



WHAT IS INTELLIGENCE?

This lesson opens the AI unit by grounding students in something they already know: themselves! Before students can think critically about artificial intelligence, they need to understand what human intelligence actually is—and most students haven't been asked to think about that before. By starting with a broad, inclusive definition of intelligence, this lesson does two things at once: it affirms that every student in the room is intelligent in their own way, and it sets up the essential contrast that will carry through the entire AI unit.



The key understanding in this lesson is that AI doesn't think—it predicts. It processes patterns from data that humans create. It cannot imagine, empathize, or adapt the way humans can. Students this age are already encountering AI constantly, in recommendation engines, voice assistants, auto-correct, and even in the video they are about to watch. However, most have never been asked to think critically about what AI actually is or isn't capable of. This lesson begins that conversation.

KEY STANDARDS

CASEL Competencies: Self-Awareness (1.a, b), Social Awareness (3.b).

Common Core Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY, SL.4.1, SL.5.1.

aiEDU: Know Your Basics (1a: Define & identify AI systems); Lead with the Human Advantage (3a: Build emotional intelligence).

AILit Framework (OECD/EU, 2026): Engage with AI 1, Engage with AI 2. Knowledge: 1.1, 1.4. Skills: Self and Social Awareness. Attitudes: Curious, Empathetic.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Understand that intelligence includes many different things.
- Identify different types of human intelligence.
- Describe the differences between human intelligence and artificial intelligence.

VOCABULARY

INTELLIGENCE: The ability to learn, think, or solve problems.

VOCABULARY, cont.

HUMAN INTELLIGENCE: The special ways that people use their brains, like imagining, creating, feeling emotions, and working together.

ARTIFICIAL: Made or produced by humans rather than occurring naturally.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A technology that gathers information and makes predictions from that information.

THE LESSON

1. Introduce the lesson by asking students: *What does it mean to be “intelligent?” What are some different ways that people are intelligent?* Discuss their answers.
2. Then, explain that intelligence is “the ability to learn, think, or solve problems.” Explain that some people are especially good at things like knowing when a friend is feeling sad or left out, while others are good at figuring out a challenging puzzle or game. These are types of intelligence. Ask students to share more examples.
3. Make a list (in a place that everyone can see) of the different ways students say people are intelligent. Your list should include a variety of things such as: solving math problems, competing in a sport, playing music, understanding feelings and emotions, solving puzzles, creating art, etc.
4. Tell students they are about to watch a video that helps explain ALL the amazing ways humans are smart or intelligent... and how that’s different from something they are probably hearing a lot about—“artificial intelligence” or AI.
5. Play video, then review the key points (vocabulary underlined and bold):
 - Human intelligence isn't just one thing, it's a lot of things. Refer back to the list you just made. Point out that all of these are different types of intelligence.
 - Something artificial is made or produced by humans rather than occurring naturally.
 - Explain that artificial intelligence is created by humans and built into many things we use today, like computers and smartphones.
6. Be sure students understand that artificial intelligence or “AI” is a technology that gathers information from humans and makes predictions based on that information. It’s how a chatbot “knows” how to answer a question, or how a music or video app “knows” what song or video a person might like next.

THE LESSON, cont.

7. Ask students: *Where have you noticed AI in your life?* (In case no one mentions it, tell students they just encountered AI in the video... the narration was generated by AI!)
8. Emphasize that AI doesn't think or feel the way humans do. It predicts based on the data that humans give it. AI follows patterns it was trained on. Humans can break patterns and adapt when needed. One of our intelligences as humans is our flexibility!

ACTIVITY

Tell students that in this activity they will be thinking about their own special type of intelligence.

Step 1: What's Your Intelligence?

Give each student a copy of the next page, ideally printed on cardstock. Tell students: *Think of something you are good at or do well. Write down what it is and then, as best you can, illustrate it. This is your special "intelligence."*

Step 2: Gallery Walk

When students are finished, gather up all the cards and lay them out on a table, or a place where students can walk by and see and read them. After the gallery walk, ask:

- *What types of intelligences do we have in our classroom? Discuss.*

Then ask:

- *Are some of these "intelligences" unique to humans?*
- *Why is human intelligence special?*
- *Are there things artificial intelligence might help us with?*

Wrap up with this reminder:

AI can do incredible things, but humans can imagine, create, feel, and make choices. That's what makes us uniquely intelligent.

GOAL

Students will understand that intelligence includes many different human abilities—such as creativity, problem-solving, and emotional awareness—and that everyone possesses unique intelligence. They will also learn how human intelligence differs from artificial intelligence, which relies on data and predictions rather than feelings, imagination, or creativity.

OPTIONAL JOURNAL PROMPT

How can knowing that people are intelligent in different ways help us treat each other better?

WHAT'S YOUR

INTELLIGENCE?

Think of something you do well.
Fill in the blank and then illustrate it below.

Something I do well or am good at is: _____

This is a type of intelligence!



FOR STUDENT

VOCABULARY

INTELLIGENCE

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HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

The special ways that people use their brains, like imagining, creating, feeling emotions, and working together.

ARTIFICIAL

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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