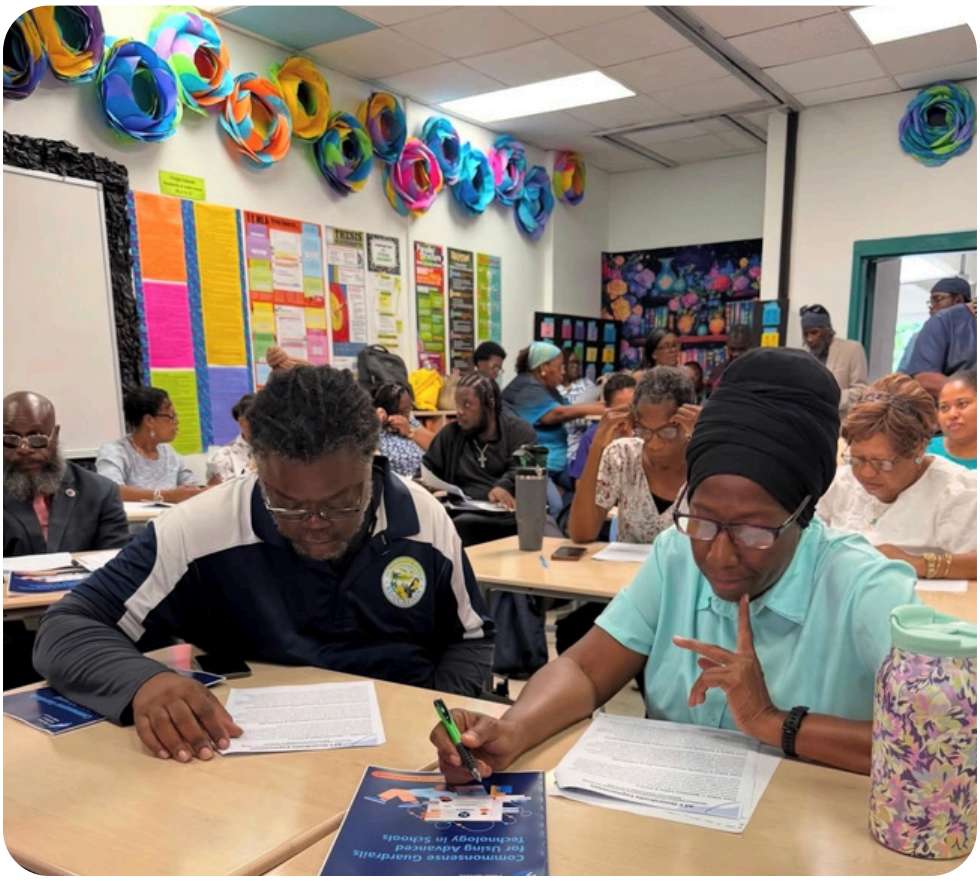
Education
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NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR AI INSTRUCTION

The AI Academy Brief

October 2026 · Issue #6



Insights, educator voices, and practical ideas from the National Academy for AI Instruction.

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Opening Message

The technology we use every day depends on more than computers and software. Behind many digital tools is physical infrastructure, including data centers that have supported the internet and digital services for decades. These facilities require significant amounts of land, electricity, and water. As the use of artificial intelligence grows, so does the demand for the infrastructure needed to support it. Communities across the country are weighing what this expansion means for their neighborhoods, local economies, and public resources.

For educators, understanding AI also means understanding the infrastructure behind it and the opportunities and challenges its growth presents. Data center development can create jobs, attract investment, and support new learning opportunities. However, these benefits must be weighed against the potential impacts on families, schools, and the communities where facilities are built.

The question is not simply whether communities should welcome or reject data centers. It is how to ensure their development serves the public good, respects local needs, and creates lasting benefits for the people who live and work nearby.

Where We Stand

At the Academy, we believe the growth of AI infrastructure must be matched by a commitment to community well-being, public accountability, and educational opportunity. Data centers should not shift the costs of technological growth onto the people and communities where they are built. The public deserves transparency about how these facilities will affect resources and a meaningful role in decisions about their development. The public should hold companies to clear, enforceable commitments rather than having to rely on broad promises about the benefits companies expect to deliver.

As educators, we also see an opportunity to connect this infrastructure to learning. Communities investing in the systems that power AI should share in the benefits, including through local jobs, workforce development, and access to safe AI tools and training for schools, colleges, and libraries. Students should be given opportunities to understand the technology shaping their world and develop the knowledge to use it thoughtfully.

This is not about opposing data centers or accepting every proposal as presented. It is about making thoughtful decisions that reflect local needs and ensure the benefits of AI infrastructure are shared fairly. Every data center should leave its community and its schools better off than it found them.

Rob's Reflections

Data Centers: Build Smart, Build Fair

Every time a student turns in an assignment online, a data center does the work. So does every email, bank transfer and video call. These buildings are now basic infrastructure, like roads and power lines. The AI boom is driving a wave of new ones.

Communities are right to be wary. Some fear higher power bills. Others fear dry wells, noise and tax breaks that give away the store. Some towns want to ban data centers outright. The National Academy for AI Instruction understands that impulse.

However, a permanent ban does not stop demand. It moves the jobs and investment somewhere else, raises costs, and hands an even bigger edge to the tech companies. A short pause to study the grid and update local rules can make sense. A ban does not.

Our position is simple. Fix up what we already have first. Build new only on fair terms. Put every promise in writing.

Refurbish first. Many older data centers sit on sites that already have power lines, roads, fiber and zoning. Upgrading them saves farmland and open space. Newer equipment does more work with less electricity and water. Retrofits put electricians, pipefitters and HVAC technicians to work. But an upgraded site can draw far more power than the old one. When it does, it must meet the same tests as new construction.

Build new on fair terms. Before a community says yes, a company must:

- Pay electricity rates that cover its full cost to the grid, so families and small businesses do not pay more.
- Pay for the power lines, substations, roads and pipes it needs. No tax breaks. No public bonds for private profit.
- Disclose how much water it uses and where it comes from, use recycled water wherever possible, and put back more than it takes in water-stressed areas.
- Add real clean energy to the local grid, not credits bought somewhere else.
- Hire locally, pay prevailing wages, and use union labor and registered apprenticeships.
- Pay a durable share of the taxes that fund schools, hospitals, libraries and parks.
- Fund a plan to reuse or clean up the site if it ever closes.

Rob's Reflections

A promise in a press release is not a promise. Commitments belong in binding community benefit agreements, with financial penalties if they are broken and annual reports checked by an independent auditor.

As educators, we add one more test. A data center should be a steady source of revenue for schools. It should also be a source of learning. Companies that build in a community should offer free or low-cost, safe AI tools and training to local schools, colleges and nonprofits. Students who live next to the hardware should learn to use what it powers.

There is a model to build on. In January, Microsoft announced its Community-First AI Infrastructure Plan. It pledges to pay its way on electricity, replenish more water than it uses, train local workers, not ask towns to cut its property taxes, and invest in AI training through schools, community colleges and libraries. That is a good start. We want it to become the floor for every company, not the exception. And we want each pledge written into agreements a community can enforce.

Government has a job too. Regulators should keep data center costs off household bills. Lawmakers should review every tax break for what the public gets back. Zoning should steer projects to sites that can support them. Residents need a real seat at the table.

This issue is not black and white. Some projects should be approved. Some should be changed. Some should be turned down. But a few things are not up for debate. Families do not pay higher bills so a company can expand. Communities do not lose the water they depend on. Local workers get good jobs.

The question is not only what we can build. It is what we should build, and on whose terms. Every data center should leave its community and its schools better off than it found them.

— Rob Weil, Chief Executive Officer of the National Academy for AI Instruction

Voices from the Academy

The Academy: AI Innovation in the 21st Century Through the Lens of a 21-Year Paraprofessional

As a paraprofessional with 21 years of experience in New York City Public Schools, I am excited about the opportunities artificial intelligence offers to enhance instructional practices, strengthen student engagement, and make learning more accessible. This school year, I returned to a general education classroom as a one-to-one paraprofessional, providing instructional and behavioral support while promoting student independence.

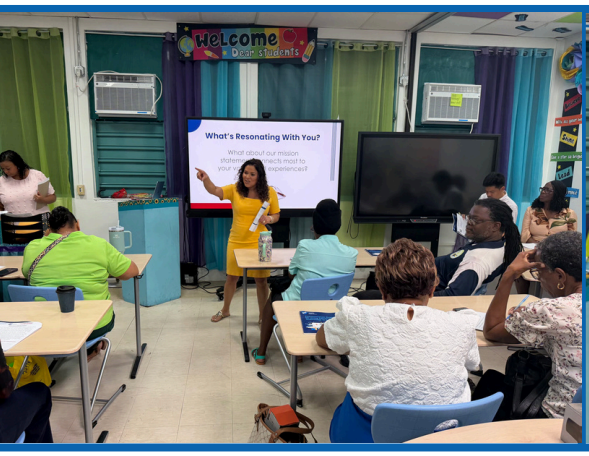
Through the AI Academy, I have discovered new ways to use AI as a professional thought partner to develop positive behavior management strategies, increase student motivation, and adapt grade-level ELA and mathematics curricula to meet diverse learning needs. Recently, I shared my excitement with my classroom teacher about using Gemini Storybook and NotebookLM to create visual narratives and engaging, podcast-style conversations between literary characters, inspired by IMO with Michelle Obama and Craig Robinson. I envision incorporating culturally responsive-sustaining education, Black studies, and social-emotional learning to make literacy instruction more meaningful, inclusive, and engaging.

Most importantly, this experience has strengthened my vision for a UFT Para Center, a dedicated professional learning and development space where paraprofessionals can build instructional expertise, explore emerging technologies, and grow as educational leaders. When we empower paraprofessionals, we strengthen instructional practice and improve the student experience.

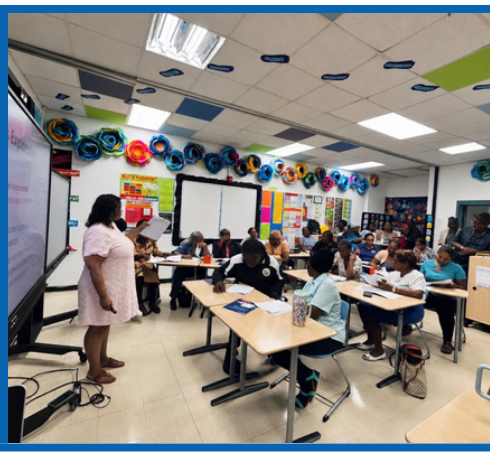
— Venus Ketcham, Paraprofessional | 21 Years of Service
P.S. 11Q | New York City Public Schools

Beyond NYC

NAAII Backyard Training in Saint Croix and Saint Thomas













This month, the National Academy for AI Instruction traveled to St. Croix and St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands to deliver four sessions for over 200 participants. Educators on both islands participated in The Thinking Classroom: Navigating Critical Thinking in the Age of AI and AI for Educators: A Foundational Guide. The visit offered an opportunity to connect with passionate educators, exchange ideas, and bring more voices into the conversation around AI.

From the Field

Reflections from the AI Academy's Director of Pedagogy, Maria Elena Guzman, on her experience training educators in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In October 2026, my colleagues Vincent Pilato, Kellmie Moreno, and I brought two sessions to the TEACH Conference in the U.S. Virgin Islands: AI for Educators: A Foundational Guide and The Thinking Classroom: Navigating Critical Thinking in the Age of AI. We offered both in St. Croix on October 16 and in St. Thomas on October 19. After twenty-nine years in education, eighteen of them in bilingual, dual language, and ENL classrooms, I walked in asking what I always ask: will this be useful on Monday morning? What I found was humility and a desire to learn that moved me.

Educators on a continuum. When we asked where people were in their AI journey, most hands went up for just getting started. Many were simply curious about how it works or getting their feet wet with planning. A few advanced users were already differentiating lessons and building tests from the content they teach. A school nurse wrote, "This is new to me and I'm excited about learning this concept." An instructor wrote, "I must work with it first to make a logical comment." Even our most advanced users were not asking for shortcuts. They were asking for care.

Those advanced users spoke with real conviction about something every educator needs to hear. AI, they reminded us, is a medium: a source of ideas and suggestions that can help us make content more accessible to every student. But it can never stand in for what matters most, a teacher's deep command of the subject. To use these tools well, we must know our content intimately. We must understand what we teach well enough to recognize when an answer falls short, to question it, and to push back. These tools are only as good as the person questioning them. The deeper our understanding of our content, the more searching our questions become, and the less likely we are to accept an output simply because it arrived.

The question I carry home. Safety and privacy opened the most eyes. After our No Name Game and a thumbs up, thumbs down vote on real sounding prompts, one participant asked me whether she could take back personal information she had already entered into an AI tool. It was such an honest question. Nobody had told her that a chat box is not a diary, or that the tool on the other side is a third party. That moment is exactly why this work is critical. A middle school teacher captured it: "AI is beneficial in many ways, but we have to be conscious of what information we receive and give away."

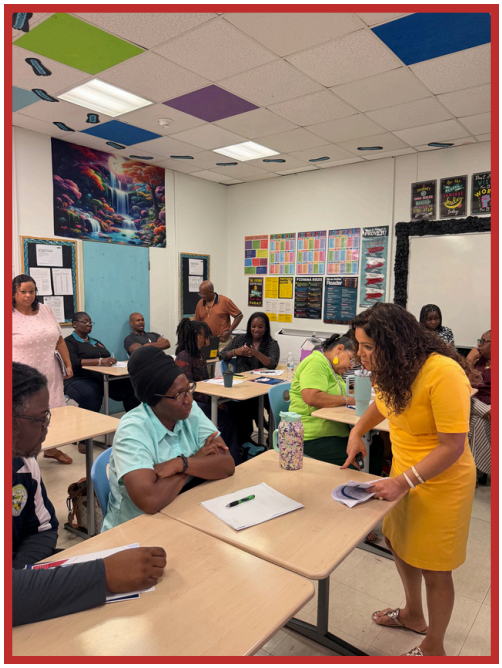
From the Field

A clear call for guardrails. The strongest message from both islands was that educators need guardrails and guidance for this work with students. Their top concern was students who stop thinking for themselves. A high school teacher named the central question: "when to and not to ask learners to use AI." A librarian named the purpose: "to protect students and empower teachers." A paraprofessional gave us the line I wish I had written: teach students "when TO USE AI and when TO WALK AWAY!"

What they told us. Our sessions reached over 200 educators across both islands. Those who completed evaluations gave an average recommendation of about 9.3 out of 10, and most left significantly more confident. One teacher wrote, "I never thought about these perspectives before this meeting." Others asked for more hands-on time, which tells me they are hungry for more.

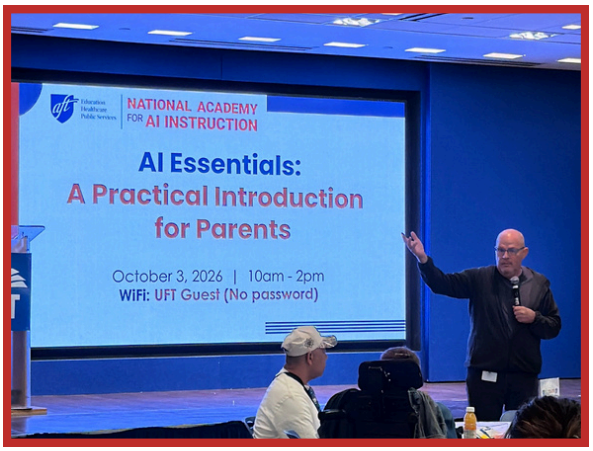
What I carry with me. It takes courage to say "this is new to me" in front of colleagues. That courage is the stance we ask of our students every day, and these educators modeled it. As a bilingual educator, I think first about who gets taught to question these tools and who is simply handed them. AI can suggest; educators decide. These educators are ready. What they need is guidance, guardrails, and time to keep learning together. Stories like these are what make this work so worthwhile.

— Maria Elena Guzman, Director of Pedagogy for the National Academy for AI Instruction



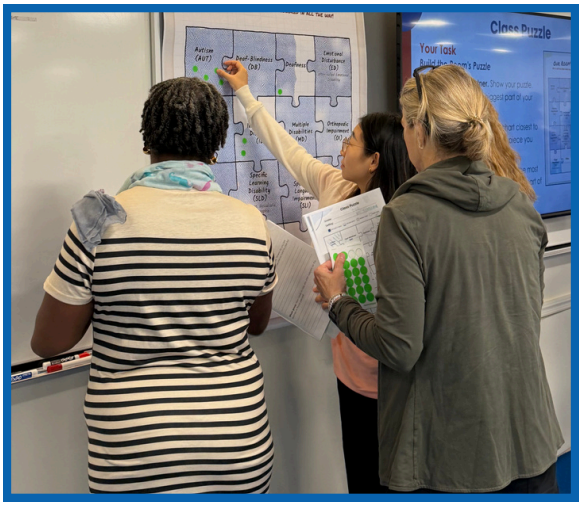


Academy Highlights





AI Essentials: A Practical Introduction for Parents
New York, NY • October 3, 2026





Access by Design: AI Tools for Accessible and Inclusive Instruction
New York, NY • October 14, 2026





Keeping Minds Engaged: Critical Thinking and Cognitive Offloading in the Age of AI
New York, NY • October 29, 2026

Upcoming Sessions

Explore upcoming virtual and in-person learning opportunities from the National Academy for AI Instruction.

The Academy offers both in-person and virtual sessions so educators can participate in the way that works best for them. We offer beginner and more advanced courses, so no matter your experience with AI, there is a training designed for you. Each session focuses on practical strategies you can apply right away.

aiinstruction.org

November 12, 2026 · IN PERSON
Opening the Door: Using AI to Help Students Enter Mathematical Tasks

November 16, 2026 · VIRTUAL
Smart Supports: Using AI to Scaffold and Differentiate for English Learners

November 18, 2026 · IN PERSON
Prompt, Scaffold, Soar: AI Strategies That Lift Every Multilingual Learner

Learn on Your Schedule

Can't make it to a live session? Explore the Academy's growing library of on-demand learning opportunities. Watch anytime, learn at your own pace, and **earn CTLE hours** while exploring topics ranging from AI foundations and critical thinking to cognitive offloading, accessibility, and more.

Featured On-Demand Sessions:

- Human-Centered AI for Educators
- Who's Doing the Thinking? AI, Cognitive Offloading, and What's at Stake
- Smart Supports: Using AI to Scaffold and Differentiate for English Learners
- Critical Thinking in the Age of AI
- Access by Design: AI Tools for Accessible and Inclusive Instruction

Explore All On-Demand Sessions:



aiinstruction.org/courses

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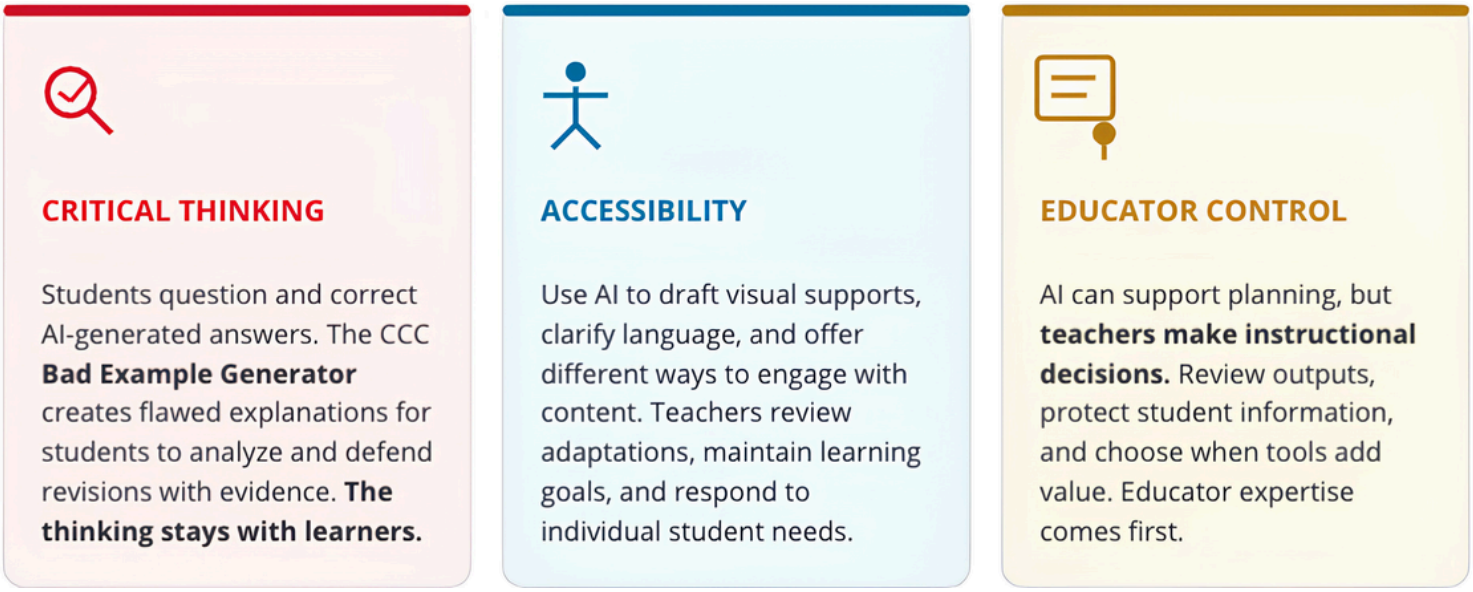
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Cranston Coaches Corner

Practical tools, fresh ideas, and resources for today's educators
Created by Pete Guyon, Instructional Coach Coordinator for Cranston Public Schools in Rhode Island, the **Cranston Coaches Corner (CCC)** is a regularly published newsletter with Google for Education updates, free classroom resources, practical AI ideas, and teaching strategies educators can use right away.

Each edition also features **The Prompt Corner**, with adaptable prompts for lesson planning, differentiation, and student engagement. Our focus is on useful technology that strengthens teaching and learning.

Keeping teachers and student thinking at the center of AI
As AI becomes more common in education, it's important to remember that technology should support good teaching, *not* replace it. Teachers remain the decision-makers when it comes to instruction, student needs, and how AI-generated materials are used.



Explore, Experiment, and Share
Whether you're just beginning to explore AI or already using it in your classroom, CCC offers practical ideas worth trying. From NotebookLM and Gemini to Google Vids and ready-to-use prompts, the goal is to help educators discover what works, share what they've learned, and keep meaningful teaching and learning at the heart of technology integration.

Scan the QR code to explore the Cranston Coaches Corner newsletter archive.