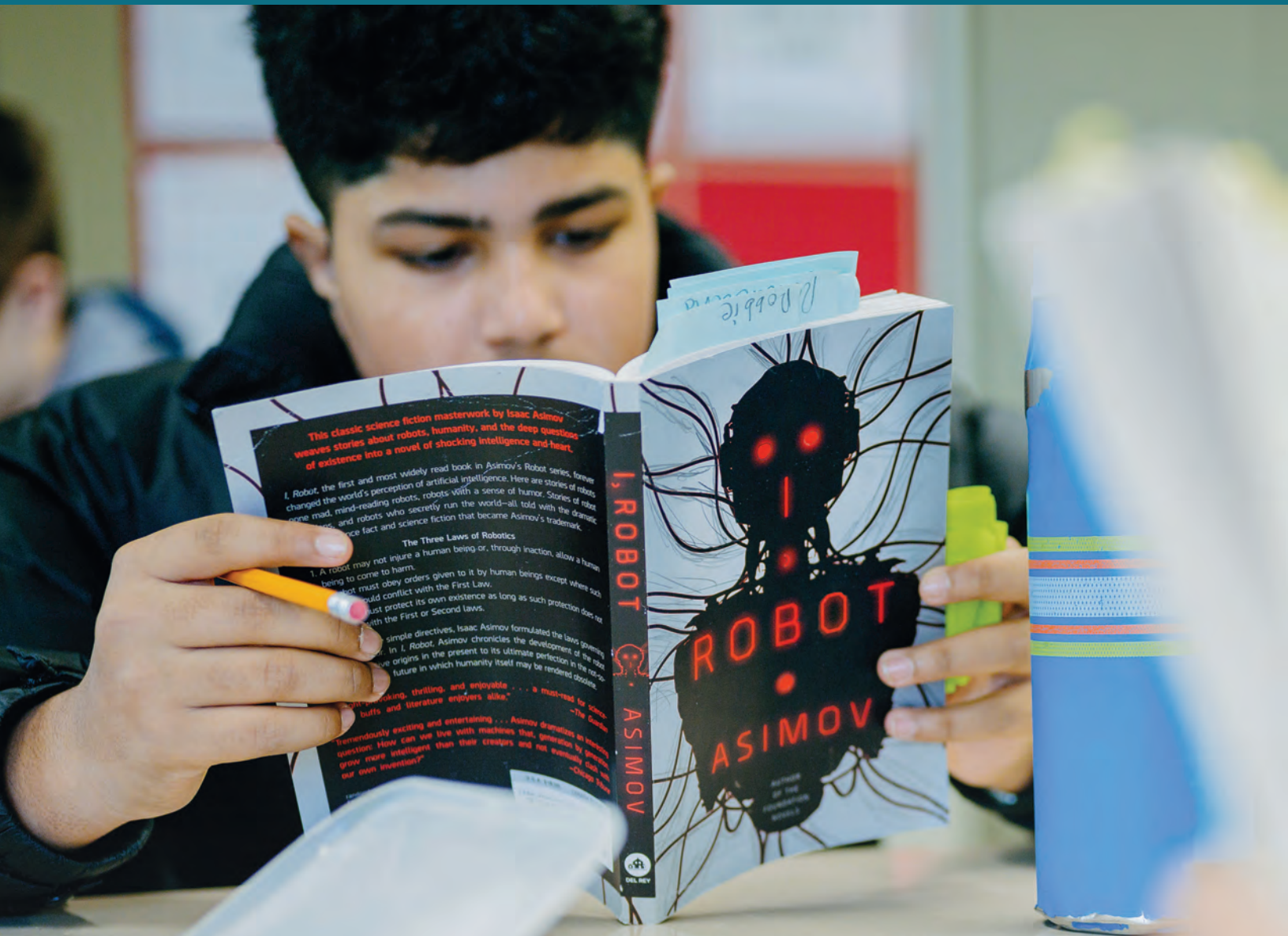


Overlaker

ALUMNI AND SCHOOL NEWS FOR THE OVERLAKE SCHOOL COMMUNITY **SUMMER 2026**



Human Intelligence
in the Age of AI



March snow fun!

Did you know, since 1945, there have only been 53 days with measurable snow in March. The latest measurable snow in Seattle occurred on April 17, 1972.



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Overlaker

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FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

What Endures When the Tools Change

Dear Overlake Community,

Artificial intelligence is changing how we write, create, and solve problems. It is also changing the questions a school has to ask. What should students learn when information is instantly available? What does original thinking look like when a machine can produce a first draft? How do we help young people use powerful tools without surrendering their own judgment, voice, and integrity?

Our answer is not to retreat from change, and not to chase every new tool because it is new. We are preparing students to think clearly, to ask better questions, and to hold onto their own judgment when a tool offers them an easy answer. Those capacities have always mattered. In the age of AI, they matter more.

This issue of the Overlaker looks at how our educators and students are engaging with AI deliberately. In Karen Mihata's eighth-grade English classroom, students used AI not as a shortcut but as a way to make their own thinking visible. Working with *I, Robot*, Ms. M-Bot, and their reflective "Metacoglogs," they practiced questioning a draft, weighing feedback, and deciding for themselves when the technology helped and when their own insight mattered more.

That last decision is the whole point. AI can generate language, summarize a reading, find patterns, and speed up certain kinds of work. It cannot do the human part. It cannot build trust in a room of thirteen-year-olds, sense when a discussion needs to slow down, or give a quiet student the nerve to say the thing they are not yet sure of. Those are the conditions of real learning, and they remain at the center of an Overlake education.

You will also read about Overlake's AI Philosophy, our ongoing work on adult and student AI fluency, and the faculty who are learning alongside their students. Their willingness to experiment, paired with their refusal to abandon what works, tells you something about this community. We know that reading closely, writing well, and standing behind your own work are not old-fashioned skills. They are exactly what a person needs to use new tools wisely.

Our alumni stories make that point powerfully. Across medicine, cybersecurity, environmental research, infrastructure, and data science, Overlake graduates are using AI to address complex human problems. What stands out in their stories is not simply technical fluency. It is curiosity, communication, adaptability, resourcefulness, and the ability to keep learning. These are outcomes of an education that asks students to be known, challenged, and engaged over time.

That is the real story of this issue. Overlake is not preparing students to use AI; we are preparing the kind of people who can be trusted with it. The tools will keep changing. Our purpose will not.

With deep appreciation,

Gretchen Warner
Head of School

Around the Nest



OVERLAKE'S NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Meet Cheronne Wong

"I love every single day that I come here," says Cheronne Wong, Overlake's new Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

Last fall, Cheronne Wong joined Overlake with more than two decades of experience spanning the arts, nonprofit leadership, and business accounting. She began her career after receiving her BBA in Accounting and then her MFA in Performance as a modern dancer in New York, supplementing her income with a temporary assignment on Wall Street. As her career evolved, she continued to pursue those dual interests, eventually founding her own dance company. Most recently, she served as CFO of the Seattle Symphony, where she oversaw the Symphony, Benaroya Hall, and the Seattle Symphony Foundation, bringing together her professional expertise and lifelong passions.

As she considered her next step for her career last year, she reflected on her time to figure out what mattered to her most. "I wanted to be part of a mission-based organization where I could contribute my expertise, interest, and passion into work that supported community," she shares.

Since she stepped into the Overlake community last October, Wong has found a great amount of cross over from her work at the Symphony. Here at Overlake, she is responsible for the Business Office team, a growing endowment, operating and capital budgets, board relationships, and long-range strategic plans — all things she managed at the Seattle Symphony. In her time this year, she has loved digging in and using her skills she has developed over her career to care for Overlake and its future.

"My key mission is to make sure that we're financially stable for the future and to steward the funds of the school and to ensure that we can fulfill our mission," Wong says.

That sense of purpose is what excites her most. From supporting staff, faculty and programs to stewarding resources that make an Overlake education possible, Wong sees her work as helping to build the foundation of the school for the next generation.

"It's been a lot of fun, you come to work and there are all these kids who are bright eyed and happy, and you feel like you're here for a good purpose...for this next generation of kids."

Her journey from the stage to the business office may be unique, but it all connects and led her to Overlake. "Everything happened at the right time," she shares. "I truly believe in the mission at Overlake and am honored to be part of its community."

“

It's been a lot of fun, you come to work and there are all these kids who are bright eyed and happy, and you feel like you're here for a good purpose...for this next generation of kids.

CHERONNE WONG



Want to binge the whole season of TOTS? Head over to @owlsnews on Instagram or Youtube and find the links to listen in.



NEW PODCAST

Two Owls Talking Sports

The World's #1 Podcast Covering Overlake Athletics

There's a new podcast in town! Athletic Director, John Wiley, and Head of Middle School, Mike Davidson, are commentators on the podcast, "Two Owls Talking Sports" also known as "TOTS". A weekly show where they talk Owls sports, host special guests, and have a great time. We sat down with Wiley and Davidson to hear more about their weekly show.

Why did you come up with the idea for TOTS?

JW: A generation ago, you found excitement in high school sports off the court in the newspaper, the *Seattle Times* would carry every Overlake game. Now the major newspapers don't cover high school sports. It's fallen to social media. It's gone to podcast. It's gone to streaming. It's our job to create the excitement. These kids put in a lot of hours and they get recognized for that. Kids want to hear their name associated with something positive. And that's what we're able to do for so many of our students.

MD: For me this goes back to a term that John and I both heard a long time ago from a guy by the name of Bruce Brown. The term we use is "make your

time the big time". So, what that means for a small school, athletic program is take what you have, which is small school athletics, and make it feel as big time as possible. That makes it feel big time for your athletes, parents, and coaches.

What's your favorite part of the broadcast?

MD: My favorite is when we get to interview student athletes, and we give them some fun questions that lets their personality shine through.

What have been some fun benefits from the broadcast?

MD: It's kind of fun to do a little bit of media training with the students. It's an opportunity for them to say, "Hey, I've been interviewed on a stage and that doesn't intimidate me. I've now been on microphone."

JW: Our guests are usually students and those students may not have been interviewed before. There's some nerves, but they're going to be interviewed for colleges, they're going to be interviewed for jobs someday. So it's all really good experience. And it's fun for them!

What do you hope people take from this?

JW: We are doing everything we possibly can to support and highlight all the good that comes out of all their [the student's] work, you know? To have a podcast, to stream our games, to do broadcast, have an active social media account, all that works together to support the real serious commitment that kids have to make. It's not always easy, so let's show the fun stuff and let's tell people why our kids do this.

MD: Success for me is if kids have people stop them to say, "I heard something positive about you." There are successes that students have and we just like to celebrate those.

Final thoughts?

MD: It's so funny, every day now I get someone who comes up to me who I was not expecting or I did not know, and that is the icebreaker—"Hey, I heard you on Tots!" You know, if that's our connection, that's awesome. It just kind of shows that you know, people want to hear good things.

JW: This was not anything that was required of us. It was just something we wanted to do. You gotta make your job fun. And this is definitely fun.

EVENTS

A Busy Spring at Overlake



To see more event photos,
go to our Instagram page —
[@theoverlakeschool](#).



ArtsFest

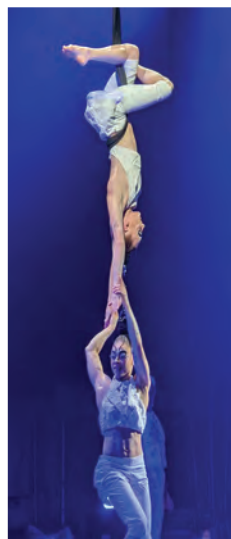
This year's ArtsFest began with vibrant colors and endless fun! From painting masterpieces to creating unique wooden sculptures and collages, our students dove into a world of art.

In the Gym, the dance moves were on fire while Karaoke sessions hit the high notes in the choir room. And let's not forget the rhythm of the Boomwhackers!

Whether they're painting, singing, dancing, or trying something entirely new, ArtsFest invites students to explore their interests and celebrate the joy of creating. These moments help students build confidence, connect with peers, and discover new ways to express themselves.

EVENTS

A Busy Spring at Overlake



Dark Day

What started as a last-minute all-school assembly to hear an international AI expert quickly turned into an announcement that it was Dark Day! This long-held Overlake tradition dates back decades to when the school celebrated some of the darkest days of the year by canceling classes and going skiing or heading to the Family Fun Center.

This year, the entire community, students and employees, loaded buses and headed to the circus! Overlake was part of a special performance of Cirque du Soleil's "ECHO" at Marymoor Park, with a special Q&A session afterward. This special day was months in the making — and what a secret surprise it was!

Dark Day is a reminder that learning happens beyond the classroom, too. By stepping away from schedules and assignments, students and employees have the opportunity to strengthen relationships, build community, and create shared memories that contribute to a sense of belonging at Overlake.



To see more event photos,
go to our Instagram page —
[@theoverlakeschool](#).



Project Week

Project Week is one of Overlake's most storied weeks each year, when our owls learn new skills, travel to new places, and stretch themselves in new ways.

Project Week at Overlake is a massive team effort, with folks from all over pitching in! Retired teachers, former staff, and even spouses of employees jump in to lead projects.

This week is all about bringing the community together and creating awesome opportunities for students. It's incredible to see everyone come together to make it happen.

Project Week gives students the opportunity to learn by doing. Whether traveling, building, creating, or exploring, students deepen their understanding of themselves and the world around them while developing skills that extend far beyond the classroom.

EVENTS

A Busy Spring at Overlake



Owls Night Out

Owls Night Out, *In Bloom*, was a night to remember! We came together in an evening of joy, connection and generosity, making it truly delightful.

Our collective efforts went towards funding Overlake's Student Financial Aid, helping ensure that bright and curious students will continue to bloom at Overlake for years to come.

At Overlake, we believe our community is strongest when students from a variety of backgrounds and experiences can learn together. Support for Student Financial Aid helps ensure that an Overlake education remains accessible to bright, motivated students for generations to come.



To see more event photos,
go to our Instagram page —
[@theoverlakeschool](#).



Service Day

From Middle School to Upper School, Service Day was a highlight of the season as students stepped into the community to lend a hand and make a meaningful impact.

Across a wide range of projects — trail maintenance, seed planting, food sorting, playground improvements, horse trail care, and even bike repairs — students of all ages jumped into hands-on work that directly supported local farms and organizations.

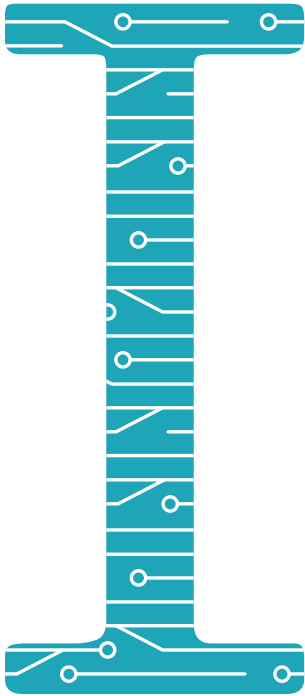
Service Day continues to be a powerful opportunity for students to give back, get their hands dirty, and see firsthand the difference they can make beyond campus.

Service Day helps students see themselves as active contributors to their communities. By working alongside local organizations and tackling real-world needs, students develop empathy, responsibility, and a deeper understanding of the impact they can have beyond Overlake's campus.



Beyond the Prompt

Learning to Think in an AI World



In some ways it seems like it showed up overnight. A tool that could describe string theory to a 5-year-old. That could write a sitcom scene about an alien invasion in the style of *Friends*. Or show you what you and your dog would look like as Pixar characters. On the more useful side of things, it could also polish up your resume to make it sound more ‘professional’. And it could do all of this — instantly. Artificial Intelligence (AI) burst into the mainstream in late 2022 and changed everything.

What did it mean for teachers? For schools? For education in general? Karen Mihata, an Overlake English faculty member since 1997, wondered if her time in the classroom would come to a close. How could she teach when something as seemingly powerful as AI was now on the scene? After some time and thoughtful interactions, she decided to become a student again and applied for an Overlake sabbatical. She wanted to dig into what AI meant for her future as an English teacher. She didn’t know what she would find.

“Trying something new is fun, exciting, and it’s also a risk,” Mihata shares.

Before her sabbatical, Mihata remembers trying to use AI for different class activities, but students could not break free from seeing it as a ‘cheating machine.’ She knew something would have to change. As her semester sabbatical progressed, her eyes were opened to the capabilities of what AI could do.

Upon her return, Mihata was equipped with a brand-new lesson plan designed around Isaac Asimov’s *I, Robot*, and a resilient attitude. For her entire career, she has taught her students that, “stories of resilience are not centered on the problem, they’re centered on the outcome and the positive approach.” And now she was going to be living that out in real time with her students.



“

Stories of resilience are not centered on the problem, they're centered on the outcome and the positive approach.

KAREN MIHATA
MIDDLE SCHOOL ENGLISH
FACULTY

Learning alongside her students

Stepping outside of her normal lesson plans for eighth-grade English, Mihata knew she would need buy-in and support from her supervisors to experiment with new curriculum ideas. Head of Middle School, Mike Davidson, was more than happy to lend his support.

“We know that AI represents a set of tools that will fundamentally alter elements of both teaching and learning,” Davidson comments. “When Karen proposed a very deliberate exploration of what an English course might look like if it embraces rather than rejects these tools, we were excited for her to break new ground even though it might feel less like a traditional classroom.”

On her first day back in the classroom in January, Mihata spoke candidly to her students who were in a room where the desks had been jumbled and turned upside down — a visual illustration of what AI has done to the teaching landscape. She went on to share that they were about to go on a journey together. Teacher and student, learning in real time, what works, and what does not. She acknowledged she may not always get it right and mistakes would be made, but that they would all learn together along the way.

“I don’t have an ego about this. I don’t worry about making mistakes in front of students. I’m hard on myself, but for my students, I like to model what you do when it doesn’t work, and take the sting out of that,” she says.

Ms. M-Bot

Mihata’s eighth graders didn’t know they would meet a new teacher this semester. Enter “Ms. M-Bot,” a Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) teaching assistant designed by Mihata using Flint — an AI platform designed for use in schools — to help teach literary techniques like allusions, character tags, retcon, and thesis writing.

“It was kind of mind blowing that that was even an option,” Mihata shares. “And it will only

get better as I get better at setting up the GPT, and the students get better at interacting with it.” Ms. M-Bot might help a student design a thesis statement and help them think through how to improve on it. It can make suggestions, ask if there is a better or stronger word to drive home and clarify their point, and give each student individualized feedback in real time.

It also holds students accountable to a standard of work, designed to not let an assignment be completed before it meets the specific criteria.

“There’s a level of data, personalization, and accountability that they have not had before, and that’s been eye-opening for me as a teacher,” Mihata says.

For Mihata, the goal isn’t simply to use AI more often, but to use it more intentionally, an approach that’s also shaping conversations across campus.

Experimenting and continuous learning

Throughout the *I, Robot* unit, Mihata assigned students to complete periodic “Metacoglogs.” A name Mihata coined to describe time for each student to self-reflect on what’s going on internally, especially in relation to the work they are doing with AI. “It’s really about tracking your growth,” she says about their reflections. “What are you understanding about your own brain, about what you learn, about what you need, how you might leverage AI, when you need humans instead...the Metacoglogs are trying to capture that metacognition — that ‘what am I thinking about my thinking all along the way’.”

As students were rethinking their relationship with AI, faculty members were doing the same. Mihata invited teachers and administrators to occasionally swing by to observe her class in action. Nicknamed “AI drive-bys,” these class sessions allowed her peers to see first-hand what she was doing and even have the courage to try it for themselves.

After completing an assignment right alongside the students, it’s safe to say that Davidson was impressed.

“The result [of Ms. M-Bot] was real-time, differentiated coaching for every student in the room at the same time,” Davidson reports. “A similar lesson without AI integration might see the teacher conferring with a student while six to seven others wait their turn, but because of the work Karen put in on the front end, it was as if she had cloned herself to be able to conference simultaneously with every student.”

Middle School Social Studies teacher and Department Chair, Karen Zaidberg, took what she observed and applied it to her own class, having Flint take her students through a task with individual coaching that helped them refine their work and evaluate it once submitted.

“Outsourcing the labor to Flint allowed me to be in a supporting role,” Zaidberg shares. “The analytics are great; I could view individual kids’ progress and dialogue with the bot, which was fascinating. Then at the end of class, we had a fabulous conversation about the utility of Flint and good uses and limitations of AI for history work.” She added, “Seeing Karen do it and be honest about the process freed me up to take a chance on it.”

Even with this new tool, none of this replaces the human or replaces teaching. It does however, leverage AI — a key distinction Mihata has maintained in her work. “Leverage AI, keep student learning at the center, and keep the human in the equation,” she confirms. Her work builds on the work that Overlake has been exploring around how AI impacts the future of education. In 2023, Overlake published version 1.0 of its “AI Philosophy,” led by Director of Information Literacy & Technology (ILT) Kelly Vikstrom. “It was critical for us as a liberal arts school to think through the impact of this technology that arrived at our doorstep — it wasn’t one we chose to adopt — and that we framed it as part of an Overlake education immediately. We couldn’t just bury our heads in the sand,” said Vikstrom. Mihata was excited but skeptical about the work, and ultimately partnered with Vikstrom and the ILT team to continue her exploration.

As faculty explored these questions in real time, students were developing their own perspectives on when AI helps, when it distracts, and where they believe the boundaries should be.

AI vs. GPT — what’s the difference?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to a whole field of “smart” technology.

A Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT) is a type of AI designed to work with language. It is designed to read, write, hold conversation and predict text, and summarize or generate ideas.

For example, a car is a type of vehicle in the same way a GPT is a type of AI.

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Seeing Karen do it and be honest about the process freed me up to take a chance on it.

KAREN ZAIDBERG
MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL
STUDIES FACULTY



Student experience

Much like the internet, AI is here to stay, and Mihata recognizes that today's student needs to learn how to leverage AI in their work.

"My job is to do right by the kid in front of me. Always," she emphasizes. "And that means, helping them function in today's world." Challenging students to use this powerful tool in their learning helps students move beyond seeing AI as a way to cut corners and helps them see it as a tool to enhance their own learning.

But how did the students feel as they learned in a new way? Whether they liked using AI in their work or not, most ended the quarter with a different opinion than when they started. Here are a few reflections from students following the experience:

Finding the why

"When I first started with AI, I thought like it wasn't really necessary in the classroom because, when I first think about AI, I think of doing assignments or stuff like that. But then, when I really realized, what we did later on, and we paired it with our book *I, Robot*, which is kind of about technology, then it started to make sense of why we were using it."
– Lade O.

A thought partner

"When I started the quarter with AI, I was very hesitant I feel and I was very dry with my responses and I wasn't really trying to learn with it because I thought it wasn't useful. But then as the quarter went on, I was becoming more detailed, and I was using AI as more of a thought partner rather than pushing it away." – Daksha M.

When not to use AI

"I was definitely skeptical. I also just did not want to use AI because my personal opinion on AI is that it does not belong in a creative space because it fundamentally does not have creativity. It's like a copy paste machine in a sense. But as the quarter went on, I was able to better understand it and use it like a tool. I was able to use it to draw out some of my ideas and to better understand what and how I was thinking. Fundamentally, I now have a new understanding of how AI can be used. Instead of just like a tool for plagiarism, I can see that it can be used as a way to help myself, whether that be pulling some work off of myself and writing out and fine-tuning ideas. But in the end, I don't see myself going forward using AI." – Reid B.

Expanding perspectives

"Originally when I was using AI, I was kind of hesitant because I've never used it in a classroom setting before and I've never really used it to the extent that we were using it in class. But I feel like over time my perspective kind of changed because I saw that AI could provide you with a lot of different perspectives and ways to help you that sometimes is limited in a classroom. It can help you more than maybe your peers or teacher could help you in a class discussion. And so, I think that kind of opened my perspective and helps me be more open to using AI." – Karys F.

Deepening learning

"I think in the beginning of this quarter I didn't really use AI and I always thought of it as something that you could use to cheat on your assignments or just use it to do all the work for you. But then throughout this quarter, I learned that you can actually use it to help enhance your own learning and help you think better, not just do your work for you, but help you understand the material better and help you do your best work by giving you information that you never thought about or helping you do better research." – Angela L.

Overlake's AI Philosophy

As AI technology emerged and began reshaping education, the Overlake team, led by Overlake's ILT team, recognized the importance of developing a philosophy to guide its use in our classrooms. Guided by our belief that the most important skills our students develop are deeply human ones, curiosity, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and sound judgment, we want students to learn how to use these tools thoughtfully and responsibly. AI can support learning, but it is never the goal itself. The goal is a student who knows how to think, question, create, and make informed decisions while using powerful tools wisely.

The following principles guide our approach to AI at Overlake:

Ethically

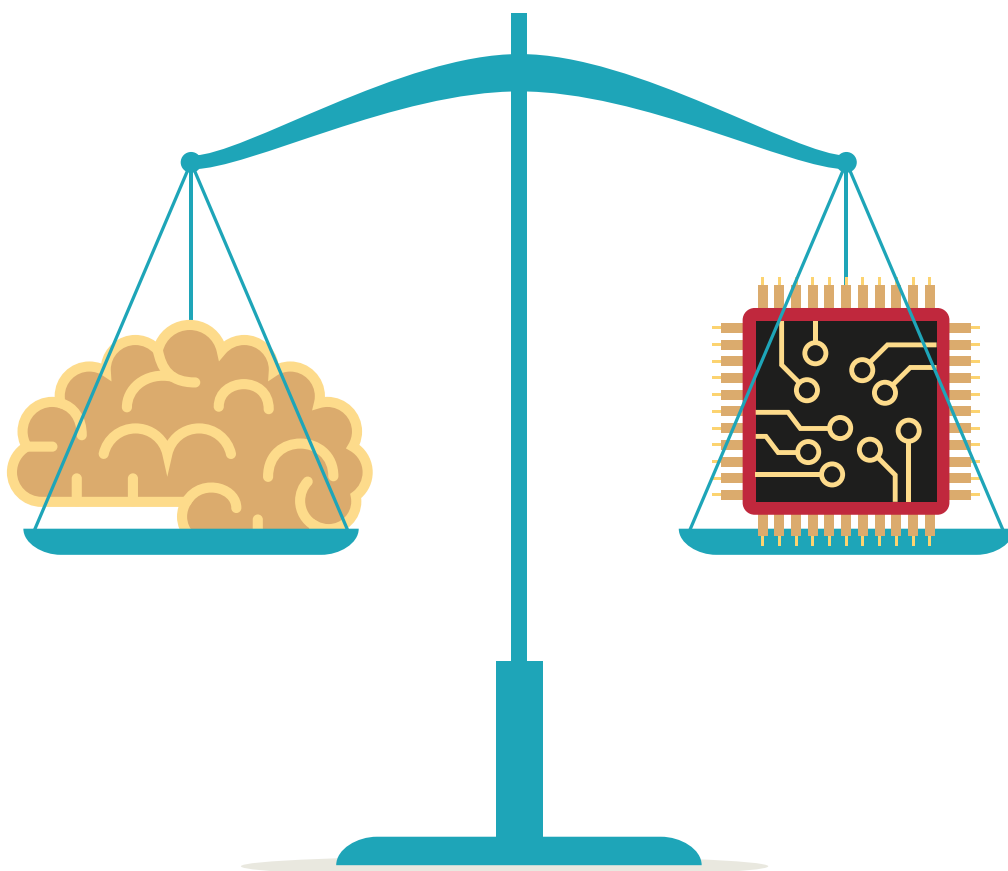
- **Adhere to all platform rules and policies, including age limits.**
 - Note that ChatGPT is only for use by those 13 and up.
 - Remember to check and verify policy and terms of use on any AI platform or tool that you are using.
- **AI may not be used to substitute for, or perform, a specific skill being taught.**
 - Don't use AI to replace a skill you have not yet mastered.
- **The use of AI to create knowingly false information, images, deep fakes, or false likenesses of students, teachers, or other members of the community that could be used to threaten, bully, extort, harass, embarrass, damage the reputation, or intentionally mislead/misinform, are significant infractions and will be treated as such.**
- **In line with copyright and responsible use, intellectual property that is not yours may not be shared or uploaded to any AI platform without explicit permission.**

Responsibly

- **Student data, including, but not limited to, full names, emails, or other identifiable information, will not be shared with any AI models or chatbots.**
- **AI may be used to enhance learning, but not to substitute for, or unfairly aid, learning.**
- **Verify, challenge, and check any output of an AI tool, knowing that the tools are flawed and biased.**

Transparently

- **Use of AI tools must be disclosed and cited or acknowledged in every case.**
 - See resources at NoodleTools, MLA, Chicago (images), and APA.
- **Teachers should be explicit and clear about when and how AI tools may be used in their course, and on each assignment.**
- **Students should always ask for clarification if expectations and guidelines are not clear to them, not make assumptions.**
- **Teachers may ask students to describe in writing how AI was used (when it is allowed) and what benefit it provided.**



Embracing the New While Leaning on the Tried and True

Sitting in a busy library, Kelly Vikstrom, Director of Information Literacy & Technology (ILT), thinks back a few years to when ChatGPT first made headlines in the news. “This is my tagline about AI—it’s just media literacy on steroids.”

For years, Vikstrom has been teaching Overlake students and employees useful skills on media literacy; from investigating sources to better spotting misinformation.

“One of our strategies as we rolled out AI technology, and I had gone to all these professional development conferences to learn about AI, was how is this going to be shared with the school,” reflects Vikstrom.

Dating back to the summer of 2023, just a few months after the launch of ChatGPT, Overlake formed an AI in Ed working group comprised of educators across the campus to figure out how best to embrace this new technology.

“The first challenge that came up in the educator community was around academic integrity. But I think we very quickly realized that, yes, we needed to tell the kids we’re aware of that, and at the same time, we need to get our adults

literate, because unless the adults are AI literate, they can’t teach the kids and support the kids at being AI literate,” explains Vikstrom.

Nicole Balin, sixth-grade English teacher, had her reservations at first and yet realized AI was here to stay. “AI is not going to disappear in the world, and, if anything, it’s only going to be ever present as students get older. And so, I think in an educational space, communication and transparency is really important,” explains Balin.

Balin started the year setting guidelines with her students, sharing the School’s AI philosophy and partnering with librarian Rebecca Moore to put together a research guide. “I had them read a little bit more about AI, and then I have them analyze articles that were showing the ways in which middle school teachers and students could use AI to benefit and supplement learning, and then also ways in which AI can be really harmful to learning.”

The adoption of Flint K-12 in the 2024-25 school year helped faculty have a safer place to embrace AI since the Claude-based platform doesn’t train on any of Overlake’s data. “The

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What I like about this function of AI is that it provides the coaching from me, but on the student's own time.

LIZ SIARNY
UPPER SCHOOL HISTORY FACULTY

platform tries to guide students without doing the work for them,” explains Vikstrom. “If you type, ‘Write an essay about X,’ it will come back and give you questions and say, ‘Oh, I see you’re writing an essay about X. What are some topics you’re thinking about?’ or ‘How could we brainstorm this?’ It won’t actually do the work,” says Vikstrom.

Instead, teachers can input their lesson plans and still have their students engage in the content they want. Upper School history teacher Liz Siarny, designed an AI tutor that acts as a chatbot, assisting students in a research project. “The chatbot performed two functions. One was to go through the research process and make sure they understood what the process was and then to match the topic they were interested in and take them through an interrogative process to see how the topic aligns with one of the essential questions of the unit.”

The students respond to the chatbot and use vetted sources that Siarny provides. She can then see the student’s progress with the chatbot and can add in other information for the student to help with next steps. It helps the student learn to “talk” to AI and understand what questions to ask to achieve the answers they need for their project. It helps them become more AI literate. “What I like about this function of AI is that it provides the coaching from me, but on the student’s own time,” says Siarny.

While AI might be helpful to educators in some aspects of their pedagogy, it’s not a full-time replacement for teaching or learning. “I don’t like asking AI about current events because it doesn’t provide a balance,” explains Siarny. Instead, she relies on the tried-and-true skill of reading. “Maybe I’m old school, but I say we still need reading for learning. We also need to do in-class discussion early and often with reading comprehension, looking for bias, verification of materials, and lateral reading. If a student doesn’t know how to have a discussion in person, they certainly aren’t going to know how to do it with a bot.”

In Nicole Balin’s classroom, students still need to learn the skill of writing. “AI is a tool, but it cannot replace your own individual way of thinking and expressing those thoughts in writing.” Instead, Balin uses AI as a study partner for her students. “My students take a lot of vocab quizzes, and we talk about how to use Flint as a study partner. They can ask it to create fill-in-the-blank sentences that then test their knowledge of vocabulary. I think there are a lot of ways that we can use AI that actually are related to writing, but don’t replace that skill of writing.”

It could be tempting to lean so heavily into AI and all the ways to shortcut your work in order to feel more productive. But that short-term thinking can derail any long-term learning. That’s true for students and educators. “If a student is learning to write sentences, then the educator needs to be able to say, ‘The outcome here is I want you to learn how to write a good sentence, so don’t use AI to do that, because then you’re robbing yourself of learning how to write a sentence,’” says Vikstrom. “So, that’s on us as teachers to tell the students what they are learning and when and how they can or can’t use AI to do that.”

AI at Overlake: A Timeline

2022

November

- ChatGPT hits the scene
- Article “The End of High School English” published in the *Atlantic*

2023

June

- AI in Ed Working Group formed

August

- Overlake AI Philosophy created
- AI incorporated into syllabi
- Student panel on AI
- Faculty and students present to students about AI

2024

- Continued experimentation with AI, including Copilot and ChatGPT licenses

2025

February

- Professional development on AI to build adult literacy
- Ongoing Wednesday morning professional development in departments on AI and learning outcomes

May

- Rollout of school-wide AI platform trial, Flint K-12
- Professional development on AI to build adult literacy

2025
-26

- Continuing work on adult AI literacy
- Incorporate AI guidance for students into most assessments
- Begin teaching AI literacy to students

AI Platforms We’re Using at Overlake

* Flint

* Claude
for teams

ChatGPT

Fi Adobe Firefly

Copilot

Canva

At Overlake, How Do You Use AI?



"I'll use Granola during my meetings to take notes. It will spit out bullet points from your conversation."

BEN RAMAGE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES



"Athletics uses ChatGPT in our daily work to generate meeting summaries and notes, create coach practice plans, and perform data analysis that helps us make informed decisions. We also leverage AI for image generation to enhance our communications, presentations, and overall graphics use."

ALICIA GOLD
ASSISTANT ATHLETIC DIRECTOR



"I've been using Anthropic's Claude Code to create projects and integrations from scratch. It doesn't produce a polished product on the first go, but it certainly removes the drudgery. I can go from concept to proof-of-concept in an afternoon."

DAVID BASHAM
DATA LEAD



"I've used Flint to generate age-appropriate scripts that represent the kids present in my class as well as basic scripts for students to adapt and edit."

KERA WRIGHT
PERFORMING ARTS TEACHER



"I use AI in curriculum design, helping me adapt high-quality existing models — such as the Stanford Integrated NGSS Curriculum — for my biology courses. I use AI intentionally, prompting it with clear goals and constraints so that the materials it helps me generate reflect the same instructional philosophy, coherence, scaffolding, differentiation, and standards alignment as the original Stanford model while being tailored to my own students and context in Overlake's science department."

CLARISSA TOUPIN
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH

ALUMNI PUTTING AI TO WORK BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

From Curiosity to Code: Using AI to Make an Impact

What if artificial intelligence could help communities prepare for natural disasters before they happen?

For alum **David Treadwell IV ('15)**, that question is no longer hypothetical. In his work as a data scientist, he is using AI to analyze risk, model complex systems, and help organizations make smarter, faster decisions — work that has real implications for how communities respond to an increasingly unpredictable world.

As a student at Overlake, David's interests were grounded in athletics and health. He spent his time learning about nutrition and exercise science, initially planning to pursue kinesiology and become a physical therapist. But like many Overlake graduates, what stayed with him wasn't just a specific subject, it was a mindset.

"That curiosity, that willingness to explore and keep learning, that really started at Overlake," he says.

He also recalls moments in the classroom that built foundational skills he still uses today. "I remember public speaking in ninth grade in Army's class," he says. "Learning how to organize your thoughts and communicate clearly is something I rely on constantly now, whether I'm explaining a model, presenting findings, or working with a team."

After graduating, David studied business and political science and began his career at Blueback Global (later TopSource Worldwide) as a data analyst, working across finance, operations, and marketing. But one aspect of his work stood out.

"I really loved the part of the job that involved forecasting and modeling," he explains. "That's when the picture started to form."

That interest led him to take math and computer science courses at night while working full time. He went on to

complete a certificate in computer science fundamentals at Seattle University, followed by a master's in computer science at Northeastern University, where he focused on machine learning and AI.

Along the way, he discovered a passion for computer vision, the ability for machines to interpret and analyze images and video. That work now translates into meaningful applications. In his role at Logic20/20, a technology consulting firm, David uses AI and data science to help organizations, particularly in the utilities sector, better understand and mitigate risk.

"A lot of the work is in risk mitigation," he explains. "How can we use data and models to anticipate issues before they happen, whether that's infrastructure risks or environmental impacts?"

In some cases, that means helping organizations anticipate, mitigate, and manage the risk and impact of natural disasters — particularly wildfires and extreme storms — that contributes to safer, more resilient communities.

David has also contributed to environmental research through Earth and Space Research, where he remains an affiliate scientist. There, he has worked on AI models that predict ice formation in the Arctic Ocean, helping researchers better understand environmental change.

For David, the power of AI lies in its breadth of application. "AI can be useful in all sorts of fields," he says. "It's important that we don't think of AI as just one thing, it can be applied in a lot of different ways and ultimately can do a lot of good in the world."

At the same time, he emphasizes that AI is not a replacement for human thinking. Instead, he describes it as a "sandwich model" with people at both ends of the process.



“

You have humans defining the problem, guiding the process, and then interpreting and applying the results. AI sits in the middle, helping to accelerate and enhance what people can already do.

DAVID TREADWELL IV ('15)

That philosophy carries into his own work. Like many professionals, David uses AI tools to streamline tasks such as writing and analysis, but always with a human lens.

"It's like accelerated brainstorming," he says. "You can generate ideas quickly, react to them, refine them, and ultimately make something your own."

That balance, leveraging technology while maintaining human judgment, is one he sees as essential for the future.

And it's a mindset rooted in his time at Overlake.

"The biggest thing I took away as a student at Overlake was learning how to learn," David says. "Being curious and open to new paths is what allows you to grow."

ALUMNI PUTTING AI TO WORK BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Scanning the Future: Bringing AI to High-Risk Pregnancy Care

At about 20 weeks into a pregnancy, an ultrasound becomes something more than a routine scan. For physicians, it's a critical moment; a detailed check for tiny clues that reveal how a baby is developing. But even for highly trained specialists, finding those clues isn't always easy.

"An ultrasound at 20-22 weeks is like looking for a needle in a haystack," explains **Dr. Jeroen Vanderhoeven ('96)**, a perinatologist at Swedish. While the vast majority of ultrasounds suggest healthy, normally developing fetuses, a small percentage reveal real complications.

"As perinatologists, we are always looking for ways to improve the accuracy and efficiency of that process for our patients to reduce both false positives and false negatives."

So when Jeroen was approached by Origin Medical with an AI solution designed to help detect and analyze ultrasound images in real time, he was ready to dive in.

Now serving as Origin Medical's Chief Medical Officer, Jeroen is helping bring that technology into clinical care — combining cutting-edge AI with the expertise of physicians and sonographers to improve how high-risk pregnancies are monitored.

For anyone who has undergone an ultrasound, there's typically a lot of pausing and clicking while the technician captures and saves images. This tool helps streamline that process. Because AI is already detecting and analyzing the images being captured, the ultrasound itself can move faster. Preliminary data suggests scan times could improve 30-50%, meaning more patients could be seen and access to care improve.

"One of the challenges of serving patients in Washington is the remote-

ness of our region," Jeroen explains. Swedish, UW, and Seattle Children's all serve high-risk patients from remote parts of the state — including Eastern Washington and the Olympic Peninsula — as well as patients traveling from other states like Idaho and Alaska.

"Last week, I saw a patient who waited two weeks to get in and had to commute two hours by car to Seattle, only to find out that the suspected abnormality was a false positive," he says. "Eliminating patient stress and improving their experience, while also providing more accurate and efficient diagnoses when needed, helps us better serve our patients."

While AI is becoming an increasingly useful tool in medicine, Jeroen emphasizes that it doesn't replace clinicians, it supports them.

"In healthcare, you're not expected to have all the tools or all the answers all the time," he says. "But you are expected to know how to get them — and my Overlake education helped me develop the curiosity and resourcefulness that prepared me for a career in healthcare, which often means finding creative solutions or tools to get answers to patients."

"When I was at Overlake in the mid-90s, it was a small school that tried so hard to provide everything you could want as a student," Jeroen recalls. "I played piano and wanted to join a jazz band, but Overlake didn't have one at the time. Arts faculty member Sarah Fitzpatrick helped bring on a teacher who could support a jazz band. Overlake created that pathway and option — and that's something that resonated in how I support my patients today." He also credits science teacher Lisa Orenstein as both his favorite teacher and someone who helped spark his interest in science.

After graduating from Overlake, Jeroen attended Swarthmore College for his undergraduate degree and stayed in Pennsylvania for medical school at Drexel University. An OBGYN residency at Oregon Health & Science University brought him back to the Pacific Northwest, followed by a maternal-fetal medicine fellowship at UW Medicine. Today, Jeroen lives in Seattle with his wife and their two children—a second grader and a fifth grader—who keep him busy hiking and cheering from the sidelines at their many soccer games.

For Jeroen, the future of medicine isn't about replacing expertise with technology. It's about giving experts better tools and using curiosity, the same kind nurtured at Overlake, to keep finding new and better ways to care for patients, one ultrasound at a time.

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In healthcare, you're not expected to have all the tools or all the answers all the time, but you are expected to know how to get them — and my Overlake education helped me develop the curiosity and resourcefulness that prepared me for a career in healthcare, which often means finding creative solutions or tools to get answers to patients.

DR. JEROEN VANDERHOEVEN ('96)



ALUMNI PUTTING AI TO WORK BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Selling Security in the Age of AI

From AI-powered attacks to AI-driven defenses, cybersecurity is entering a new era, and Overlake alum **Conrad Im ('21)** of Seattle-based F5 is right in the middle of it.

F5 is a cybersecurity and application delivery company focused on protecting and managing the massive flow of data behind modern web apps and APIs. “Increasingly,” Conrad explains, “the company is applying artificial intelligence to that mission,” using AI-driven tools to detect threats, automate security operations, and protect emerging AI-powered applications themselves. Through platforms that combine traffic management, API (application programming interface) protection, and AI security features such as data-leak prevention and monitoring of large language model activity, F5 helps organizations safely run these complex systems. Work that Conrad helps to simplify as “setting up guardrails and stress tests.”

And Conrad sits at the front of it all as the entry point for clients looking to use F5’s services.

With a background in economics and political communications from Southern Methodist University, he’s not the most traditional tech hire. But he has a knack for sales, and he speaks the language of AI, partly because he uses it in his day-to-day work.

“Whether I’m crafting an electronic outreach to a prospect, culling LinkedIn for cold leads, or preparing for a client meeting, I’m leveraging AI in everything that I do,” Conrad explains. “Not only does it save me valuable time, but more importantly it helps me be a quick study on a specific industry or

company that has its own language and lexicon. It helps me not only sound informed but speak like an industry insider.” He’s even using AI to study the specific tools and services F5 sells so he can help guide clients toward the solutions and support they need to reach their goals.

That personalized approach — and attention to language — can be traced back to his Overlake days. “My English teachers were all amazing, and they taught me the power of language and composition,” he says, adding that his communication skills really took off in college thanks to the foundation he built at Overlake.

Now working at F5’s satellite office in Liberty Lake, Conrad is enjoying getting to know the greater Spokane area while already attending company conferences and planning his next career move within the organization. And he’s keeping his Overlake ties strong: he hopes to meet up with Varsity Golf Coach Justin Prohn and the Overlake golf team later this year when they play in the area and he regularly meets up with his Class of 2021 friends including a planned visit at this year’s June All-Class Reunion where they’ll be celebrating their milestone fifth reunion year.

As AI continues to reshape cybersecurity, Conrad sees opportunity rather than uncertainty. The technology may evolve rapidly, but the challenge remains the same: understanding people, solving problems, and helping clients navigate a changing world.



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My English teachers [at Overlake] were all amazing, and they taught me the power of language and composition.

CONRAD IM ('21)

ALUMNI PUTTING AI TO WORK BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Clearing the Pipeline with AI: An Alum Brings AI Underground

In this fast-paced world, time is one of our most precious commodities. When AI can spare you precious minutes — a communication crafted in minutes instead of hours, a diagnosis made in a fraction of the time, a report that synthesizes days' worth of material — it quickly becomes invaluable.

Anshuman Srivastava ('00) is embracing that power as the Chief Product and Technology Officer at ITpipes, an AI startup in the government technology sector. The company helps cities detect problems in underground pipe infrastructure — using AI to dramatically speed up the journey from inspection to action. ITpipes reduces the typical turnaround time from inspection to an actionable decision by 12x, shrinking a process that normally takes about two months down to roughly five days.

The process is time-consuming and, in many ways, subjective. Cities send out a truck with an inspector who climbs down a manhole and runs a camera through the pipe, searching for cracks, damage from tree roots, and other issues. As they inspect, they capture images and log reports that later get reviewed by experts. "It's basically like a colonoscopy," Anshuman says, "but for city pipes."

Those videos and reports eventually make their way to specialists who analyze the footage and determine what needs fixing. But the lag between identifying a potential problem and forming a plan can stretch to nearly two months. In that time, a small leak can become a bigger one, and minor damage can escalate.

That's where ITpipes steps in.

The company uses an array of computer vision models, each trained to identify a specific type of pipe damage or issue. In effect, every model becomes a different kind of expert. Inspectors upload their footage to ITpipes, where the system analyzes it across these specialized models. A human reviewer then evaluates the AI's findings and compiles a report, delivering insights in a fraction of the time.

"In this way, we're not replacing the human, but we are making humans more efficient," explains Anshuman. "Cities are eager for the time-saving aspect — there's a market and real need for this technology."

And there's more to come.

Anshuman and his team of software engineers are exploring how a large language model, something like an

industry-specific version of ChatGPT or Gemini, could help experts recommend next steps to cities, both retroactively and proactively.

Helping cities better plan and maintain their underground infrastructure is exactly the kind of challenge that drew Anshuman to ITpipes. After spending many years at Axon — a smart device company that works with government contracts for body cameras and tasers — he was ready to return to the startup world. "ITpipes is still relatively small and scrappy, so there's not a lot of red tape and I get to drive a lot of decisions," shares Anshuman.

For him, each career move has been guided by a simple principle. "Every time I've changed roles throughout my career, it's always been to optimize learning. I always want to grow, even at my age," he adds with a laugh. "I get bored if I'm not being challenged in some way and that stems back to my Overlake days."

Curiosity, creativity, and a willingness to experiment — traits that trace back to his Overlake education — continue to shape how Anshuman approaches both technology and leadership. Whether analyzing pipelines beneath a city or planning the next birthday mystery, he's always looking for smarter ways to connect the pieces.



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Every time I've changed roles throughout my career, it's always been to optimize learning. I get bored if I'm not challenged in some way and that stems back to my Overlake days.

ANSHUMAN SRIVASTAVA ('00)

Class Notes

Overlake community members give a hoot about what's happening within our alumni community! In Class Notes, we share events big and small, personal or professional, chance meetings, fun adventures, travel stories, etc. If you have an alumni story to share, send it to alumni@overlake.org.

2020s



Dante Austin ('24) was named to GLAAD's 20 Under 20 list. Recognized as one of the next-gen LGBTQIA+ change-makers helping shape media, advocacy, and acceptance, Dante was featured in *Teen Vogue* along with the other 19 outstanding youth.

Matthew Birov ('24) participated in San Francisco's Browser Use x Y Combinator Hackathon where he built Swarm, an open marketplace where specialized agents bid for work, execute in parallel on live websites, and earn reputational scores, evolving into a self-improving agentic workforce. Matthew is studying computer science and finance at Northwestern University.

Bess Hurlock ('24) is starting a new role as an English-Language and Human Rights Editorial Intern for the Czech Centre for Human Rights. In

her position, Bess proofreads and edits English texts for the Centre's publications, website, and the *Czech Republic Human Rights Review* (English Bulletin). She also writes content for online and print publication, ensuring the provision of high-quality English content for relations with foreign institutions and experts and assists with content updates to ensure clarity, accuracy, and consistency across all English-language materials.

Sadie Wickham ('24) shares that she will be working as an intern this summer with international law firm GPD Lex in Rome, Italy, to gain professional experience in a global environment. Sadie shares that she will be exploring how legal and regulatory factors shape business decisions, which connects closely to her interest in business consulting.

Ben Wyler ('23), now a Junior at Washington University studying computer engineering, shares that he is currently serving as a member of the University's EMS (Emergency Support Team) and as a Residential Advisor. Ben also shares that he works with the Campus YMCA branch. Last summer, Ben worked at a media company focusing on diabetes and obesity information services.



Lucy Stearns ('22) joined her mom and Overlake's amazing Arts Department Chair Erin Gabriel for a campus visit, coming all the way from New York City!



Maggie Needham ('20) visited with Tina Proctor, Amanda Jones, Susan Essex, and others while visiting from DC.

Peregrin Charest ('18)

completed a new certification as a Certified Sexuality Occupational Therapist from the Institute of Sex and Occupational Therapy. Peregrin works as an occupational therapist to reduce occupational injustices and to offer creative solutions for systemic change and policies regarding houseless populations, disability rights groups, and the LGBTQIA+ community.



Lulu Pinczower ('18)

organized a popular Bay Area Alumni Gathering at DACHA Kitchen and Bar on February 11. Special thanks to alumni faculty Lisa Orenstein for joining the festivities! A wonderful evening was had by all—thank you to all our alums who attended!

2010s



Meili Zhang ('19) visited Overlake this year to share her experience as a powerful brand ambassador and digital content creator with partnerships including Maybelline, Dove, Victoria's Secret, and Essie.



Ryan Long ('17) played in the 2026 World Baseball Classic (WBC) for Great Britain in March. The WBC is an international baseball tournament that began in 2006 where many of the world's best professional players compete for their national teams. It was Ryan's second time playing for the WBC (first was in 2023). Ryan

played on the Growls Overlake and Bear Creek combined team under Coach Mike Davidson for all four years as an Upper School student at Overlake and has since been playing in the double-A league, occasionally swinging up to the triple-A level.



Neal Sivasdas ('17) has been named by *Ad Age's* 2026 24 Gen Zers to watch in marketing and advertising. Neal is pictured here in Times Square with brother **Jay Sivasdas ('20)** who is at Morgan Stanley IB. Congrats to Neal on this well-deserved recognition.



Sarah Moore ('16) was our special alumni speaker at this year's Owls Night Out event. Her heartfelt remarks about her experience as a student to becoming a successful Analytical Consultant at SAS in Washington, DC, moved the crowd to both laughter and tears. Thank you for sharing your story with us, Sarah!



Bijou Basu ('14) had a standout year! She got engaged to her partner from Case Western Reserve University, successfully defended her PhD as part of her MD-PhD, and earned multiple honors, including the American Medical Association's Research Challenge finalist and Rising Star in Medical Research Award, and the NIH Outstanding Scholars in Neuroscience Award. She returns to medical school this May to begin her third year, with plans to pursue neurology.

Bob Gardner ('12) and wife Nicole welcomed their first son, Theo, on February 21. Proud grandma and former Board of Trustees President, Randi Hedin, shares that Baby Theo is a happy baby and is settling into his home in Brooklyn, NY. Congrats to all!



Hakan Gem ('10) came to campus for an Alumni Lunch & Learn on March 23, where he talked about his education

and career path to becoming a dentist, professor at the University of Washington, and faculty member at Fred Hutch Cancer Center.

Stephanie Roush ('10) held a virtual Alumni Lunch & Learn on March 30, sharing her insights as an independent film producer and entrepreneur.



Simone (Gabriel-Scherief) Ericson ('12) and her husband Michael recently welcomed baby Bennett on May 6. This is Erin Gabriel's first grandchild too! Congratulations to the happy family!

2000s



Allison (Schoening) Rataezyk ('08) released her new children's book, *Perseverant Piper*, in May. Set along the Olympic Coast, the rhyming story follows a fourth grader who learns perseverance

through a backpacking adventure, celebrating PNW nature and encouraging confidence and exploration. You can learn more at her website, allisonrataezyk.com.



Matt Nieman ('06) and his wife welcomed baby Rory to the family in early March. Congratulations to the expanding family. We love seeing pics of future Owls!

1990s



Jeroen Vanderhoeven ('96) provided an inspiring Alumni Lunch & Learn on April 28, sharing his experiences and journey to becoming a perinatologist at Swedish and Origin Medical's Chief Medical Officer. **Lisa Orenstein** also stopped by to attend Jeroen's presentation! See related story on page 22.

Current and Retired Faculty and Staff



Congratulations to sixth grade English teacher, **Nicole Balin**, on the birth of Arlo Roy Balin-Helmers, born on April 16!



Former faculty member, **Howard Levin** caught up with alum faculty members **Lisa Orenstein** and **Dave Bennett** while in town for the February NAIS conference. Howard currently serves as the Director of Technology at University High School in San Francisco. We love seeing our former faculty stay connected.



Alum faculty member, **Morrie Schneider**, turned 90 in March and was feted by family and friends, including former Overlake faculty members **Janet Rothfels**, **Dave Bennett**, and **Bob Wood** who flew into Palm Desert for the occasion. Happy 90th, Morrie!

In Memory

Greg Gamble Helfrich ('78)

Greg Gamble Helfrich ('78) passed away earlier this year and was celebrated by loved ones and former Owls at a celebration of life event which was held on April 18 at St. Mark's on Capitol Hill. Greg and his older brother, **Peter Helfrich ('76)**, who passed away last year, were beloved members of the Overlake community and in fact, the original Overlake Student Center was named in memory of their sister, Katherine. Greg was deeply passionate about photography and was one of the most prolific contributors to the yearbook and *The Monte Carlo Bug*, Overlake's wonderfully irreverent student publication of that era. His creative eye and sense of humor helped capture the spirit of Overlake during those years. The Overlake School wishes peace and sends love to all who are missing Greg.

Beth (Ulery) Hormann ('72)

Beth (Ulery) Hormann ('72) passed away in February 2026. Beth was the daughter of founding faculty member Denver Ulery, for whom the Wood Shop in the Art Barn is named, and sister to Tammy (Ulery) Jahrman ('80), Jodi (Ulery) McCollum ('83), and Nole Ann Ulery-Horsey. The family lived on campus for a number of years on the site of the original Math/Science building and now the Whitten Math and Sciences Center. Thank you to Jodi for sharing a student newspaper copy from 1973 and a letter from then Alumni Coordinator Josh Burkner ('91), sharing news about an upcoming reunion in the '90s, both of which were found on Beth's nightstand. Our hearts go out to the Ulery family!

Do you have vintage Overlake things?

We would love them for our archives. Please email us at alumni@overlake.org. Thank you!





Congratulations Class of 2026

We are proud to share that this remarkable group of 79 students earned offers from 143 colleges and universities and will head to 43 different destinations across 19 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. Their next steps reflect the wonderful range of talents, ambitions, and aspirations within this class. Scan the QR code to view the full list.





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