

## Spotlight Transcript\_Ep2\_Rachel Yurk\_2025

### AI in Action - How Pewaukee School District is preparing students for life beyond the classroom

Yasmin London (00:01.378)

Hello and welcome to Spotlight by Qoria, the podcast where we unpack all the best stories, strategies and learnings for schools by schools all around the world. I'm Yasmin London and I'm incredibly excited today to welcome you to our Spotlight guest, Rachel Yurk from Pewaukee School District. Welcome Rachel, how are you doing today?

Rachel Yurk (00:22.371)

I am well. I am well. Thank you so much for having me.

Yasmin London (00:26.39)

It's an absolute pleasure. Now you're the Chief Information and Technology Officer at Pewaukee School District, which is in Wisconsin in the United States. You've been doing that role for a little while, haven't you? But you've got a very, very long, I guess, history and experience in education. So one of the things that I always like to start with all of our guests is asking what got you into the business of education and what is it about young people that you like, that you love working with.

that you like working in this industry.

Rachel Yurk (00:57.999)

Sure. So I have had an entire career in education. So 32, going on 33 years in the field. I started in the classroom, just passionate about learning and what makes different people tick, what gets them excited, and really trying to find ways to reach every person. So about 20 years in.

I started working, I actually had a mentor who said, you know, if you really pay attention to the things that you're doing, they all seem to involve technology. And, perhaps you might want to think about that avenue, which brought me into a little bit of coaching and then an

administrative degree that, you know, eventually morphed into the current role that I have been doing,

the work that I'm doing now in Pewaukee for, think this is my sixth, maybe seventh year there. And I just, it sure does. I'm thinking about that, but awesome to, you know, be on the side of things where I feel like I can enact change and encourage educators to use tools new and differently and, you know, continue to impact learning for kids.

Yasmin London (01:57.646)

Goes quickly, doesn't it?

Yasmin London (02:19.224)

Yeah, absolutely. I think the world needs more people like you who perhaps have the skills and knowledge and ability to lean in and really show everyone else the positive aspects that technology can bring. think there's a lot of fear out there and understandably so, right? We've got the rise of AI, we've got online safety risks, we've got the concerns around things like misinformation and disinformation. And recently we've seen organizations like Meta reduce fat.

checking. So it can feel a little bit overwhelming for your average person trying to sort of get involved in this. It's really important to have those people just like you that can help lead the way. I'm interested Rachel, how would you describe the digital environment for schools right now?

Rachel Yurk (03:08.27)

Well, I mean, we're coming out of COVID where there was a lot of learning at home, learning, you know, just as you and I are speaking tonight, being very screen rich and although facing and seeing one another, it's not that same face to face in person. So coming off of that, our teachers are

kind of have the knowledge of some new skills that they can have and what can they do to really make a change. But at the same time, they desire so much to spend time with kids, face to face. And so it's now finding that delicate balance of many, many tools that we know excite kids and get them really

just engaged in learning, but at the same time, we know there's that delicate balance of too much screen time, as well as the safety side of things. Where do you draw a line and say,

this is not for you, maybe not yet? And then even more challenging, how do we help them learn about things that maybe they're not old enough to do so that when the time comes, they're still ready for a world that's going to be...

that's going to have that be a big part of it. mean, like AI is, for example, AI is not going away. It's here now and we're all gonna be working in our fields more and more in AI, but there's a whole lot of AI that is just not appropriate for our students. So how do we help them learn about that? How do we bring about that personal side of things while still taking advantage of what it offers for teaching and learning?

Yasmin London (04:35.0)

Yeah.

Yasmin London (04:56.888)

Absolutely. What do you do for educators that you work with within your district? Because you spoke earlier about the power of mentoring and coaching and how that's really impacted you in a positive way. Knowing that all of these educators and school leaders are feeling, you know, in the middle of sort of a rock and a hard place, if you will. What sort of advice do you give them in terms of managing their mindset? You know, how they can help

Rachel Yurk (05:17.901)

Yeah.

Yasmin London (05:25.006)

students prepare for a world that they're not old enough to understand yet, but we know that we need to build those skills so that once they're sort of dropped into the world of social media or technology or AI, that they've got a foundational base. What advice do you give them?

Rachel Yurk (05:40.746)

Wow, that's a big ask. Lots of advice is around, being sure that you yourself know and understand things and you maintain, being a learner yourself. We never stopped learning. and our educators are no different. If we only took those things that we learned when we were in school to become teachers, we wouldn't stay effective teachers, you know, throughout our careers. So.

Yasmin London (05:43.214)

Yeah.

Rachel Yurk (06:09.39)

There's that big shift of technology that is going to just keep coming. Our school district is very focused on strategic planning. So as one of the process owners in the district, I maintain two strategic planning goals. And we are very careful about

implementing processes that help us stay innovative in two areas. One being future ready, which is really what we're talking about, being ready for a future that we may or may not even know what that looks like. And so that's always something we're trying to achieve. And then just sustainability of good quality, teaching and learning and pedagogical practices, all of that sort of thing. And so within all of that,

whether it is the plan that involves around future ready, which is more AI emerging technologies and or the sustainability goal, which is about finding that balance between the online world and the in-person learning while using technology. like quality use of technology and making sure that when we do employ the tools that we have available, we're using them well.

we're using them in a meaningful way.

Yasmin London (07:33.602)

Yeah, I think that that word meaningful is important because I think many of us have this tendency to be reactive and expect that we have to learn about the next big thing and having these clear roadmaps, blueprints, if you will, around your two strategies really helps keep our focus, doesn't it? Because focus is a really big issue in this world. We're trying to make sure we're across everything. It's impossible, right?

Rachel Yurk (07:40.92)

Mm-hmm.

Yeah.

Rachel Yurk (07:58.924)

Right, right. So I mean, whether it's a focus for our educators on professional development. So, you know, a professional development pathway, we have different learners across the

districts go into specific professional development pathways. They self-select those based on their own professional goals, but the goals from across the district. So

I'm in my second year of an AI emerging technologies pathway and that particular pathway is not the same group that I had last year. They then become leaders for others in, among their colleagues across the district. And they do a lot of, whether it's informal or formal, but assisting other learners around them.

And they have great ideas and become leaders within the district in those areas.

Yasmin London (09:02.946)

Yeah, that's really important to make sure that there is agency, I guess, in self-selecting those goals. We're not going to be great at anything if we're not intrinsically motivated, are we? So it's really important to figure out what are those areas of interest out of the spectrum of things that we could be moving forward with and really trying to lean into those. And you mentioned as well how we share those learnings.

Rachel Yurk (09:20.056)

Right.

Yasmin London (09:26.336)

One of the great initiatives that I know you've been working on is an AI student summit where you're partnering with local colleges and businesses, you're creating certifications for students. So you're really finding a way to make the skills that you're developing in your students have a real-world applicability. Can you tell us a bit more about how you came up with that idea and what have been the best benefits?

Rachel Yurk (09:46.733)

Yeah.

Rachel Yurk (09:51.586)

Yeah.

So about this time last year, after a year-ish of beginning our strategic plan around artificial intelligence, we had developed guidance for students and staff. We had developed ethics for students and staff. We had done professional development for not only our staff, but learning sessions for our school board.

to be behind us and support us in the work that we were doing as well. And we recognized we had other districts around us who were very interested in all of those documents, all of those things. How are you still doing the work you're doing when students really are not old enough to engage in any of the artificial intelligence things that we were talking and learning about?

So all of that was happening through teacher example. So maybe kids can't work with, you know, large language models, but their teachers can and they can produce information and be transparent. This, you know, I didn't create this, you know, I generated this and we're going to learn through that. And this is how I did it. And so as we started looking at that and getting more and more questions from areas, we thought the idea was what if we built a summit where

educators from around our area in Wisconsin could learn and learn together, find out about how we were changing some of our practices, how we were saving time, being more efficient, more effective, and freeing up time in the classroom that our educators would normally spend on some things so that they could have more of those face-to-face personal interactions with kids.

Rachel Yurk (11:46.894)

So that was kind of our dream. And last August, we did our first AI summit. We partnered with the Technical College, Waukesha County Technical College is bordered right up to our property. And so we already had a partnership with them. At the same time, they were launching an AI lab and doing all sorts of certifications. I think they have

three different certifications in a variety of artificial intelligence certifications it's a two-year program that they run there. so it seemed like a natural, comfortable place. We could talk about how students can leave our organizations or really a K-12 organization and continue on learning in those ways.

We had a business panel that spoke from our area and business leaders came and they talked about how AI is already in their businesses, providing kind of that relevance of like, why are we doing what we're doing? And just that we can't afford to wait for other tools to come about. We already have students graduating, going into fields and having experiences where

If they're not using it, they will be asked to, and if we don't teach them how to be ethical and proper in their use, then they're going to falter and we will have missed for that. So that summit came about really within that. We're looking at again, doing that again next August, opening it up with more of a leadership track so that one of the powerful things about our implementation of AI in the district has been

support from the superintendent, the school board, the community, and staff. One of the things we've measured has been really not only what are we doing for those people that self-select to be in a professional development pathway, but across the board, all of our teachers. so surveying our staff and, know, what is your comfort level with AI? And that's one of our metrics that we're keeping track of.

Rachel Yurk (14:13.518)

We're not expecting that every educator in the district is going to be 150 % on board, gung-ho, ready to implement any part of AI into their work. But are they growing in a comfort level so that they can start to see the importance and the relevance in that? we help those people that maybe are fearful, getting more comfortable with it, seeing the positive side, right?

Yasmin London (14:36.576)

Yeah, absolutely. Well, I think that word relevance is so important because, you know, that's where we see that real world applicability, as you mentioned before. So when you were speaking to businesses and when they came in and spoke, what were the ways they were using AI in their businesses that I guess were important for students and for staff to know?

Rachel Yurk (14:58.318)

Well, they definitely hit upon that, that, whole ethical use. And they talked about how, you know, by no fault of ours, right? I mean, like AI has not been on the scene long enough that we've failed to help kids to know how to use it ethically, but they've had to take on some of that responsibility and how they, they really, they, they desire that idea of, you know,

Digital citizenship and just understanding of how you use tools, when and where and how and so on is critical. They're using it a lot in the analysis of data. The speed at which AI can take in large quantities of data and come to conclusions and understanding is something that almost all of the businesses that we had come in said, you know, we cannot top that.

they wanted us to realise like, Hey, we're still going to need people to do the same jobs. The same job titles may not be used, but there are still people who are, facilitating the work. It just is probably going to happen at a much faster speed than they've ever been able to do that. So yeah, it's kind of like that, you know, buckle up, hang on, 'cause things are going to start to move really fast.

Yasmin London (16:22.338)

They really will.

Rachel Yurk (16:22.634)

And yeah, our understanding became, wow, if our students aren't ready for that, if our students aren't familiar with it, then some other individual will be selected. And we, of course, want what's best for those kids that come out of our system.

Yasmin London (16:37.006)

Absolutely.

Yasmin London (16:41.55)

Well, that's what that's saying is that AI is not going to take your job, but somebody with the skills and knowledge of how to use it absolutely will come along and use it. I think sometimes it is just taking that first step, isn't it? And you start to see the applicability, you start to see how it's being used, you start to see how it is just about efficiency in many ways once we've got those safety frameworks really right. I want to backtrack because you mentioned obviously getting the buy-in from

Rachel Yurk (16:46.857)

Right?

Yasmin London (17:09.432)

from staff members at school, that's a really important thing to consider. I think probably the majority would say they're less comfortable than they are comfortable. And in speaking to lots of educators that I know, the real draw card is the efficiencies for them. What have you found to be the greatest benefits of AI for schools, for staff members, for an individual that's in a really big system?

Rachel Yurk (17:17.73)

Yeah.



Rachel Yurk (17:33.87)

Sure. Well, mean, our early on, some of our first like introduction to AI, it was what we coined was, hey, you know, coming out of the pandemic, coming out of learning all these new tools, you know, and then anything that comes across the plate in education just seems like one more thing. And there's just a general burnout.

for a lot of our teachers. A lot of our kids came out of the pandemic with some social-emotional challenges. Who knows what exactly caused that, but we do see it on the other side. So our teachers are tired. They don't have a lot of extra time. And really one of the things that was appealing was we used to say, look, we can't take things off your plate. Like this is where we are, right? And we can't change the...

the current status of which we're teaching in, the kids are gonna keep coming. I always joke, that they kind of come by the busload. So they're gonna keep coming, right? But while they continue to come, we can automate some of those things that are on an educator's plate to give them the effectiveness and the efficiencies so that maybe you do have a wide band of

Yasmin London (18:40.782)

Like it or not

Rachel Yurk (19:02.452)

abilities within all of your kids, but what if AI takes content and helps you level it that much faster? There's a tool that we use, a partnership that we made early on in this journey into AI that within a matter of, I can do a demo within a matter of five minutes, it will generate a lesson plan, a sub-plan based on academic standards from your state. It will

You can then ask it to create a presentation to teach that same lesson plan. So it will do 20 slides with images that are based on that. And then there is a feature where you can push out an exit ticket or a check and understand, a check of understanding to the students directly.

in which it takes each of those standards that you originally identified when you said you wanted a lesson plan on this academic standard, and it will continuously quiz them to see if they've understood it after you've taught the lesson. And all of those tools are available and can generate all that content within five minutes. Everybody wants to know that tool is brisk teaching.

Yasmin London (20:14.958)

What's the name of that tool, Rachel, for everybody listening? They're all gonna be wanting to know. Brisk teaching.

Rachel Yurk (20:23.402)

And brisk teaching is a resource that works right within your Google domain. So many of our school districts are Google apps for education and brisk teaching is an extension that works within the Google domain. It will boost activities for students. So students are also able to interact with a chatbot under all under that comfortable shuttle of

of Boost where the teacher can see all of it. It flags inappropriate discussions. You can pause if one student is maybe not being very good or not being as engaged as you want. You see all of the interactions. They don't go anywhere. They're a privacy, very conscious resource. And it's just amazing that you never leave your Google domain.

You're in Google Docs, and Google Slides, and pushing out to students, and they're all working on platforms that they're comfortable with. It's just, it's an amazing tool. And that alone, teachers didn't have to learn something new. They just had to learn how to request it, and all of a sudden they're automating their plate. So yeah, it's...

Yasmin London (21:40.216)

Yeah.

That's incredible. What's the setup like? Does it take a long time to get it prepared for your individual teacher within a school or within a district? Is it labor intensive or how did you find that experience?

Rachel Yurk (21:55.502)

No, it's because it's an extension within the Google administration dashboard. You're pushing that extension. We pushed it out to all of our teachers. We don't allow our students to download their own extensions or to add their own extensions specifically for that reason. It's a teacher tool. It is not a student tool. So our students can't go to brisk teaching because it's an educator tool. They're well aware of it.

We have some of our staff who have their own children in our district. Recently a friend shared, well, my son's gonna be graduating. And he said, Mom, I don't know what I'm gonna

do. I'm not gonna be able to have brisk, give me feedback on my writing anymore. This is big.

Yasmin London (22:43.438)

It's a really good point though, right? Is there a concern around over-reliance on these tools or is that just not something that you worry about? You think that's the future and you know.

Rachel Yurk (22:53.526)

Well, the tools that we've engaged are tools that are directed through the teacher first. So the teacher really does. Now, we're not ignorant. We do know that our kids can go on to their own individual devices. They can go to their phones. They can use AI. And so it's really important that we teach our kids about ethics and how to cite AI when you work with it.

AI uses icons that indicate how much AI is allowed or used in a certain project. maybe it's all that no AI is used in this at all. Maybe it's all AI. Maybe it's created by a human, checked by AI or vice versa, created by AI and checked by a human. All of those things are important.

I think the really critical thing for our teachers as learners is that our teachers are starting to say, myself included, wow, I have learned through tools like brisk teaching that maybe I let kids off the hook a little bit when I'm doing an assessment of kids and they're struggling and I don't let them go through the productive struggle.

quite as much as a chatbot will be tenacious and not give them the answer. You know, as I watch kids interact with those chatbots as it's quizzing them and trying to see what they know, I've had a couple of teachers say, wow, it is persistent. I would have given in long before. And so, you know, there's, there's, yeah, that's great as an educator to be reflective.

Yasmin London (24:19.182)

Sorry, sorry.

Yasmin London (24:35.598)

That's a great thing.

Rachel Yurk (24:40.92)

You know, I've had some situations where I've myself had AI generate content from, you know, work that I've done and the content that it generates is not at all what I meant. And to

me, that's a reflection to say, wow, my clarity is not there. You know, I thought, you know, maybe I think I know what I'm saying, but it's not clear to other people. And, and so I think.

Yasmin London (24:55.299)

Yeah.

Yasmin London (25:00.344)

Mm, mm.

Yasmin London (25:07.736)

Yeah.

Rachel Yurk (25:08.962)

Those are the positive sides of AI. It's not all positive. Don't get me wrong. There are some negatives too, but you know, I, I, I do think, you know, we, it's not going away. So we've got to learn how to use it. Well.

Yasmin London (25:13.762)

No, I...

Yasmin London (25:21.25)

Yeah, yeah, I think that's such an interesting point you make about what we think or I guess perceptions of what we think we're putting out to people and something like AI being able to mirror back actually you're not being clear about your messaging. There's probably an AI tool to fix that I actually learned about the other day called Prompt Genius. So for your prompts into different AI prompt genius will help you tailor your

Rachel Yurk (25:36.344)

for sure.

Hahaha

Okay.

Yasmin London (25:48.398)

prompts to actually get the best possible outcome. Learning about AI's integration with AI, you know, again, it can sort of start to feel a bit bigger than Ben Her, but those small tools

that the small sort of tech stack that you start to feel comfortable with, you become familiar with, and then you can start to explore. Now, one of the things that I've observed through all of these different initiatives that you've put into place is you've obviously had really fantastic support from your superintendents to your board.

Rachel Yurk (26:01.912)  
for sure.

Yasmin London (26:18.174)

And I remember discussing with you that you'd actually implemented lessons in AI for your board members. Is that right?

Rachel Yurk (26:26.134)

Yeah, yeah, correct. We did a school board learning session within the first six months of starting our strategic plan. We recognise that you know, just like every other adult, you're only you only know as much as you've experienced. you know, school boards tend to come from all different backgrounds and

You know, some are parents, some are community members, some are grandparents, you know, some, you know, just have a passion for education and learning, but not necessarily doing work with AI. And so we felt like if they were gonna understand and support the work that we were doing, it was in our best interest. So we did an evening gathering with the school board and...

You know, just shared with them how we're using it. For instance, brisk teaching was one tool that we kind of showcased how, you know, it can give targeted feedback on student work. It's not going to write the paper for them, but it's going to make suggestions on how we can, you know, use specific criteria that we're going to, you know, be grading kids on to help support that targeted learning for students. And, you know, right away they saw

this is not the same kind of AI that maybe I hear about in the news, or maybe I hear about, you know, people complaining about, it's not, our students are not going to have, they're not going to have it just right for them. And furthermore, there's that whole ethics and guidance piece that we've put, you know, beneath that as a foundation to promote good digital citizenship within that. So.

Yasmin London (28:11.886)

Absolutely. It sounds like you've had some great sort of encouraging people behind you. Have there been any challenges? Have you come across anyone that really sort of dug their heels in and said, no, we shouldn't be doing this? You know, we need to wait until we sort of get instruction from, you know, the powers that be, the other authorities that we need to just sit tight. What do you say to people like that?

Rachel Yurk (28:36.238)

Well, I mean, I've had educators who have said, you know, come to a learning session and said, you know, I'm here because I don't think this is going to work for English or for, know, whatever course it is that they're working with. And, you know, usually, it's the ability to differentiate learning.

That is the catch for an educator who is sceptical because they think all it's going to do is create the, write for them. That's what we hear all the time. Kids won't have to write anymore. Kids won't have to do that. And when they see, you know, an AI tool, for instance, create a podcast, you know, there's Notebook LM is out right now and you can upload a document, you know, a PDF document and basically just have it create a

podcast. It is crazy good. You know, so like, for instance, I led a PV session earlier today and basically said, now, we don't think of a boring document that you have that your kids have to read. And I, you know, I pulled up, you know, a resource that we all have to use from our Department of Education that we all have to be familiar with and read and so on. And I said, Okay, so let's take that.

Yasmin London (29:32.374)

is fascinating, isn't it?

Rachel Yurk (30:01.462)

and put it in this tool and have it create a podcast. And of course, it was like a 16-minute podcast. And yes, they're fictitious people that are talking and that sort of thing. But I said, what if your earliest understanding of more critical information is through listening to two people talk about it. And then you read this document and now this document has a little bit of relevance.

Yasmin London (30:21.422)

That's right.

Rachel Yurk (30:27.554)

So usually by example, that type of tool, I'm able to have somebody kind of understand, well, maybe that's not so bad. I have family members who say it's terrible. You shouldn't be doing that. You shouldn't be doing that. Again, give them some examples of some things that it can do. And all of a sudden, okay, maybe it is okay. So I think it usually comes from a misunderstanding or not having a lot of knowledge about it.

Yasmin London (30:55.928)

Yeah, like everything, right? If we don't know, we often fear the unknown. I think that I'd love if you brought up that example of Notebook LN because I recently discovered podcast availability on it and it is so hyper-realistic and it is such a great way to learn about a range of different topics. And you raise that really important point that we're all quite different learners. Some people learn through hearing, some people are visual learners.

And so the diversification and personalized learning, these are great examples of how we can do that if we are just, I guess, willing to stretch ourselves a little bit. So anybody listening, please look up Notebook LM. It's incredible, incredible tools. Now, is there anything, you know, thinking about your AI summit, how you've educated your board, how you've really brought your community together, everyone from staff to parents to local businesses?

Rachel Yurk (31:39.202)

Yeah.

Yasmin London (31:53.143)

Is there anything reflecting back that you would have done differently if you had your time again? I mean, you're evolving this year in August, you're going to run another summit, and you're going to focus on a leadership track. So there's evolution there. But reflecting back, is there anything that you would have done differently to start off with?

Rachel Yurk (32:11.414)

You know, I guess the only thing is maybe more data from the very get-go. When I hear about teachers or leaders in school districts that are just starting, my big thing is to get your data before you start because it will roll so quickly and you're going to look back and you're going to say, if only I had surveyed staff, if only I had

You know, gathered that information because it is super hard to identify where there has been growth and, now, like, I mean, is it, is it on the learner side? Is it on the educator's side?

Is it on the effectiveness, the efficiencies? Where does that happen? And I think when you don't know where your direction is going to take you, you don't know how to.

gather that baseline data so that you can measure growth. There are things that, like I said, I don't know that I really thought about measuring educator efficiencies. I know that our teachers are saying, my gosh, it's saving me so much time. But how could I have said, I use AI to be more efficient? I just generally don't. So yeah, I wish I had done more.

Yasmin London (33:33.006)

Yeah, I think that's a really good one. Totally. I mean, it's that formative assessment. We learn that in educating young people, that baseline because data actually tells the story ultimately, doesn't it? It shows people the value. It's in those moments that when we've got naysayers or people challenging us, we can say, in the last year, this is what saved me. This is what it's done. And it actually wasn't that hard to actually set up and start. It's just a matter of stepping forward and leaning in.

Rachel Yurk (33:42.136)

Mm-hmm.

Rachel Yurk (33:45.741)

Right.

Yasmin London (34:02.582)

Now for you at Kooaikee School District, what is your big hairy audacious goal that you're looking forward to over the next 12 months? So as I mentioned, you've got your leadership summit, your AI summit, I should say, evolving. What's your massive goal? Where are you heading towards?

Rachel Yurk (34:21.814)

I think the, the, the really big next step is, is opening up AI for kids. There are now tools out there that were not there when we started that with parent permission can be used. and you know, we're still blocking by category. So on our devices and with our logins, our students are not, are not, are not there. And so that's a really big next step.

For us, do we feel comfortable enough that, you know, as I've mentioned that ethics, that comfort level with citations, that they're going to use it, you know, to fidelity with all the



ethical considerations that we want. Have they listened? Right. And can we flip a switch that allows them to get to those things?

And is that going to violate the trust that we've built up between our educators or our community or, and who and what age and when do we do that? And so that's our next big step. And I don't know what that's gonna look like, but I do know I have more and more teachers saying, can you just open it up? Can they just get there? Can they, and there are ways that...

that through Linewise, through Classwise, they're able to get into certain tools. When are we going to be ready to comfortably allow kids to kind of swim in that pool with the right safety stuff in place to keep them?

Yasmin London (35:58.787)

Yeah.

Yasmin London (36:04.578)

Yeah. How do you come up with that line? Where do you know when you're going to jump off the cliff?

Rachel Yurk (36:09.549)

I wish I knew. I'm not sure where that's going to be. I mean, it's a big one because if you make a mistake, it's people's trust that you've lost. And that's concerning. You know, that is something that we really value and we've had all along and it's hard to get back if you violate that trust. Yeah.

Yasmin London (36:16.366)

Yeah, I think

Yasmin London (36:33.358)

That's right. That's right. I guess it's in a bit of transparency as well. It's in communicating with your communities what you're planning to do, how you want to get there, going back to that data-driven decision-making perspective, and trying to bring people along the journey with you. And certainly, I guess you'll probably come to that point where you know it's safe enough to try and that safety message has to be paramount, front and center.

Rachel Yurk (37:02.925)

Exactly.

Yasmin London (37:03.222)

Now, before we wrap up, I just wanted to ask you, if you could think about, you know, your experience in education, if you can think about your initiatives in AI, what's one takeaway for listeners, one crucial lesson that you've learned that you think that other schools should know? It's a really tricky one. It can be anything, but what would you like them to do or know?

Rachel Yurk (37:24.728)

Mmm.

Rachel Yurk (37:29.036)

Yeah. Yeah. I think the biggest thing is really to start with your staff and to make sure that, you know, we didn't jump in, you know, like right away. I mean, to some, it might be perceived in that way, but we really focused on trusting our staff to make good decisions.

I've heard of districts out there that even their staff cannot use AI and I don't know how you're gonna learn if you don't trust the adults to do that and then let them lead by example for students and then find your tools that will allow you brisk teaching is one that allows us to you know put it in front of students but kind of in that bubble there where we can watch and observe and correct and

you know, help kids learn when you make a mistake, this is how you recover. If we just block everything and we don't let anybody interact with it, then they're not gonna be able to, they're not gonna be able to gain those skills. And if our teachers can't gain the skills, then we have no way of leading by example. So that would be my biggest, my biggest trick is about

trusting the professionals that you have hired to do the job. You know, of course, we support them. Early on, boy, in the first weeks when we first began, the chief academic officer and myself said, we'll come in and teach AI. We taught high school art, we taught world language, we taught things we had never, yeah, we knew nothing about, and we led by example.

Yasmin London (39:16.824)

Amazing.

Rachel Yurk (39:21.934)

There's a tool out there for schools called AI Snapshots. We used AI Snapshots. They don't use AI, but they allow students to engage in conversations about the ethical use of AI. We got kids talking about it, and then we did examples of what that might look like and how you would use it. And that gained the trust and the credibility from our staff.

A lot of those things were very, very intentional and they made a big difference.

Yasmin London (39:53.976)

Yeah, that's a great word. Being intentional, trusting the people in your school, letting, I guess, adults be adults and really trying to empower them because ultimately, you know, they're the students' role models. If they're not confident, it's really difficult to instill confidence across the student body in the wider school community. So some incredible takeaways. I loved our conversation today, Rachel. I love how you talk about

Rachel Yurk (40:13.39)

For sure. Yep.

Yasmin London (40:22.094)

how AI differentiates learning and the specific examples you've been able to give. I think they're the really tangible takeaways for our listeners. You've talked about getting your data right from the get-go. So for anybody listening today, get the basics right. The basics work if you work the basics and it's great to be able to illustrate the improvements that you've made when you start your AI journey.

really making sure that we're capturing leadership along the way. It's hard to be progressive and to get people to approve things if they're not on the journey. So make sure that you're taking those steps to really engage them in the journey that you want to take. But incredible takeaways, Rachel. One of the things that we say at Qoria is that you know, as the digital world evolves, so do we. And that's something that, you're obviously doing amongst others in your school district. So thank you for sharing your insights with us today.

Rachel Yurk (41:14.818)

No, thank you. Yeah, of course, of course. It's been wonderful to talk. I enjoyed the conversation.

Yasmin London (41:16.225)

It's been a pleasure.

Thank you.

Yasmin London (41:24.978)

It's been incredible. I could talk about this all day. But I think we've got to let people get back to theirs, but it's been fantastic. So thank you for your time. I really appreciate it.

Rachel Yurk (41:28.011)

I know, right?

Rachel Yurk (41:35.68)

Of course, of course.