Dowel innovation

Rhymes and algorithms: teaching artificial intelligence through slam poetry workshops

Domain: The digital age	**Place:** Nice, France	**Duration:** 6 workshops, spread over 4 months	**Target audience:** Two SEGPA classes (30 children)

Mission

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) can significantly influence children's learning and cognitive development. It requires careful guidance, critical reflection on its integration into education, and particular attention to the essential skills of both students and teachers. These skills, known as "AI literacy," often extend beyond technical expertise and encompass critical thinking, ethical awareness, and collaborative abilities to prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of these new technologies.

Engagement activities

This interaction offered three key activities for students with special educational needs (SEN): exploring artificial intelligence through a visit to the House of AI, an interactive space complemented by dedicated presentations; developing their cognitive and socio-emotional skills through slam workshops; and finally, applying their knowledge by using generative AI to enrich their work and broaden their cultural references, in line with the school curriculum.

Artistic activities

Five slam poetry workshops, where students created their own texts and learned to recite them. During the final workshop, all the students went on stage to present their work.

IMPACT

Boosting self-confidence

Broader cultural references

Improving AI knowledge

Improved critical thinking skills

Stronger relationships between students and teachers

Developing cognitive and socio-emotional skills

WHAT HAPPENED?

The interaction took place in the Alpes-Maritimes, a region where AI plays an important role. Policymakers have taken proactive measures to amplify its beneficial effects, notably through OTESIA (Observatory of the economic and societal impacts of AI) and the "House of AI", a publicly funded space designed to present AI concepts and applications to various audiences, including students.

Faced with the rapid rise of generative AI and growing concerns about misinformation, strengthening AI skills has become crucial, both for students who must use these technologies and for the teachers who support them. OTESIA therefore proposed slam poetry as an innovative and impactful way to complement AI education.

Slam poetry does indeed promote self-expression, critical thinking, and creativity.
To bring this vision to fruition, the CidiSol association was approached as a key partner. Its established relationships with local schools enabled them to select a middle school and two classes of students with SEN to participate in the interaction.

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

Visit to the House of AI
The initiative began with a visit to the House of AI. Through interactive demonstrations, students explored the question "What can AI do?" and discussed its operation, training, and the ethical issues related to its use. Particular attention was paid to generative AI and its role in spreading misinformation.

Slam and new learning experiences
The initiative continued with a series of five slam poetry workshops. After the writing phase, students began experimenting with generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT and Mistral AI, to develop their creativity. This experience included an introduction to the art of prompting, where students learned to formulate precise queries to obtain specific results. By using AI to question and refine their slams, the students expanded their artistic exploration.

Strengthening AI expertise
During the five slam poetry sessions, the students were able to put into practice the knowledge acquired during the visit to the AI house, testing the results and limitations of AI. They were then able to apply their skills in other areas, with the constant support of their teachers.

Artistic activities

To kick off the slam workshops, the students discovered a brief historical overview of slam and rap, to understand the objectives and differences of these two movements, before focusing on slam (a dynamic art form designed to capture attention, where performance and text are equally important).
To create an immediate connection and provide a concrete example, artist Killian Alaari performed one of his own slam poems, inviting the students to join in the singing. This hands-on participation allowed the students to experience the rhythm and energy of slam poetry, while fostering a collaborative atmosphere that set the tone for the workshops.

Next, it was the students' turn to create their own poetry slams. Each one chose a personal subject that was close to their heart, whether it was a strong emotion felt during the week or a passion.

A series of interactive games initially helped students gain confidence in their ability to express themselves. One of the challenges involved developing sentences and ideas related to the essence of their topic, without explicitly mentioning it, or the chosen time or place. This approach encouraged creativity and a deeper exploration of their emotions and experiences. With the support of the slam poet and their teachers, the students developed personal narratives, allowing them to express themselves authentically. The workshop environment was safe, welcoming, and free from judgment, enabling students to explore and share their ideas with ease.

In a second phase, the students worked on structuring their slams to create coherent and impactful performances, focusing on conveying their words with emotion, rhythm, and clarity. They explored the use of pauses, intonation, and body language to enhance storytelling, ensuring their words resonated not only in the content but also through the power of the performance. Next, they worked on their stage presence, practicing in front of their peers, gaining confidence, and refining their interpretations.

The final day was not only an opportunity for the students to present their work, but also a moment of collective celebration. Each performance was met with applause and encouragement from their peers, teachers, and the slam poet, creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and support.
At the end of the workshops, the students had not only developed their skills in poetry and performance, but had also gained valuable knowledge about how AI can be used as a tool to enhance creativity, broaden their artistic horizons and engage with complex emotional themes.

Find the artist, Killian Alaari, on YouTube

Impact of the interaction

Integrating slam poetry workshops into AI education created a powerful and engaging learning experience, enabling students to express themselves more effectively while fostering critical thinking and creativity. Students honed their ability to structure their thoughts into compelling narratives, strengthening both their writing and speaking skills. This process encouraged them to evaluate and articulate their ideas clearly, while self-expression in a stimulating environment boosted their confidence and self-esteem.

A key element of the workshops was the personalized feedback from the artist, which deepened the students' connection to their work and strengthened their relationship with the teachers. This positive and interactive environment fostered cognitive and socio-emotional development, thus contributing to improved learning outcomes. The workshops not only developed linguistic and artistic skills but also created a space for personal reflection and open dialogue, helping students develop greater self-awareness.

By combining AI education with slam poetry, the initiative offered a unique and reflective approach to understanding AI, how it works, and its applications. Rather than viewing AI as a passive tool or a substitute for human creativity, students approached it critically, discovering how it can support their artistic and intellectual development. This approach encouraged active participation, ensuring students' emotional and cognitive engagement while developing essential AI skills.
Using AI for their slam poetry provided students with a dynamic approach to artistic expression. This process allowed them to compare stylistic elements suggested by the AI with their own way of expressing themselves, enabling them to both enrich their vocabulary and gain perspective on a text in whose creation they would not have had any direct involvement.

Beyond the students, the experience also proved transformative for teachers, enabling them to better understand the potential of AI in education. They gained a deeper understanding of how to integrate AI into their classrooms and how to support students in its effective use. By combining artistic expression and digital literacy, the initiative not only enriched students' perspectives on AI but also allowed teachers to explore and utilize its possibilities thoughtfully and responsibly.
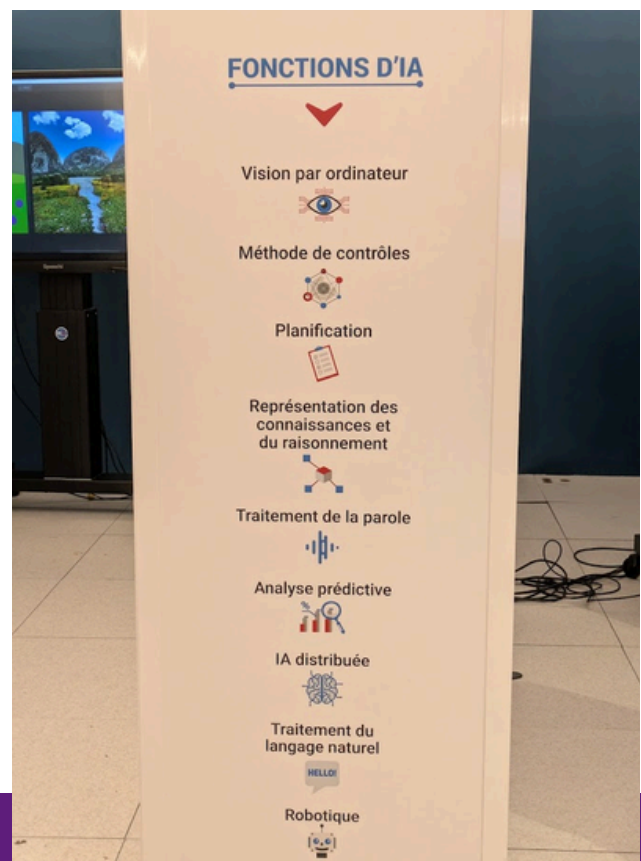
Best practices for replication

Interaction
Seeds

For successful replication, DOWEL emphasizes the importance of focusing on the following key aspects:

- Strong teacher involvement is essential, as they play a vital role in fostering student curiosity, assessing their understanding of AI, and providing ongoing support between workshops. To ensure their preparation, an initial awareness and support session with teachers is crucial. This helps them not only understand the process but also alleviate their own concerns, as well as those of the artist, regarding the integration of AI.

- The slam poet's experience and approach are equally essential. As a facilitator of the creative process, the poet establishes an environment of trust and openness, allowing students to express themselves freely, develop their critical thinking skills, and fully engage in the activity.

- Finally, since students are exposed to AI from a very young age, early awareness is essential. Addressing the issue of AI literacy before misconceptions take hold allows for the development of a thoughtful and informed perspective on this technology.

Resources

The poetry-slam workshops cost €2,700. The visit to the House of AI is a free service, set up by the municipality to facilitate the discovery of AI for the general public.

Contact us for more information:
julie.saccomano@dowel.eu