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Press Release

AFT to Launch National Academy for AI Instruction with Microsoft, OpenAI, Anthropic and United Federation of Teachers

For Release:

Tuesday, July 8, 2025

Contact:

AFT Press

aftpress@aft.org

Microsoft Media Relations, We. Communications

rapidresponse@wecommunications.com

OpenAI Media Relations

press@openai.com

Anthropic Media Relations

NEW YORK – The AFT, alongside the United Federation of Teachers and lead partner Microsoft Corp., founding partner OpenAI, and Anthropic, announced the launch of the National Academy for AI Instruction today. The groundbreaking \$23 million education initiative will provide access to free AI training and curriculum for all 1.8 million members of the AFT, starting with K-12 educators. It will be based at a state-of-the-art bricks-and-mortar Manhattan facility designed to transform how artificial intelligence is taught and integrated into classrooms across the United States.

The academy will help address the gap in structured, accessible AI training and provide a national model for AI-integrated curriculum and teaching that puts educators in the driver's seat.

Teachers are facing tremendous technological changes, which include the challenges of navigating AI wisely, ethically and safely. They are overwhelmed and looking for ways to gain the skills they need to help their students succeed. The program is the first partnership between a national union and tech companies, structured to create a sustainable education infrastructure for AI.

"To best serve students, we must ensure teachers have a strong voice in the development and use of AI," said **Brad Smith, vice chair and president of Microsoft**. "This partnership will not only help teachers learn how to better use AI, it will give them the opportunity to tell tech companies how we can create AI that better serves kids."

The announcement was made at the headquarters of the AFT's largest affiliate, the 200,000-member New York City-based UFT, where hundreds of educators were on hand for a three-day training session,

including six hours of AI-focused material that highlighted practical, hands-on ways to marry the emerging technology with established pedagogy.

“AI holds tremendous promise but huge challenges—and it’s our job as educators to make sure AI serves our students and society, not the other way around,” said **AFT President Randi Weingarten**. “The direct connection between a teacher and their kids can never be replaced by new technologies, but if we learn how to harness it, set commonsense guardrails and put teachers in the driver’s seat, teaching and learning can be enhanced.”

“The academy is a place where educators and school staff will learn about AI—not just how it works, but how to use it wisely, safely and ethically. This idea started with [the partnership between lead partner Microsoft and the AFL-CIO](#) in late 2023. We jointly hosted symposiums over the last two summers, but never reached critical mass to ensure America’s educators are coaches in the game, not spectators on the sidelines. Today’s announcement would not be possible without the cooperation of Microsoft, OpenAI, Anthropic and the leadership at the United Federation of Teachers, and I thank them for their efforts.”

“When it comes to AI in schools, the question is whether it is being used to disrupt education for the benefit of students and teachers or at their expense. We want this technology to be used by teachers for their benefit, by helping them to learn, to think and to create,” said **Chris Lehane, chief global affairs officer of OpenAI**. “This AI academy will help ensure that AI is being deployed to help educators do what they do best—teach—and in so doing, help advance the small-d’ democratizing power of education.”

“We’re at a pivotal moment in education, and how we introduce AI to educators today will shape teaching for generations to come,” said **Anthropic Co-founder and Head of Policy Jack Clark**. “That’s why we’re thrilled to partner with the AFT to empower teachers with the knowledge and tools to guide

their students through this evolving landscape. Together, we're building a future where AI supports great teaching in ethical and effective ways."

Anchored by the New York City facility, the National Academy for AI Instruction will serve as a premier hub for AI education, equipped with cutting-edge technology and operated under the leadership of the AFT and a coalition of public and private stakeholders. The academy will begin instruction later this fall and then scale nationally. Over five years, the program aims to support 400,000 educators—approximately 10 percent of the U.S. teaching workforce—reaching more than 7.2 million students.

Through the training of thousands of teachers annually and by offering credential pathways and continuing education credits, the academy will facilitate broad AI instruction and expand opportunity for all.

"For so long, there have been many new programs that were weaponized against educators," said **UFT President Michael Mulgrew**. "Our goal is to develop a tool that gives educators the ability to train their AI and incorporate it into their instructional planning, giving them more one-on-one time with their students."

"Sometimes as a teacher you suffer burnout and you can't always communicate to the class in the right voice or find the right message, and I feel like these AI tools we are working with can really help with that—especially phrasing things in a way that helps students learn better," says **Marlee Katz, teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing in multiple New York City public schools in the borough of Queens**. "The tools don't take away your voice, but if I need to sound more professional or friendly or informed, I feel like these tools are like a best friend that can help you communicate. I love it."

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“As an instructional technology specialist for over 27 years, watching educators learn and work with AI reminds me of when teachers were first using word processors. We are watching educators transform the way people use technology for work in real time, but with AI it’s on another unbelievable level because it’s just so much more powerful,” says **Vincent Pilato, New York City Public Schools K-8 educator and UFT Teacher Center director**. “I think the UFT and the AFT were right to say AI is something educators should take ownership of, not only because it can assist with enhancing the way they interact with and meet the needs of students, but also because AI assists with educator workflow. It can be a thought partner when they’re working by themselves, whether that’s late-night lesson planning, looking at student data or filing any types of reports—a tool that’s going to be transformative for teachers and students alike.”

Together, Microsoft, OpenAI, Anthropic and the AFT are proud to help our nation’s teachers become AI-proficient educators and to leverage this unique partnership to democratize access to AI skills, ensuring that students from all backgrounds are prepared to thrive in an AI-driven future.

Designed by leading AI experts and experienced educators, the program will include workshops, online courses and hands-on training sessions, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to navigate an AI-driven future. It will bring together interdisciplinary research teams to drive innovation in AI education and establish a national model for AI-integrated teaching environments. Finally, the academy will provide ongoing support and resources to help educators stay updated with the latest advancements in AI. Innovation labs and feedback cycles will ensure these tools are refined based on actual classroom experiences.

Through scalable training modules, virtual learning environments and credential pathways, the program empowers a diverse range of educators to become confident leaders in AI instruction. In turn, these

teachers will bring AI literacy, ethical reasoning and creative problem-solving into classrooms that might otherwise be left behind in the digital transformation.

The idea for the academy was first proposed by venture capitalist, educator, activist and AFT member **Roy Bahat**. He is currently the head of Bloomberg Beta, the venture capital arm of Bloomberg, and will be joining the academy's board of directors.

For more information about the National Academy for AI Instruction, please visit Alinstruction.org.

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About the AFT

The AFT represents 1.8 million pre-K through 12th-grade teachers; paraprofessionals and other school-related personnel; higher education faculty and professional staff; federal, state and local government employees; nurses and healthcare workers; and early childhood educators.

About Microsoft

Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT" @microsoft) creates platforms and tools powered by AI to deliver innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers. The technology company is committed to making AI available broadly and doing so responsibly, with a mission to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

About OpenAI

OpenAI is an AI research and deployment company with a mission to ensure that artificial general intelligence benefits all of humanity.

About Anthropic

Anthropic is an AI safety and research company that creates reliable, interpretable, and steerable AI systems. Anthropic's flagship product is Claude, a large language model trusted by millions of users worldwide. Learn more about Anthropic and Claude at anthropic.com.

About UFT

The UFT represents nearly 200,000 members and is the sole bargaining agent for most of the nonsupervisory educators who work in the New York City public schools. This includes teachers; retired members; classroom paraprofessionals; and many other school-based titles including school secretaries, school counselors, occupational and physical therapists, family child care providers, nurses, and other employees at several private educational institutions and some charter schools.

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Our Mission

The AFT is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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