can focus on the other work of systems change.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. And just the tedious tasks that you mentioned, go along with that reallocation, right? If you're making other choices with your time, right, and you're reprioritizing your time, that's really what jumps out for me too. So I love that those, those examples that you gave were really about creating more time for all of us to do the meteor <laugh> or the heavier lifts as opposed to some of the things that are just tedious could be automated, especially at that administrative level. So I'm curious if you have any examples to share of AI applications that are already being used to support student learning. So maybe outside of the admin space and more into that classroom student facing

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

Spaces. So there's a couple of things. One is I tell our educators, do not be afraid to actually use generative AI to help you enhance your lesson plans. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So like, use the ChatGPT and say, here's my lesson plan. How do I integrate universal design for learning into this? Or how do I support, you know, these evidence-based practices for multilingual learners with this? And so again, I think that that's like a tool to enhance the work you're already doing. It's not creating it from scratch, but it's supporting it. You can do blended approaches around AI instruction where you have the students begin their prompt and then

give them prompts to use with the generative AI tool that would say, okay, address the grammar in this and give me feedback on that. Gimme feedback on, on my voice, gimme feedback on my tone, things of that nature.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

There's a ton of you know tools that you can use to support access for students speech to text access. There's something called SpeechFlow which supports a multilingual learner transcription. So it's like speech to text, but in other languages. So if you have a dual immersion or dual language program, you can use that. If you've got kids that, let's say a kid has a broken arm or a kid has fine motor challenges, or a kid gets easily distracted and has ADHD, you can use something like Otter ai, which is a capture the lectures that you're speaking. You can use captions AI for students that need to you need to provide access that might have some, some hearing challenges associated with that. Seeing AI site. So I don't know if you've heard of seeing ai mm-hmm.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

<Affirmative>, but what it does is it describes the environment for students so that if they if they're not able to actually visually see it visualizes from them. So tons of these things Yeah. You know, SymboTalk right? That's like a communications board for students that are nonverbal. So like all these kind of resources are integrated. They don't replace a teaching. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, they're just a tool that we can use to provide access to students that make their experiences, they feel more engaged in the experiences that are happening in the classroom speechify text to speech reader, right? Tons. There's so many of these little tools that we can use. So you can start with something as simple as Grammarly, which you might not have been using, or you can do like mys a a i, which actually kind of gives specific targeted feedback to students about their, about their writing.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

So you can start small and, and, and, and then expand into that. There's a couple of new tools that are just coming out. I don't know if you've heard of Khanmigo? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. So Conmigo is like a tutoring bot with Khan Academy. And so you can explore that and use that, or you could do something like SpringMath. SpringMath is just generates kind of an intervention lesson or plan for a teacher that's supposed to be taught by the instructor, right? So it could still be teacher led, but also give some real support to them in terms of what specifically they should use for intervention purposes. So like, so, so many, but like, that's just

like a, a, a couple of things that, that we can do in the classrooms, both whole class and also individually supporting of our students.

Monica Burns:

Such a great list. And we'll make sure to link out to listeners some of the resources that you've recommended. And, you know, as you were talking, I think for me, the words that really resonated were enhance, right? So enhancing your instructional practice and then access, right? Giving students access to things that might have been challenging for them to really make meaning of, to making sure that we're giving everyone what they need to have a successful school day. And that's one of the things that I know gets me <laugh> so excited about these different resources, even though it is a, a fast-paced and kind of changing landscape. And, you know, with that in mind, this kind of fast-paced nature, there's, you know, sometimes some hesitation around things that are new. So how can organizations foster a culture that is receptive to the adoption of artificial intelligence technologies, you know, by administrators? Is there, do you have advice for administrators, you know, who are, are tackling this idea with their school community?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

I recommend just be collaborative about it. So talk, start with a conversation with the teachers about what do we wanna work on? What are things that we're, our students are struggling with that we're not there yet as practitioners on things that we see as challenging and difficult in our roles as educators, and see if there are tools that can help us with those areas. So that's one technique. Another is to just give time for our practitioners to practice and play with these tools. Maybe you have a curated set of just a few tools that all practitioners within the school explore. 'cause They might feel overwhelmed by all of them. Or you have a more comprehensive list for people that are a little bit more comfortable with that scaffolding supports around, do you want me to demonstrate this for you? Do you want, do you want me to co-teach this school with you before we begin to implement this tool? Give them a chance to give feedback on the tools. Say, this is not working for my kids because of this, or this is really working for me. I think someone else would love this with a similar profile of students. So I think it's really just giving them time and scaffolds to be successful as opposed to just say, okay, do it now. Or, here's what we have. We purchased this, use it.

Monica Burns:

And I love that idea of a curated list too, right? Like, these are the ones that we're here to support you with, or everyone is trying out together, right. Building that tool belt. So there is

almost a sense of community <laugh>, you know, around all of this. So, you know, there may be administrators listening or folks who have a, a leadership role in their comm school community that are really excited about this and do wanna build that culture, right? But there may also be people listening who are a little skeptical or hesitant about adopting AI technology in their work. Do you have advice for, for those folks who are still feeling like they're, they're not quite ready to jump in or, or maybe even start a conversation yet with their colleagues?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

I think we should all be skeptical and a little nervous <laugh>. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, I think, you know, it's, it's anyone that says not to be, I think that that, that that's disingenuous. I mean, there are aspects of AI, let's say some of those attendance trackers that are facial recognition personally, that makes me a little nervous. <Laugh>. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, like, you know, it feels a little bit like 1984. So the book George Orwell. So I, I feel like, you know, we have to be thoughtful and careful about the tools that we are using. I think there, there has to be some level of a vetting system within any district to make sure that it's appropriate to make sure that it, it, it, it it respects student privacy as well. And we're not giving information out to these companies. Like, it's really easy to download an app and, and then we're like exposing student information images and things like that.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

So we wanna be really careful about, from the perspective as an organization, that we have a policy in place about the use of this. That we are thoughtful about this, that we have some level of vetting that occurs around these tools without hampering, without making it so cumbersome that, you know, we can't use these tools when they, when they come up. But I would say find opportunities for people that are nervous and skeptical to use tools that feel relevant to their practice. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> let them use them. And, and I have found that that's the easiest way to change opinions. 'cause Sometimes we just say no without saying, well, you know, you have been using it, you know that this is AI and this is AI and this is AI. And they're like, oh, okay. All right. Maybe it's not this, just this, you know, this idea of what I think AI is to know the, kind of, the reality of it. But I want us all personally to stay skeptical, a little bit of it. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> to be aware of some of the things that might happen while also being open to it.

Monica Burns:

I'm so glad you, you said it like that. I was just in Florida last week with a group of, or yesterday, I've, not even last week. Gosh, I I won't think I've been home for 12 hours. <Laugh>. It's my flight landed <laugh>, I'm being honest. So yesterday we were, morning we were having this conversation around like a reframing AI conversation saying, this can automate, this can help. But then at the same time, I kept pausing to say, but this is not a toxic positivity situation. Like, let's not pretend that there isn't, you know, something here that we need to be mindful of. So I really love the way that you, you share that 'cause it is so important to acknowledge these pieces that are unknown while at the same time, right, spending, you know, or allocating some time to take a closer look right and not ignore the changes that are happening. So before we finish up, I want to make sure people know about your newest book, about where they can connect with you. Where can they learn more about your work?

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

Thank you so much. So an easy way to connect me is they can reach out through email. So it's Kristan kristan@cca-pr.com. They could use that same ending to check out our website, www.cca-pr.com, our book, which we're super excited about. So what I say, free yourself up for this systems level work. The systems level work is what we talk about in the book. These are key levers that we will pull to make sure every kiddo is successful. It's called, *In Support of Students: A Leader's Guide to Equitable MTSS* Go hit it up on Amazon or Barnesandnoble.com or any of those book websites widely publishing. You can get it direct there if you're doing a bulk order. But we're super excited about this. So let's free ourselves up through AI so we can do this important work, which is to make sure that all of our systems are, are there for our kiddos. And so you can link on and I can send you other links like my Twitter and, and other links as well. But that, that should get you to me. Yeah.

Monica Burns:

Anyone who's listening right now, you can click in the show notes. You'll find all of the ways to stay connected to learn more about the book in support of students. And I'm just so grateful for your time and your energy and these actionable tips and that you shared today for this topic that I know is front of mind for so many educators. So thank you so much for joining for today's episode.

Dr. Kristan Rodriguez:

So grateful that you had me on today. Thank you for all you're doing. <Silence>.

So let's make this EdTech easy with some key points from the episode...

Acknowledge the perspectives other people have about AI.

Share specific ways AI can impact a person's day-to-day life.

Stay on the lookout for new tools and the evolving conversation on AI.

Remember, you can find the shownotes and the full list of resources from this episode

including all of the ways to connect with Dr. Kristan Rodriguez on

classtechtips.com/podcast and finding today's episode #227!

Promotion/Reminder

A big thank you to Jotform, a powerful online forms tool for teachers. Jotform offers 50% off to teachers, so be sure to check it out today at jotform.com.

Outro

Thank you for tuning into another Tuesday episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast. If you are listening on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or another favorite app, don't forget to hit the "Follow" button – this way next week's episode will be waiting for you first thing next Tuesday morning.

And if you want to share an idea from the episode with a friend or colleague, text, tweet or post the link on your favorite social media platform – and of course you can tag me @ClassTechTips with any questions!

Episode Resources

- Check out Dr. Kristan Rodriguez's consulting website
- Find Dr. Kristan Rodriguez's new book *In Support of Students: A Leader's Guide to Equitable MTSS* on Amazon
- Connect with Dr. Kristan Rodriguez on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram or send her an email
- AI in Education Membership (Sign up & Waitlist)
- Calendly (Online appointment scheduling tool)
- Grammarly (AI-powered typing assistant)
- ChatGPT (Open AI)
- Docendo Zen (School scheduling tool)

- [SpeechFlow](#) (Speech-to-text API)
- [SymboTalk](#) (App that talks for you)
- [Khanmigo](#) (AI-powered guide for tutoring & assistance)
- [SpringMath](#) (AI-powered RTI system)
- [14 Artificial Intelligence Teaching Tools](#) (Blog Post)
- [60+ Must-Try ChatGPT Prompts for Teachers](#) (Free ebook)
- [Embracing Teachable Moments with Artificial Intelligence Detection Technology](#) (Blog Post)
- [AI in the Classroom Tips from a Teacher Using ChatGPT with Richard Perry](#) (Podcast Episode)
- [Using AI Chatbots to Enhance Planning and Instruction – Quick Reference Guide](#) (Blog Post)
- [Digital Distractions How to Help Students Stay On Track](#) (Podcast Episode)
- [20 ChatGPT Prompts for ELA Teachers](#) (Blog Post)
- [How to Create Writing Prompts Faster with Artificial Intelligence](#) (Blog Post)
- [5 ChatGPT Chrome Extensions for Teachers](#) (Blog Post)
- [Exploring the Impact of AI on Writing Instruction](#) (Podcast Episode)
- [How to Use Virtual Coaching for Teacher Collaboration](#) (Blog Post)