

TODAY. SCHOOL USES AI TO TEACH STUDENTS. TRANSCRIPT

Reporter: This probably isn't what comes to mind when you think of an average school day. Kids breathing fire, climbing a rock wall, and even learning the art of grilling, but for students at the Alpha School in Austin, Texas, this is no field. Here, K-12th graders are proudly cutting classes, spending just two hours a day learning math, science, reading, and writing, all with the help of an AI tutor and without a single teacher.

Reporter: Mackenzie Price is the cofounder of Alpha School and its two-hour learning program.

Price: This is a school without teachers. We have no teachers at our school. Can you believe that? The educators are a suite of AI-powered apps that gamify lessons, monitor progress, and with the help of eye tracking, keep tabs on students' attention span.

Reporter: Who's teaching?

Student: I think the app is teaching me, but I'm also teaching myself.

Reporter: All as adult guides, many of which have never been teachers, look on without interfering with their robot counterparts.

Reporter: Are you comfortable having guides in the classroom that don't necessarily know the core curriculum?

Price: It's okay that our guides aren't experts in physics or math or whatever they're doing. They're experts in their students.

Reporter: It almost sounds like the guides here are told, "You're here to lead the kids to AI."

Price: Our guides are not allowed to teach. They are coaching students to become self-driven learners.

Reporter: Price says that the AI tutor personalizes lessons for each student, allowing them to learn class material in half the time. And according to data from Alpha, students score in the 90th percentile on standardized tests in most grade levels.

Reporter: It all comes as students nationwide grapple with AI's role. While some critics say it's too soon to know if the tech is having a positive effect in classrooms, one study found that generative AI tutors can inhibit learning if students become too reliant on the tool.

Reporter: How do you make sure that the AI is teaching kids what it's supposed to be doing?

Price: We have a lot of guardrails in place to make sure that kids are not dealing with some of the issues that come with what we hear about with AI.

Reporter: Still, at Alpha, where tuition costs \$40,000 a year, academics are just the beginning.

Reporter: This is called our check chart.

Reporter: Each student must complete a long list of tasks before they can level up, including things like run a mile without stopping, solve a Rubik's Cube, and even independently put together a piece of IKEA furniture. All in an effort to teach life skills and promote passion projects.

Reporter: Welcome to the Alpha School Airbnb.

Reporter: Like this group of sixth graders who are running a real Airbnb.

Reporter: How old are you?

Student: I'm 11.

Reporter: You're 11?

Student: Yeah.

Reporter: And how much money did you guys make with this Airbnb?

Student: We have \$10,000 of confirmed bookings.

Reporter: Over at Alpha High School...

Reporter: You made an app?

Student: I developed an app.