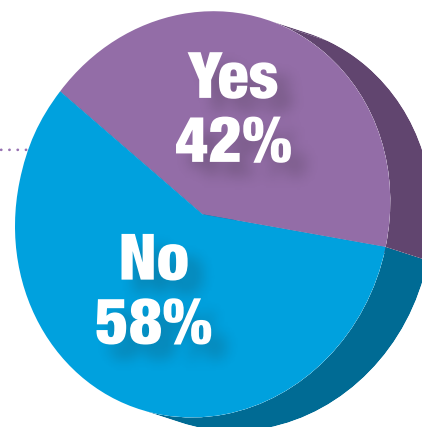


READERS **respond**

POLL RESULTS

Can computers tutor students as effectively as teachers?

The majority of those who commented or took the poll feel that computers cannot tutor as effectively as teachers.



Human Teachers Are Better

Until a computer can recognize a flicker of insight and knows what to do with it, give me a teacher.

*Michael McVey
Eastern Michigan University
Ypsilanti, Michigan*

Computers Aren't Perceptive Enough

If it is true that something like 90% of communication is non-verbal then I say no, computers can't tutor as effectively as teachers. The human element cannot be removed from this most human of activities.

*Jim Spatara
Reynolds High School
Reynolds, Pennsylvania*

Face-To-Face Instruction Is Best

There are many instances of ineffective, unengaging, low-level thinking through the use of computers as tutors. I have witnessed students dulled by preparing for standardized assessments through computerized practice tests. Students, especially ones who struggle, would benefit more from face-to-face instruction by teachers passionate about making learning come alive.

*Sherah B. Carr
Mercer University-Tift College of Education
Atlanta, Georgia*

Teachers Know What's Best

It is not a matter of whether or not computers can be more or less effective than teachers in tutoring students. It is a question of the teacher selecting the appropriate tutoring software for the skill set.

*Midge Liggan
Richmond City Schools
Richmond, Virginia*

Computers Can Be Most Effective

Excellent examples of computer tutors exceeding the capabilities of human tutors are found in a variety of the products of Scientific Learning Corporation. Some of these products, based on cognitive neuroscience research, require real-time analysis and interactions that far exceed the capabilities of a human tutor.

*Dave Moursund
Information Age Education
Eugene, Oregon*

There Is No Comparison

Computers are a proven tool, but not our competition. If you think machines are going to replace teachers, you have been out of the classroom too long. If computers alone could teach, we would have replaced expensive teachers years ago and colleges of education would just be refining instructional software today.

*Bill Freese
Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana*

We Need Computers to Tutor

Computers are a necessary adjunct to effectively differentiate instruction in overcrowded heterogeneous classroom settings. One teacher cannot effectively serve the academic needs of all students through traditional methodology. How else will our students learn to think outside the browser and compete in today's increasingly "flat" world?

*Ron Link
Jonathan Levin High School for Media
& Communications
New York, New York*

Machines Aren't Human Enough

Until a computer can ask "why" and probe the depth of a student's understanding, the answer is an unqualified "no." There is no machine that can ask deep questions, assess conceptual understanding based on the response, and instantly create a micro lesson to address observed misconceptions like a teacher.

*Jeffrey J. Steckroth
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia*

Computers Don't Have the Skills

If the student receiving computer tutoring responds well to visual or auditory instruction then yes. However, when you assume this student has an LD, the best observations are seen not through one's typing responses, but body language. Can we program frustration or smile indicators?

*Jennifer Gaspar-Santos
St. Matthew's Episcopal Day School
San Mateo, California*

Human Tutors Are Better Guides

A computer can be a useful tool in tutoring a student, but it cannot tutor as effectively as a teacher. It cannot gauge whether a student has learned a concept or is just guessing. It also cannot determine where a student is having trouble and guide his/her thinking.

*Kathye Parma
St. Clare of Assisi Catholic Church and School
Houston, Texas*