



Programmers of tomorrow: EMSB students get hands-on robotics, AI training

Starting as early as kindergarten, students are coding and interacting with robots

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Students at Merton Elementary School got the chance to interact with smart robots, Friday. Robotics are introduced in the kindergarten classroom at the Côte Saint-Luc school. (CBC)

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The English Montreal School Board is launching five different programs to integrate robotics and artificial intelligence into the regular school curriculum.

The initiative is part of an effort to attract new students, by offering them a chance to work with AI and technology from a young age.

Children in kindergarten are even learning how to code and work with robots at Merton Elementary School in Côte Saint-Luc.

"Parents have choices to come to us, so we are competitive," said EMSB's chair, Angela Mancini. "We have to remain competitive and show why would you choose us over the French counterparts."

Twelve-year-old Raphael Sutherland-Ortega has been working with robots since fourth grade.

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Raphael Sutherland-Ortega, 12, has been working with robots since Grade 4 at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School. (CBC)

He and his classmates at Pierre Elliott Trudeau Elementary School are building a robot that can play piano.

"Robots are the future," said Sutherland-Ortega.

The EMSB believes robots and artificial intelligence will not only give its students a leg up on mastering future technology but will make overall learning more fun and will motivate students to graduate.

"They're very quick at learning how sound works, how to put things together, how to get the application to do what they want," said Debbie Adams, a science, technology and robotics teacher at Merton.

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The autonomous, programmable robot NAO has been a big hit in the four Quebec schools where it's been used as a teaching tool. (CBC)

The announcement of the new EMSB programs comes at a time when parents are thinking about school registration, and many of the province's French-language schools are bursting at the seams.

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The EMSB isn't the only board using robotics to attract parents, however; some of the French boards have already been doing it.

It's becoming increasingly popular to bring robots and AI into the classroom, as educators try to equip the next generation with skills that will be increasingly in demand a decade from now.

With files from Lauren McCallum

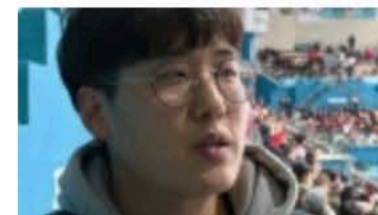


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