Beyond the Prompt: Exploring How Critical Thinking Shapes Girls' AI Usage Patterns in a Year 8 GALS Series Class

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Abstract

This action research investigated the impact of critical thinking skills on AI output in Year 8 girls within the social emotional self identity course called GALS Series at the Girls Athletic Leadership School. This study was aimed towards supporting the development and use of an AI policy at the Girls Athletic Leadership School, GALS, by obtaining students' perspective and encouraging the use of critical thinking skills with AI output. I worked with a group of 8th Grade students in the GALS Series classroom to facilitate this research. Data were analyzed to assess how critically thinking about AI systems output influenced adolescent girls' motivation to use an AI platform. Students participated in pre- and post-surveys, individual reflections, and small and whole group discussions. Ultimately, through engaging with ChatGPT in a multitude of ways, three key findings were identified: students verbally discussed a lack of diversity in generated images, shared a mistrust and questioning perspective with the written output, and individually reflected on the impacts of AI in their future.

Glossary

Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS): Founded in 2010, GALS Denver became Colorado's first tuition-free, public, gender-based middle school, designed to uplift and empower girls during their most formative years. The mission of GALS is to empower students to succeed academically, lead confidently, live boldly and thrive physically. The classroom environment fosters the academic mastery and personal development necessary for every student to become a powerful advocate for themselves and a leader in their community.

GALS Series: A core course focused on social, emotional, and leadership development, and an intentional, wellness-focused culture and curriculum for all students.

Critical Thinking: The ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information for oneself, and others, to make responsible decisions in every life.

Output of AI/ChaGPT: Throughout this research, students used the platform of ChatGPT with the supervision of the researcher. Any message that was produced by ChatGPT is referred to as the output.

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In an era of screen time, social media, and generative AI videos, the development of resilient adolescent girls' identity is an essential for their social emotional development. The Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS) is working towards adolescent self-instrument through its core class GALS Series, where every day the focus is on girls' identity development and growth of their social emotional capabilities.. In GALS Series, students are encouraged to challenge the societal norm and think beyond what they have been told. This environment focuses on the five CASEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Through units of work such as: Privilege and Oppression, Accountability, Setting Intentions, and Family Dynamics, students reflect on their learning and further develop their sense of self throughout the school year.

However, as generative AI tools like ChatGPT become part of the new norm, the traditional social emotional skills adolescents have must adapt to this new reality. This led to the development of my research question—How does critical thinking shape girls' AI usage patterns in a Year 8 GALS Series Class? It is no longer enough for girls to think beyond what they have been told by people; they must now learn to think beyond what they are told by algorithms. This study explored that intersection, examining how the foundational identity work of the GALS Series empowered adolescent girls to move from being passive consumers of AI to becoming informed, ethical auditors of it. By looking at how students navigated AI outputs, this research sought to understand if a strong sense of self and critical thinking skills could lead girls to challenge the biased narratives of a machine.

Literature Review

Life skills are an essential component of one's overall well-being. The development and knowledge of how to navigate through daily life, cope with emotions, and adapt in an everchanging society is established, and built on, during the adolescent years. Weisz and Hawley (2002) describe adolescence as a transformation with physiological, neurological, psychological, and social developmental changes. For adolescent girls, this transition is further complicated by societal pressures and a systemic "silencing" of their authentic voices, necessitating a social-emotional framework that prioritizes their agency and the disruption of unrealistic gendered norms (Lockhart, 2021). In today's society, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a major influence on adolescents' daily activities. AI or AI-created environments can impact teenagers' mental health and shape their lives positively or negatively. This developmental transition is why it is crucial for adolescent girls to have critical thinking skills to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize AI information with others in their journey for moral development.

During this developmental time, the influence of personalization algorithms can promote "good" human beings or foster an addiction and unhealthy social differentiation (Montag et al., 2021). Furthermore, researchers have highlighted the gender bias within AI; cautioning users to reflect on how it spreads and reinforces harmful stereotypes. Individuals, especially females, are highly exposed and at risk of being left behind in economic, political, and social life due to the AI algorithms (Marinucci et al., 2022). These systems are often seen as fair or neutral; however, they are created by humans and inevitably echo the inherent human biases (O'Connor & Liu, 2024). These biases can be a result of a focused cis-male gendered world perspective, compounded by a significant "diversity crisis" in the AI sector; currently, women represent only 12% of AI researchers and 6% of professional software developers (UNESCO, 2024). Lockhart (2021) emphasizes that because such environments often replicate dominant social hierarchies,

adolescent girls must be intentionally equipped to "disrupt the norm" rather than passively absorb the "silence" imposed by these exclusionary structures. This demographic imbalance ensures that the “default” user and creator remain male, often leading to the exclusion of female perspectives during the critical stages of model training and data labeling.

Researchers continue to analyze the origins of AI to illustrate why adolescent girls remain one of the most vulnerable populations in the digital age. AI perpetuates this social norm for early adolescent girls by penalizing its users based on gender. Biases in AI models are not just a technical issue because they entwine social norms and prejudices. According to Ho et al., (2025), the manifestation of AI’s gender biases can appear in the consumer through reinforcement of stereotypical gender roles, the use of gendered language, and differential treatments of users based on perceived gender.

What does this mean for adolescent girls in today’s society, particularly within the learning environment of the classroom? The risk extends beyond technical error to a fundamental psychological "loss of voice." Developmental psychologist Carol Gilligan (1982) argues that adolescence is a critical juncture where girls often struggle to maintain their authentic voice against a culture that pressures them toward self-silencing and conformity. In the middle school classroom, the act of "handing over" one’s voice to a biased AI agent threatens to accelerate this process; if a student relies on an algorithm that excludes her perspective, she is essentially participating in her own silencing. This makes the cultivation of critical thinking not just an academic goal, but a protective necessity.

Recent findings from Swartz et al. (2026) suggest that while student use of AI is surging, female students are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to express concern that AI reliance is eroding their critical thinking skills. This awareness suggests a unique relational

vigilance among girls—a desire to protect their original thought and moral agency. Therefore, engaging with AI through a critical lens in a classroom setting provides girls with a vital opportunity to reclaim their "different voice" (Gilligan, 1982), using the technology as a foil to practice the advocacy and decision-making skills required to navigate a male-centric digital world.

The majorities of the studies on AI, gender, gender bias in AI, and adolescent girls focus on the unintentional harm these biases can create. My study, therefore, had students engaging with ChatGPT output, processing through the messages they received, and working with their peers as they utilized their critical thinking skills. This approach not only addressed the documented harms of bias but also equipped students with the critical tools to recognize and challenge these influences in their own lives, ultimately fostering awareness, resilience, and advocacy for societal justice.

Research Context

The Girls Athletic Leadership School (GALS) is the only public all-girls' school, inclusive of gender non-binary and transgender students, in the state of Colorado. For this research, my participants included twenty-one 8th Grade girls in a GALS Series classroom. I saw my students for 4 or 5 hours a week over the first school semester, although this research took place once a week over a 7 week period in mid-October to early January. I chose these students because they utilized their academic, social, emotional, and learned experiences very well when cultivating an environment to think beyond the ordinary classroom topics. This was my fourth consecutive year teaching this specific course to 8th Grade students. To gain permission to include my students in this project, I emailed an opt-out letter to their parents at the beginning of

the year. I also asked the girls for their permission to include them and assured them that their responses would be anonymized throughout my final report.

Action

At the beginning of the research, I introduced my project to the students and explained how AI was a new topic to our specific school, and our policy was only developed at the beginning of the year. I highlighted the opportunity for students to be a part of how the school uses AI and how our research could guide others in our community. Students were very motivated and intrigued with this idea and bought-in to being leaders in a category we were all still figuring out together.

Students opted in by choosing their small groups, coming up with their own team names, and having authority over their prompts. In their small groups, students created gender neutral terms to prompt ChatGPT to create a realistic image. Their prompts were peer reviewed by their classmates for feedback before finalizing their writing. Images were then submitted via three different accounts to compare and contrast their images within their group. Students answered questions individually and used discussion prompts to further express their opinions and thoughts. Everyone was encouraged to speak their minds during the verbal small- and whole-group discussions. This allowed authenticity in their experience and helped me gather data through observations and note taking.

Data Collection

In order to analyze the data on how critically thinking about AI systems output influenced a student's motivation to use an AI platform in a GALS Series classroom, I gathered data through three primary methods: student surveys, teacher observations, and student journals. Mertler (2020) explains that triangulation in mixed-methods research strengthens the credibility of a

study by collecting quantitative and qualitative data at the same time and valuing both equally during analysis. Using multiple forms of evidence increased the trustworthiness and authenticity of my project's findings. The combination of surveys, observations and reflections made it possible to see both quantitative shifts in awareness and qualitative depth in students' thinking.

Quantitative data within my research were collected through pre- and post-surveys to measure students' social awareness related to gender bias in AI systems. Using the numerical scales allowed for students to rate one's feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of AI and self-development (Mertler, 2020). According to Mertler, qualitative data consist of narrative accounts, such as observational notes and student journals. I utilized a semi-structured observation method, allowing for flexibility in note taking to investigate the girls' thinking process, peer collaboration, and social awareness during our whole group discussion. Student journals allowed for a sense of the students' thoughts, perceptions, and experiences in their real world, as well as their interpretation of their AI engagement and peer conversations.

During the initial phases of my research, students completed a pre-survey to collect grounding data of their understanding of bias, influence of bias on human behavior, and the greater impact on AI in their own communities. A Likert-type scale was used to exist on a continuum to assess the girls' extent of agreement with the provided statements. In small groups, students then created gender neutral terms to prompt ChatGPT to create a realistic image. Their prompts were peer reviewed by their classmates for feedback before finalizing their writing. Images were then submitted via three different accounts to compare and contrast their images within their group. Post small group reflection and discussion, a whole group collaboration was utilized to share findings and further the girls' thoughts through collaboration and questioning on their discoveries.

This process of collecting qualitative data was used again when the students engaged with ChatGPT to create a realistic image of individuals within specific career categories. Students then analyzed in small and whole group dialogue to further their findings. Additional qualitative data were collected when the girls interacted with ChatGPT to help find a solution for their chosen problem. I made observations during the girls' collaborations with one another and analyzed common themes in their words and written journal entries to understand students' perspective of gender bias in AI. At the conclusion of the girls' engagement with ChatGPT and reflections, a post-action survey was conducted to further determine the development of students' gender AI knowledge, experiences, and influence that bias can have in their everyday lives.

Lastly, semi-structured interviews gave me more insight into students' thought process and the complexity behind their survey responses, providing a deeper understanding of how they interpreted gender bias in AI. In utilizing student voice, I was able to connect common themes from my research highlighting patterns in social awareness development and illustrating how gender AI bias can foster critical reflection and an in-depth understanding of equity among adolescent girls.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data on how critically thinking about AI systems output can influence a student's motivation to use an AI platform in a GALS Series classroom, I utilized the triangulation of the three primary data points: student survey responses, observational notes, and student journal reflections. Following Mertler's (2020) approach to inductive analysis, qualitative data were examined to uncover themes regarding the girls' lack of diversity finding, reluctance behavior, and societal future concerns. The responses were grouped by the data sources of students' journals, class discussions, and final interview reflections. Quantitative data

from Likert-type rating scales were analyzed to identify patterns in student perspectives. Rather than relying on averages, the data were evaluated by frequency of response; for example, most students (17 out of 21) reporting a heightened awareness of AI bias after interacting with biased examples. These specific counts provided evidence of how the project influenced the critical thinking and social awareness of the majority of the cohort. Comparing the qualitative and quantitative results highlighted both pattern alignment and differences, whereas triangulation strengthened the overall discoveries of this research.

Discussion of Findings

At the conclusion of collecting the data, my analysis supported the findings that adolescent girls were thinking critically when engaging with the output of ChatGPT. To unpack my research question—How does critical thinking shape girls' AI usage patterns in a Year 8 GALS Series Class?—three key findings were identified: students identified a lack of diversity in generated images, shared a mistrust of AI and questioned perspective with the written output, and individually reflected on the impacts of AI on their future.

Critical Recognition of AI Bias and its Effect on Student Trust in Visual Media

During our whole group discussion of the six different AI generated images, students noticed the lack of diversity amongst gender and race. This raised the question as to what audience Chat GPT was trying to serve with its output. Two examples of students' prompts were to "create a realistic image with a person wearing pajamas eating unicorn lucky charms with brown hair and blue eyes," and "create a realistic person with brown hair and blue eyes playing fortnite while wearing a volleyball uniform." All prompts excluded anything about gender, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; however, all generated images supported one race and

mostly female-presenting humans. Students reflected in their journals about the need for diversity to represent more of the audience.

Images are a visual representation for users to connect with and can inadvertently impact others who are excluded. A student from Group 3 wrote the following concern about their generated image using a prompt of someone dancing with colored hair: “My personal thoughts on this image is that it’s kinda racist and sexist because AI only generated a white woman when we said to have a person with colored hair.” Their concern is in line with Yang’s (2025) findings, that “AI-generated images consistently favor White people compared to people of color” (p. 5425). Group 2 shared an agreed upon opinion of their image being biased because all students received an image of a male walking a dog after entering their prompt, “Create a realistic image of a person in jeans walking a dog with a black shirt.” During a whole group discussion, this brought up the societal expectation that males are safe walking dogs alone and can be seen as a male dominant responsibility. Lockhart (2021) argues that for adolescent girls, the development of critical thinking is inextricably linked to the process of "disrupting the norm" within patriarchal structures. During the whole group discussion, the students’ identification of dog walking as a "male dominant responsibility" serves as a practical application of this disruption. By naming and questioning the societal expectation that public safety is gendered, these girls transitioned from a state of passive internalization to one of critical consciousness, a developmental shift that Lockhart (2021) identifies as essential for girls to navigate and challenge systemic inequities.

Yang’s (2025) research expands on Lockhart's discoveries by highlighting previous studies that indicate how stereotypical media representations can strengthen beliefs in gender and racial stereotypes and reinforce gender- and race-based role norms. In GALS Series, students had

previously completed a gender inequalities unit that provided them with background knowledge of how gender can impact individual roles in society. In my study, students used this knowledge to advocate for their experiences with public safety. One student said, “women have to be extra careful running at night or being in public alone because they are seen as an easier target in today’s society.” Gender roles were consistently being challenged by students in this classroom as our middle school aims to create a learning environment supportive of individuality, equity, and standing firm in your beliefs.

By the end of this project, it was clear students were critically thinking about the impact of their generated images on a broader audience than just themselves. According to Ennis (2011), critical thinking is "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do," (p. 5) a process that was explicitly visible in the students’ ability to identify algorithmic exclusion. For example, the data revealed a shift from observation to ethical critique when a student reflected, “basically no one’s AI made a different skin color.” This specific finding demonstrates the student's transition from passive user to an evaluator of systemic bias.

Mondal and Mallick (2023) recognize that strong critical thinkers make well-informed decisions as they question assumptions and assess evidence; by identifying the absence of diversity as a deliberate flaw rather than a random error, the students exhibited high-level "relational vigilance." Their experience expanded their critical thinking skills as they began to advocate for a more equitable AI experience. By advocating for others, the students moved from passive acceptance to informed skepticism. Ultimately, their willingness to engage with AI became contingent on their ability to navigate and challenge biased outputs, turning a learning task into an act of critical reflection.

Identifying AI Limitations Creates Patterns of User Reluctance and Skepticism

Throughout this research study, I observed students' attitudes towards using AI shift. From the intriguing “magic” of AI, as a student called it, a culture of reluctance to utilize and questioning of its validity began to form in this process. Hinks (2020) reports a similar finding on technology adoption, noting that rapid advancements in technology do not necessarily cultivate enthusiastic adoption but instead, users often exhibit cautious or resistant attitudes.

When students were asked how they used Chat GPT in the pre-survey, some answers included: “to revise stuff for grades or to just generate images,” “review my essay and find mistakes,” “random questions,” and “to help with life skills and social situations. If I don’t know how to do something.” This indicated students used AI for personal use within the three following areas: homework support, image generation, and personal support.

In their same small groups, students prompted Chat GPT to describe a day of someone in a chosen career they agreed upon. An example prompt was, “Can you write a journal entry for a day in the life of a marine biologist?" Each group put their prompt into their platform and reflected on the output in their small group. Students were asked to identify any biases, share their thoughts of this story, and identify a theme. As students were reading through their prompts, their behavior shifted into a doubtful perspective about the journal entry’s accuracy. Students began to comment on how the individual had no life and began comparing it to the schedule of their own or their family members. There was also continuation of the notices as students began to branch out their ideas based off of what someone else was saying. The doubt of AI became a chain reaction as they analyzed the output. After sharing their findings with the class, as an overall review of the stories, students discovered a connecting theme that every story shared an enjoyment of their career and only three were tired yet optimistic.

The careers of shoe designers, zoo keepers, and veterinarians were portrayed by AI as a contentment and happiness with their lives. The careers of a teacher, psychiatrist, and cosmetic surgeon described mental exhaustion but a positive outlook as their day concluded. Their observations highlighted a concern some students shared about life not always having a positive outlook, critiquing AI to be unrealistic or "basic." This led them to question the reliability of the stories and to wonder if AI was attempting to create happy endings for all careers, with one student asking, "Does everyone even like their jobs?" Within this group of students many became very confident in speaking their mind and sharing their opinions with others. From an observation view, students were beginning to grow their skepticism, seeking validation in another student's opinion. A few individuals used their peers' discussion points as evidence to why they didn't believe in AI and refused to use the system. This culture of doubt continued to play a role throughout the intervention as an "us versus them" mentality began to appear. Chan and Hu (2023) correlate this finding explaining, "the way students perceive a technological innovation such as GenAI, their views, concerns, and experiences of the technology can have impact on their willingness to utilise the tool" (p. 4).

Through the lens of Davies (2026), this was a successful pedagogical outcome; the girls were not merely consuming content but were actively seeking "validation in another student's opinion" over the AI's programmed optimism. The "us versus them" mentality highlights the social dimension of the expectancy-value theory (Chan & Hu, 2023). Once the group collectively identified the AI's false accuracy of the mental load of careers like teaching or psychiatry, they began to pick at its flaws. Their refusal to use the system appeared an act of intellectual protest as they chose to devalue a basic digital narrator in favor of their own complex, human perspectives, allowing their skepticism to take minimal value from their AI output.

In the post-survey students were asked, “What influences do you notice AI having over perspective, mind, choices, etc?” A few responses included, “It can manipulate them and tell them how to do bad things,” “AI can teach girls that they need to meet a certain standard, or make them think they are inferior to men,” and “It can tell girls how they are supposed to be but sometimes that isn’t how we actually are.” This gender-specific skepticism is further supported by the UNESCO (2024) study on large language models, which found that AI tends to produce regressive gender stereotypes, often portraying women in idealized or undervalued roles. My students’ observation that AI creates a “standard” that doesn't reflect who they “actually are” mirrors these findings. Furthermore, their collective refusal to accept these narratives as truth illustrates what Davies (2026) describes as algorithmic resistance. By seeking validation in their peers' lived experiences rather than the AI's output, these adolescent girls demonstrated that critical thinking in a digital age is as much about identity protection as it is about information literacy. They recognized that the AI’s happy endings were not just unrealistic, they were a form of synthetic socialization that they morally chose to reject.

Based on the students' responses, an intersection between critical AI literacy and adolescent moral maturation emerged. The two primary themes of concern of factual unreliability and the potential for psychological manipulation illustrated a shift from personal skepticism to a broader social consciousness. While students initially doubted the AI for its factual errors, their concern evolved into a deeper critique of the tool’s long-term influence on the perspective, mind, and choices of their peers. This shift aligns with Morris et al. (2001), who characterize the transition from self-centered thinking to a focus on the greater good as an essential of moral development. In this study, the girls' anxiety regarding self-esteem, body image, and “standardized” social scenarios serves as clear evidence of this maturation.

The girls were not merely concerned with the AI being “wrong” in a technical sense; they were critically analyzing how its “idealized” outputs could act as a harmful socializing agent for other girls. By prioritizing the mental well-being of their community over the convenience of the technology, the students demonstrated what Davies (2026) calls algorithmic resistance; a refusal to engage with a system that they have identified as an ethical risk. The observed student reluctance is not a lack of engagement, but an act of intellectual and moral autonomy. These adolescent girls valued the truth in their lived experiences more than the efficiency and perspective of ChatGPT.

The Link Between Ethical Apprehension and Hesitant AI Adoption Among Adolescent Girls

The final finding of this intervention revealed an unexpected shift from cognitive skepticism to a principled, physical refusal of the technology. As the students moved deeper into the lessons, their hesitation transformed into a deliberate ethical boycott. This was characterized by a palpable sense of distress and fear, with students citing the environmental cost: "AI is killing the polar bears” and the displacement of human labor being primary reasons for their disengagement. This "us versus them" mentality was not a result of a lack of technical skill, but rather a direct outcome of the girls’ developing value systems. Their refusal to interact with the platform was a physical demonstration of their moral agency; they chose to be a passive participant through their peers instead of using ChatGPT, effectively drawing a boundary between their personal ethics and the requirements of the digital tool.

The girls’ apprehension regarding AI use deepened as they began to project the dominance of generative AI into their own futures. Remarks regarding AI "taking over the world," or "replacing people to save companies money," suggest that the students were

performing a macro-level critical analysis of the technology's societal impact. According to Yin (2025), this type of anxiety is a common response as individuals begin to perceive the long-term societal effects of AI on the workforce. For these adolescent girls, this fear was not abstract; it led them to question the very purpose of their education. If AI is destined to replace human roles, the perceived value of their current academic efforts (Chan & Hu, 2023) began to diminish, leading to a profound pushback against the necessity of traditional schooling in an AI-dominated future.

The climax of this finding was observed in the divide between those who joked about a "VR reality" and those who adamantly insisted that "the world cannot exist without humans." This debate highlights the moral maturation discussed by Wallis et al. (2021). The students were not just using critical thinking to solve a task; they were using it to "argue, justify, and reflect on their own personal opinions and motivations" (Wallis et al., p. 630). Their apprehension was the final stage of a critical synthesis: they analyzed the environmental and economic costs, evaluated the impact on their future identities, and synthesized a decision to resist. Ultimately, the hesitant adoption observed in the GALS classroom was a sophisticated act of decision-making responsibility. By the conclusion of the research, the girls had moved from being students of AI to being ethical auditors of it, proving that, for this demographic, the choice to *not* use a tool can be a more powerful indicator of critical thinking than the choice to use it.

As students analyzed the lack of diversity in AI images, they utilized critical thinking to evaluate the ethical necessity of representation. This discovery transitioned into a building reluctance towards unrealistic outputs, representing a growth in their decision-making responsibilities that is uniquely rooted in adolescent girls' relational ethics. Unlike purely transactional decision-making, these students demonstrated a "care-based" evaluation of the

technology, choosing to reject outputs that could harm social inclusivity. Ultimately, their apprehension regarding the future of AI demonstrates an ability to synthesize current interactions into Wallis's (2021) moral framework. In the GALS classroom, critical thinking empowers students to justify and reflect on their role as ethical digital citizens—ensuring that their decision-making serves as an act of advocacy for a more inclusive technological future.

Conclusion

Results from this study show that critical thinking skills are essential in analyzing AI output. Through generating images, prompting AI stories, and engaging in class discussions, students analysed, evaluated, and synthesized information for themselves and others. Students advocated for more diversity in ChatGPT's output, calling out the biases and a lack of gender in its creations. Their findings motivated them to not use AI as a reliable source and to hold it accountable for its impact on the environment and their personal futures.

Initially, I had planned for students to all engage individually with ChatGPT to be able to obtain a range of information. However, I found having them in small groups led to deepened discussions and a discovery of commonalities amongst them. This helped drive whole group discussions and expanded their thinking by hearing diverse perspectives. There were limitations within the project, with some students missing particular class workdays and a few student transfers within the class. Further research should be conducted into how the use of AI can strengthen or weaken an adolescent girl's development of critical thinking skills. I would be interested in seeing what career interests students have when they reach their time to enter the workforce, wondering if their AI experience during this stage of development impacted their decisions.

Reflection

As an educator who focuses on the self-identity and social emotional skills of adolescent girls, this project was very insightful as to what their experiences are like growing up with the internet at their fingertips. Society already holds many challenges for students this age and the pressure of AI utilization is rising. All GALS classroom environments foster the academic mastery and personal development necessary for every student to become a powerful advocate for themselves and a leader in their community. This is a constant thought for me while educating and supporting everyone in our classroom together.

I learned the process of answering a research question is very complex. It was humbling having the data drive my process, and not me choosing the path I wanted it to take. As an educator who plans lessons, connects content to standards, and facilitates all the lessons, the research experience brought on a new perspective for me. I was not in control of what the findings would be and had to pivot my own thinking to best support the discoveries. I have found students to be leaders in making change in our school community and today's society. Their care for one another, and others in our world, struck me with gratitude that they are aware of the impacts for everyone in this rapidly growing era of artificial intelligence. I would like to thank the students who participated in my research for being vulnerable, honest, and meeting every lesson with their authentic selves.

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