Investigating ChatGPT Usage in High Schools: Student Perspectives on Policy and Practice

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While generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools, like ChatGPT, are rapidly transforming education, concerns about their use and academic integrity persist. To develop effective and equitable policies around the use of GenAI in high schools, we need to understand how high school students experience, interpret, and navigate school governance of ChatGPT use, and how schools implement policies and tools to regulate it. To achieve this goal, we interviewed 18 high school students about their experiences with school rules, enforcement practices, and technical monitoring of ChatGPT use. We find that students navigate a patchwork of implicit rules shaped by teacher discretion, academic integrity norms, and cheat detection technologies. We provide actionable insights for the FAccT research community and policy makers, alongside recommendations for thoughtful integration of ChatGPT in high school settings and directions for future research on generative AI in schools.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing → Empirical studies in HCI**.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: High School, Student, ChatGPT, AI Governance

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1 Introduction

The rapid proliferation of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools has begun to reshape educational practices in K-12 schools. While a wide array of GenAI tools have emerged, ChatGPT is still the most widely used and publicly accessible tool in educational settings [20, 44, 105]. In K-12 classroom discourse in the United States, ChatGPT has been framed as a potentially transformative technology, promising new forms of instructional support, feedback, and personalized learning [25, 40, 106, 110]. At the same time, the deployment of ChatGPT in schools has generated significant concern around academic integrity [49, 82]. Educators and administrators have expressed apprehension that GenAI might facilitate cheating or undermine existing pedagogical norms, particularly given the difficulty of distinguishing between student-authored and AI-generated work [34, 50, 94]. These concerns have prompted a range of institutional responses, including the adoption of AI-based cheat detection tools, often in the absence of clear guidance.

These developments have also raised broader concerns about how emerging AI technologies are governed in educational institutions and how responsibility, authority, and accountability are distributed among students, teachers, administrators, and technical systems. This raises two important research questions: (1) *How do high*

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school students experience and interpret school policies around acceptable ChatGPT use? and (2) *How do students navigate and respond to enforcement practices around the use of ChatGPT?*

Prior research on student perceptions of ChatGPT, however, has largely focused on college students [11, 17, 32, 33, 59, 61, 79, 84, 88, 102, 107] or middle school students [11, 61]. A small number of studies have examined high school students' views through surveys or analyses of online commentary [32, 38, 59]. While these studies offer useful early insights, they largely examine student attitudes in isolation from the institutional arrangements, enforcement practices, and technical systems through which ChatGPT is governed. To address ongoing governance challenges and inform policy development, existing research would benefit from closer examination of how high school students in the United States negotiate the institutional rules that govern ChatGPT use.

To answer these questions, we conducted an interview-based study with 18 high school students in the United States (US) to examine how ChatGPT is used, regulated, and contested in everyday school contexts. Our study captured a "natural experiment" in which high schools were grappling with the integration of ChatGPT before policies and governance practices were standardized. This unique moment allowed us to observe how students interpret, navigate, and respond to evolving institutional rules in real time, providing insights into tool use and the early formation of AI governance in schools. We adopted a bottom-up approach that uniquely foregrounded students navigating institutional uncertainty as key stakeholders in this sociotechnical system. This framework allowed us to examine how students navigate, adapt to, and sometimes resist the institutional and algorithmic forces that shape their education. We focused on early adopters [73, 87] of GenAI when ChatGPT was initially integrated into high school education shortly after its release. In doing so, our study captured emerging practices and tensions as schools grappled with how to integrate ChatGPT into existing educational systems.

We have two main findings. First, the schools attended by our participants often lacked explicit or consistent guidance on acceptable ChatGPT use, leaving rule interpretation and enforcement largely to individual teachers. This stood in contrast to our participants' ideal school policy for ChatGPT, which envisioned AI as an assistive tool that did not shoulder the bulk of the intellectual workload. Second, institutional responses observed in our study relied on fallible detection technologies and informal monitoring, which resulted in uneven enforcement and inconsistent disciplinary consequences, and prompted participants to develop varied strategies to manage risk and evade detection. Taken together, these dynamics in our participants' experiences reflected a pattern of *patchwork governance* [30], where responsibility for regulating ChatGPT use was distributed across teachers, existing academic integrity norms, and technical enforcement tools.

Our findings leveraged this natural experiment to provide timely evidence on how ChatGPT initially shaped and continues to influence high school learning environments through school governance rather than students' use of the tool itself. We show that as student–ChatGPT collaboration evolves, acceptable GenAI use is not stabilized by formal policy but negotiated through discretionary enforcement and opaque technical systems, dispersing accountability and undermining procedural justice and transparency in disciplinary actions. Our findings therefore call for AI governance frameworks in K-12 education that treat students not as compliance problems to be managed, but as stakeholders whose lived experiences are essential to defining fair and workable boundaries of GenAI use. In summary, we contribute:

- **Qualitative evidence of student ChatGPT perceptions.** We present an in-depth qualitative study of high school students' views on ChatGPT during the first year of use in schools following its release, leveraging a natural experiment to capture how students' perceptions were shaped by institutional norms, discretionary enforcement, and personal values, complementing and extending prior work outside FAccT [32, 38, 59].
- **An extension of the "patchwork governance" concept to AI governance in K-12.** We provide empirical evidence of how policy ambiguity and informal algorithmic authority around ChatGPT jointly shape student behavior, thereby extending the concept of patchwork governance [30] to the K-12 AI ecosystem and including students as key stakeholders.

- **Student-centered perspectives on AI governance.** We extend FAccT scholarship on AI governance and stakeholder perspectives by centering high school students' lived experiences with ChatGPT, offering empirically grounded insights for more accountable, equitable, and transparent AI-policymaking in education.

2 Related Work

A growing body of research has examined the use of ChatGPT and other GenAI tools in educational contexts [15, 55], focusing on applications such as supporting student communication [15], assisting teachers with instructional and administrative tasks [55], and surfacing K-12 educators' perspectives on responsible AI [109].

Across FAccT and education research, scholars have increasingly adopted sociotechnical framings to understand AI integration in schools and universities, emphasizing how technologies interact with institutional norms, governance structures, and educational practices [8, 13, 108].

However, this work has largely focused on teachers, institutions, or system-level dynamics, with relatively little attention to students as primary stakeholders within these sociotechnical systems. FAccT and related communities have begun to examine how AI systems are governed, contested, and experienced in K-12 settings [109]. We build on and extend prior works by focusing on how high school students experienced ChatGPT's early adoption, a "natural experiment" when policies and governance practices were not yet standardized. Although early, this moment is analytically valuable, capturing how students interpret and negotiate emerging institutional rules. In doing so, we contribute student-centered empirical evidence to FAccT scholarship on AI governance in education.

2.1 Uses of ChatGPT in Educational Settings

Previous work has studied the impacts of ChatGPT, and other GenAI systems, in education—with an emphasis on higher education—ranging from the possibility of personalized education to concerns of cheating and the depreciation of learning [27, 29, 40, 85, 101]. Indeed, much of the existing research within related communities like HCI has focused on tool use and positioned ChatGPT as supporting discrete tasks for students [6, 17, 22, 52, 57, 71, 72, 82, 83, 99] and teachers [10, 46, 55, 70, 81, 86].

Fewer studies, however, have interrogated how the introduction of GenAI interacted with the broader sociotechnical infrastructures of K-12 education (e.g., institutional norms, monitoring, enforcement) from a student perspective. Within the FAccT community, related work has framed GenAI not merely as an instructional tool, but as a sociotechnical system whose deployment raised questions about value alignment in K-12 teacher-AI collaboration, underscoring the need for more trustworthy and context-sensitive educational technologies [109]. Indeed, prior FAccT research on algorithmic decision-making in schools investigated to what extent automated risk prediction tools can shape student trajectories while raising questions of data use and long-term impacts [80]. We extend this line of work by shifting the analytic focus from tools and teachers to students as stakeholders embedded in these systems. High school students occupy a distinct sociotechnical position: they have greater autonomy than younger students, but their technology use remains tightly governed by institutional rules, curricular expectations, and adult oversight as compared to university students, whose GenAI use is governed by markedly different norms.

By foregrounding students' lived experiences with ChatGPT in high school settings, our work contributes to FAccT scholarship on AI governance in education by revealing how students negotiate the legitimacy, appropriateness, and boundaries of ChatGPT use during its initial adoption, providing a unique snapshot of early attitudes and insight into how schools respond to disruptive educational technologies.

2.2 Student Perceptions and ChatGPT Usage

Research has shown that the introduction of ChatGPT into educational contexts elicited varied responses from educators [58, 64], often centering concerns about cheating. Student perspectives have been similarly mixed

and context-dependent. At the college level, work has shown that students frequently characterize ChatGPT as a support for their work processes rather than as a mechanism for cheating [48, 88, 98], while also expressing skepticism about the reliability and accuracy of its outputs [54].

At the high school level, comparatively fewer studies have examined students' perceptions of ChatGPT. One survey of 71 Hungarian high school students found frequent use of ChatGPT for academic support, particularly for assignments [38]. However, this work largely emphasized students' positive outlooks and did not examine how students navigate school rules, institutional expectations, or policy ambiguity surrounding AI use. Other studies have analyzed students' online comments about ChatGPT [32] or conducted a small exploratory survey of three teachers and seven students at a U.S. high school [59], finding that students view ChatGPT as a learning aid and a source of cheating.

While prior studies provide early insights into student attitudes, they do not situate student perceptions within the governance regimes that shape how AI tools are regulated or how AI rules are enforced and contested in everyday school contexts. In particular, existing work offers limited insight into how students formed understandings of ChatGPT amid policy uncertainty, uneven enforcement, and evolving technical affordances at the moment of its initial introduction into schools. Our study builds on this literature by situating student perceptions within the governance arrangements, enforcement practices, and infrastructural constraints of their schools. In doing so, we illustrate how students negotiate ambiguous rules and integrate ChatGPT into their academic routines, offering insight into how students grapple with governance in a technological paradigm shift.

2.3 Institutional Governance, Policy, and ChatGPT in Education

In a school context, governance refers to the systems, policies, and practices through which administrators, teachers, and institutions set rules, guide behavior, and enforce standards to shape how students learn and interact [16]. Public and institutional responses to ChatGPT have highlighted the challenges of governing AI-mediated behavior within educational settings. Initial debates around ChatGPT have often centered on fears of widespread cheating and academic misconduct [49, 82]. Educators have also expressed concerns about potential harms and the erosion of assessment validity [50, 58, 64, 66], alongside researcher skepticism regarding the effectiveness of AI-based cheating detection tools [34, 94]. Subsequent work has explored AI detection techniques and pedagogical adaptations, particularly in higher education [24, 27, 28, 35].

However, increased reliance on cheat detection technologies has also introduced new governance risks. Students in higher education and K-12 settings have reported false accusations of AI-assisted cheating [39, 43, 62], contributing to heightened anxiety and perceptions of increased surveillance, even if they had not used ChatGPT themselves [43]. These dynamics illustrate how academic integrity enforcement could shift from pedagogical guidance toward algorithmically mediated monitoring, often without clear recourse or transparency for students. Notably, emerging evidence has suggested that actual rates of AI-enabled cheating may be lower than initially feared [45, 95, 97], raising concerns about whether current governance strategies are proportionate or effective.

Despite growing attention to AI governance, most work focuses on higher education [12, 76] or relies on surveys, scraped data, or controlled settings [11, 32, 38, 59, 66]. We complement this work by providing an interview-based account of how high school students experience AI governance as it is embedded within the everyday practices, rules, and power relations of high school environments.

By examining how students navigate accusations, uncertainty, and uneven enforcement, our findings contribute to FAccT scholarship on algorithmic mediation, rule negotiation, and institutional governance [29, 56, 67, 96]. In particular, we show how ambiguity in values and enforcement mechanisms, previously identified as a challenge in responsible AI governance [9], manifests in high school contexts, where students are governed by opaque policies and fallible technical systems. In doing so, we contribute to ongoing conversations about AI accountability

Participant Code	Type of School	Grade (AY 22-23)	Race	Gender	US Region
P1	Magnet	9	Asian	Man	Midwest
P2	Magnet	10	Asian	Woman	Midwest
P3	Public	12	Hispanic	Woman	Midwest
P4	Magnet	10	Black or African American	Woman	Midwest
P5	Private	11	Asian	Woman	East
P6	Charter	11	Black or African American	Man	Midwest
P7	Public	10	Black or African American	Woman	Midwest
P8	Public	12	Black or African American	Non-Binary	Midwest
P9	Public	11	White / Caucasian	Woman	Midwest
P10	Magnet	11	Black or African American	Non-Binary	Midwest
P11	Charter	11	Hispanic	Woman	Midwest
P12	Charter	9	Black or African American	Woman	Midwest
P13	Private	10	Asian	Woman	West
P14	Public	11	Black or African American	Woman	Midwest
P15	Public	10	Black or African American	Non-Binary	South
P16	Magnet	11	Black or African American	Non-Binary	Midwest
P17	Magnet	10	Asian	Non-Binary	Midwest
P18	Magnet	10	Black or African American	Man	Midwest

Table 1. Participant Demographics and School Type Breakdown. Note: public schools are state-funded; private schools are tuition-based; charter schools blend public funding with independent management; and magnet schools are public institutions with specialized curricula and optional enrollment [37, 75, 103].

and formal policy to include how GenAI technologies like ChatGPT are operationalized, contested, and made consequential in schools.

3 Method

We conducted semi-structured interviews (N=18) with students enrolled in US high schools between May and August 2023, shortly after the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022 [77]. Our study was approved by our Institutional Review Board.

Recruitment and Data Collection. Participants were recruited through a combination of university-local high school partnerships, community organizations, and word of mouth. Interested students were directed to a web form that served as a screener to confirm their student status. This screener also collected demographic information and details about their school. Additionally, the screener served as a mechanism to disseminate IRB-approved student consent and parental permission forms. Upon confirming their student status, and submitting duly signed consent forms from both themselves and their parents, participants were then contacted for an interview. Our final sample included a higher proportion of magnet school students (7/18; magnet schools are public schools with specialized curricula and optional enrollment; see Table 1 for a definition of all school types) and students from the US Midwest (15/18). Magnet school participants were recruited through direct university partnerships, while the remaining Midwest participants were recruited through collaborations with community organizations. Students outside the Midwest were recruited through word of mouth and snowball sampling.

To gather comprehensive insights into the students' experiences and perspectives, we employed a semi-structured interview format and conducted each one-on-one interview remotely using the Zoom platform. Each session was audio and video recorded and lasted between 50 and 75 minutes. This approach allowed us the flexibility to delve into various topics of interest while maintaining consistency across interviews. The interview guide is included in Appendix A and encompassed questions about students' academic challenges,

social interactions, familiarity and use of technology in school, and their thoughts, feelings, and usage of ChatGPT[1]—the most prolific tool at the time of data collection [105]. Our goal was to create a comfortable and open environment where students felt encouraged to share their honest and detailed experiences. To that end, we reminded the participants that their responses were confidential and that there were no right or wrong answers. This methodology ensured that we captured a rich, nuanced understanding of the students' views and experiences. We continued interviewing until we reached qualitative data saturation [23, 93], that is, the point at which additional interviews stopped yielding new substantive insights and instead reiterated themes already expressed by earlier participants. Participants were compensated with a $20 Amazon gift card as a token of appreciation for their time and insights.

Participants. We interviewed 18 high schoolers in total, with 15/18 participants coming from the same urban metropolitan area as shown in the participant demographic table in Table 1. Our participants hailed from schools with varying levels of funding and ranged in age from 14 to 18 years old. Our participant pool included two ninth graders, seven tenth graders, seven eleventh graders, and two twelfth graders. This distribution allowed for an in-depth look at students with significant high school experience but who were not primarily focused on college or experiencing "senior slump." Among the 18 participants, three were men, ten were women, and five were nonbinary individuals. The racial and ethnic breakdown of our participants' self-identification was as follows: ten Black, African-American; five Asian; two Hispanic; and one White participant. Our sample size also exceeds the modal number of participants (12) reported in relevant communities doing similar qualitative work [18].

Data Analysis. For analysis, all interviews were transcribed via speech-to-text software and then manually verified. We performed a thematic analysis on the transcribed interviews using both inductive and deductive approaches [14, 90]. Our analysis first used an inductive approach to create codes directly from the interview data. These were iteratively refined through team discussion. After the codebook was finalized, we deductively applied codes across transcripts. The full procedure is explained below.

Two researchers developed a comprehensive codebook through an iterative process. During an initial inductive stage, researchers independently reviewed transcripts to identify potential codes emerging directly from the data. Initially, each researcher independently analyzed the same transcript, identifying potential codes, and compared their findings for a subset of transcripts to ensure consistency. The research team convened multiple times to discuss and refine the identified codes before finalizing the codebook. The culmination of this process resulted in Table 2, the codebook. This table comprised a total of 32 codes, organized into 9 parent codes, each encompassing 1-6 child codes. For instance, the section on "Usage Of ChatGPT" had child codes like "Substantive Generation," while "School Attitudes Towards ChatGPT" utilized child codes such as "Encouragement Of Use."

Each transcript was coded twice, first by a primary coder and then by a secondary coder. For instance, "School Attitudes Towards ChatGPT" was applied to all excerpts in transcripts pertaining to discussions related to how the schools encouraged, discouraged, or generally discussed ChatGPT, with subcodes used to indicate the specifics.

Per Saldaña and Braun et al., after coding all the transcripts, the research team extracted interview excerpts from each associated structural code [14, 90]. Two coders then performed a round of subcoding on the excerpts and wrote thematic summaries for each structural code. The research team met regularly to discuss these thematic summaries, resolve any discrepancies, and finalize the emergent themes discussed in this paper such as ChatGPT-based cheating perceptions. Throughout this process, the research team iteratively compared excerpts across participants to identify recurring patterns as well as divergent perspectives. This collaborative analytic process helped ensure that the resulting themes were grounded in participants' accounts.

During the final stage of thematic synthesis, the research team also identified broader cross-cutting patterns that characterized how students described navigating institutional responses to generative AI. We analyzed our findings

[1]ChatGPT is a GenAI product freely available for public use, making it widely accessible. Participants did not specify if they used ChatGPT 3.5 or 4 [77].

Code	Description
Low Consequences	
Data Collection	Students view that there are few consequences for their data being collected by AI
Lack Of School AI Policy	Schools do not have an official AI policy
First Exposure	
First Exposure	How students were introduced to ChatGPT
Usage Of ChatGPT	
Substantive Generation	Students use ChatGPT to generate content that may be a (partial) solution to the assignment
Explanation	Students use ChatGPT to explain concepts
Light Assistance	Students use ChatGPT for assistive, not generative, tasks
Amusement	Students use ChatGPT for entertainment
Usage At School	Examples where students use ChatGPT at school
Usage At Home	Examples where students use ChatGPT at home
School Attitudes Towards ChatGPT	
Existence Of School Policy	Details the surrounding school policies on AI
Encouragement Of Use	Examples where the school or teachers encourage AI use
Technical Tools	
AI Checkers	Discuss use of or feelings about AI checkers
Surveillance Of Students	Students discuss how teachers surveil them in school as it relates to AI
Student Attitudes Towards ChatGPT	
Ownership Of Work	Students discuss "owning their work" when they use ChatGPT
Perception Of ChatGPT Intelligence	Students' perception of ChatGPT intelligence/capabilities
Philosophical Stances	
Only Assistance	Student position of restricting ChatGPT to assistance only
Students' Ideal School Policy	Students discuss what their ideal AI school policy would be
Negative Emotions Of Usage	Students discuss negative feelings they have towards AI usage
Cheating	
Accused Of Cheating	Students discuss cheating accusations involving ChatGPT
Fears Of Cheating	Students discuss fears of cheating accusations involving ChatGPT
Is Not Cheating	Students identify what constitutes NOT cheating with AI
Is Cheating	Students identify what constitutes cheating with AI
Workarounds	
Augment Output	Students discuss augmenting ChatGPT's output to avoid detection

Table 2. Codebook for qualitative analysis. Parent codes in bold. See Appendix B for an expanded version of this table with participant quotes.

under the framework of patchwork governance *"patchwork governance"* [30, 100]—i.e., the fragmented guidelines enforced variably by institutions, communities, and individual actors. This term served as an interpretive label to describe a recurring pattern in which students encountered fragmented, locally determined policies, enforcement practices, and norms around ChatGPT use across classrooms and schools.

Ethics. Although our study did not involve particularly sensitive content, we took care to foster a comfortable and respectful environment by centering student voices, using accessible language, and maintaining confidentiality. Informed consent and parental permission were obtained, and participants were compensated for their time, reflecting our commitment to ethical research practices throughout every stage of the study.

4 Findings Overview

We have two main findings. The first finding (Section 5) outlines student perspectives on how ChatGPT use was governed in their schools; the second finding (Section 6) focuses on how students navigated enforcement of rules on ChatGPT, describing the use of technical monitoring tools, inconsistent disciplinary consequences, and the strategies students employed to manage risk and evade detection of their ChatGPT use.

5 Finding 1: Student Perspectives on School Governance of ChatGPT

Students in our study spoke of how their schools relied on existing academic integrity norms with varying classroom-level rules. They also provided perspectives on ideal AI policies, highlighting how acceptability of ChatGPT use hinged on assistive use and instructional support.

5.1 Students See Academic Integrity Norms as Schools' Default Approach to ChatGPT Governance

Participants described how schools governed ChatGPT, with experiences shaped primarily by academic integrity norms and teachers' discretionary classroom rules.

Ambiguity in School-Wide ChatGPT Policy. The majority (12/18) of interviewed students were not aware of any specific school policies regarding the use of ChatGPT for schoolwork. P12's response was characteristic of the majority when she said, *"The school saying ChatGPT is a no-no? No, I haven't really heard anything about that."* That being said, five students acknowledged that a lack of an explicit AI policy did not mean that ChatGPT usage was not regulated implicitly through other, pre-existing, school policies. P11 talked about how ChatGPT usage violated academic dishonesty policies: *"[ChatGPT is] still so new that [the school policy is] not even written with it, but since they've used the AI trackers [and checkers], they've called some students out."*

In contrast with academic dishonesty policies—which could have rules about using unauthorized resources, *e.g.,* ChatGPT—the remaining four students mentioned that ChatGPT use was covered by existing plagiarism rules, even if those rules did not directly mention ChatGPT. For example, P6 told us that: *"We know about AI, but there's no policies on it. Plagiarizing in general is just bad. That's the number one policy in general. Even if it comes from a robot, if it's just plagiarizing, it's bad."* P16 added, *"They haven't really said anything about AI. They say more about plagiarism. They really don't like plagiarism."*

Interestingly, only P13 and P18 reported that their schools had AI-specific policies. P13 talked about their school's policy: *"My school's also added a section in our code of conduct about AI, not using it [. . .] the gist of it is just not to use it."* P18 similarly reported that the school had an AI policy and it was enacted by blocking ChatGPT in school. These accounts suggest that in the absence of explicit AI policies, participants' schools defaulted to existing academic integrity and plagiarism frameworks to regulate ChatGPT. For our participants, this produced an environment of implicit prohibition, where ChatGPT was widely assumed to be disallowed, even when formal rules were unclear or nonexistent.

Classroom-Level Discouragement and Instructor Discretion. While many students reported that their schools did not have any explicit policies around using ChatGPT for schoolwork, some students told us that their teachers discouraged its use by making it a classroom rule to disallow the software. As P4 put it, *"I think [school-wide policies] might come later. I think since it's still relatively new, they haven't made any policies on it. I think a lot of times when students would bring it up, teachers would discourage it."*

Of the eight participants who spoke about the existence of a classroom policy around ChatGPT, the most common theme was that teachers enacted a policy that discouraged use. Indeed, four participants mentioned that English teachers enforced strict rules against AI usage and instructed students not to use ChatGPT, as it was seen as a form of cheating. P15 succinctly summarized this stance: *"English teachers instructed students not to use it and to just come up with your own answers."* P14 elaborated further on this perspective, highlighting that her English

department took a stringent approach to AI usage because of their graduation requirement to write a paper in 11th grade. Using AI in this context was considered cheating and undermined the graduation requirement.

Two participants (P9 and P16) reported having a teacher whose discouragement of use was more nuanced than a blanket ban. P9 reported that their teacher allowed them to use ChatGPT for assistance—that is, when the final product was still a majority of the human's work—*"I heard one teacher said that we can use it to get an idea to start a draft, but we can't just completely copy it."* While P16 discussed that their teachers were not opposed to its use just as long as the students had an understanding of the output: *"Our teachers would talk about it and they would explain if you're going to use it in this way and make sure that you're still getting your understanding of it."*

Overall, participants' accounts of classroom-level governance of ChatGPT were highly discretionary and uneven. Many referenced situations where teachers discouraged its use in the name of academic integrity. The boundaries of acceptable use varied across classrooms, positioning individual instructors as de facto policy makers in the absence of school-wide guidance.

5.2 Students Prefer AI Policies That Support Assistive Use

We asked participants what their ideal school policy was with regard to ChatGPT's use in school. Participants described a clear preference for policies that allowed ChatGPT as an assistive tool while preventing it from replacing their own work. Views on acceptable use were shaped by instructional support and classroom context.

Assistive Use, Not Reliance. Eleven participants shared their thoughts. The majority of these eight participants advocated for ChatGPT's use in the realm of assistance rather than outright completion of assignments. This assertion emphasizes the tool's supportive function rather than a replacement for academic engagement. As P15 stated, *"There's a difference between asking for help and then just getting the straight-up answer."* Several participants emphasized the value of using ChatGPT to generate ideas or navigate specific conceptual roadblocks. P6, for instance, noted that ChatGPT use was *"allowed for general ideas,"* which suggested that inspiration drawn from ChatGPT was permissible if the core intellectual work remained the student's own. The emphasis on understanding content through personal effort in these ideal policies was reinforced by P16, and echoed by P17, who placed importance on the process of problem-solving, stating, *"if you can't explain to me how to do it, then I don't think that that should count because you didn't try."* However, she tempered this stance by acknowledging that utilizing ChatGPT to overcome difficulty at a specific point in the learning process was acceptable. In her words, *"if you really just got stuck at this one part, you keep getting stuck at this part and you just can't get through that, then that's fine because you were at least trying to understand it."* This nuanced perspective recognizes the importance of genuine effort and understanding, while allowing for reasonable ChatGPT assistance to facilitate progression in a student's learning journey.

A smaller group expressed contrasting views. Two participants felt that ChatGPT should be banned in school because there was no acceptable use for it. On the other end of the spectrum, P11 supported unrestricted use, indicating no need for regulation. Meanwhile, P5 offered a more policy-oriented take, framing ChatGPT use as analogous to plagiarism: *"My policy would be that if it's used, it has to be cited, and it can't be used unless you're quoting it. When you quote a book, you can't just take a phrase and put it in the middle of your essay without quotation marks. I think if you're going to use ChatGPT, either you take the numbers and the dates it gives you on the topic, but if it gives an opinion, you would have to properly cite it in order to use it, because it's not your own words."* This analogy highlights the ethical dimension of using AI-generated content in academic work.

Perceived Legitimacy of ChatGPT Depends on Instructional Support. Beyond the general emphasis on "assistive" rather than "substitutive" use, several students tied the acceptability of ChatGPT use to the level of academic support provided by their teachers. Three participants—who all hailed from lower-resource schools—reported that their perceptions regarding the acceptability of utilizing ChatGPT were closely associated with the level of academic support provided by their teachers. P7 encapsulated the sentiment when she said, *"I would be*

okay with [students using ChatGPT] if their teacher's not really helping." This sentiment was expanded upon by P12, who contextualized the appropriateness of ChatGPT use within the educational environment, particularly in classes where independent research was essential due to limited teacher support: *"If it's a class where [...] the teacher isn't giving you the research to complete something, you have to look it up on your own, I think that would be an appropriate time for ChatGPT."* These quotes underscore the perception that the acceptability of using ChatGPT was contingent upon the availability of adequate teacher support. Indeed, the lack of teacher support was the reason P11 felt comfortable using ChatGPT to assist with her computer science coursework—she did not understand what was going on otherwise.

In one notable response, P6 discussed how ChatGPT would be acceptable in situations where there was adequate teacher support, but the teacher struggled to provide effective explanations. P6 derived this perspective from his observations of other students at school: *"A lot of kids rely on it just to the fact that a lot of the teachers can't teach [because the] teachers are freshly new. So, a lot of kids just rely on it because it's easy to use and it's accessible to everybody."* These sentiments reflected the shifting dynamics of the educational landscape: amid perceptions of inadequate teaching support, participating students viewed ChatGPT as a potentially acceptable resource to bridge gaps in instructional guidance.

Taken together, students articulated a shared normative distinction between assistive and substitutive uses of ChatGPT, while diverging sharply on where that boundary should lie. These differences reflected not only personal values but also uneven access to instructional support, underscoring how perceptions of "acceptable" AI use are shaped by broader educational inequalities rather than uniform standards.

6 Finding 2: Student Perceptions and Responses to GenAI Detection & Rule Enforcement

Students reported that schools used a mix of technical monitoring tools and uneven disciplinary policies to detect and respond to ChatGPT use. In response, students developed a range of strategies to manage risk and continue using AI in ways they deemed acceptable.

6.1 Students' Understandings of ChatGPT Detection Practices

As discussed in Section 5, students reported that their schools generally discouraged the use of ChatGPT in the classroom. To monitor the usage of ChatGPT in the classroom, students reported that a number of technical tools were utilized to check their work for both ChatGPT augmentation and plagiarism in a broader sense.

GenAI Cheat Checkers. Nine students expressed that their schools utilized some type of AI cheat checking tool. P11 stated *"I know a lot of teachers do use AI checkers."* P7 mentioned their AP Biology course used turnitin.com[2] to catch ChatGPT content. P14 and P16 spoke of how their schools *"utilize[d] Google"* to do the same, as P14 explained that *"Google Classroom tells you if something was AI generated."* P15 expressed frustration with scores of false ChatGPT usage accusations enabled by the AI cheat checkers' false-positive rate. They noted that *"these are students that she's known for most of the school year, and even her favorites are getting false positives."*

However, out of the nine participants who reported that their teachers used an AI detection tool, only two mentioned that their teachers decided to discontinue its use. Both P5 and P15 reported that the decision was prompted by an excessive number of false positives, which caused frustration for all parties. The remaining seven participants did not report a removal of the tool, indicating that teachers had varied perceptions of an AI cheat checker's effectiveness and reliability.

Complicating matters further, when faced with a discrepancy between the output of an AI cheat checker and a student's word, teachers could have unintentionally favored the student they knew or liked, as mentioned by two

[2]Turnitin.com is an online platform utilized by educational institutions to assess the originality of submitted academic papers by comparing them against a vast database of previously submitted work, academic publications, and internet sources, helping educators identify potential instances of plagiarism.

participants. This dynamic introduced a subjective element into the assessment process, potentially leading to discrepancies in how academic integrity issues were addressed. Indeed, this situation may echo the experience of P13's friend who had to revise a portion of her essay while maintaining her innocence to peers, suggesting the potential for misunderstandings and unjust outcomes.

Students in our study perceived AI cheat checkers as uneven and contested enforcement mechanisms. Their inconsistent deployment and high false-positive rates introduced disparities in how students were monitored and disciplined, raising concerns about fairness and reliability in algorithmic governance of academic integrity.

Perceptions of Surveillance and Academic Integrity Tools. Eight participants exhibited a range of perceptions regarding surveillance and academic integrity tools used in their educational environments, contextualized by various methods of checking up on students employed by teachers. P7 viewed surveillance and academic integrity tools such as turnitin.com positively and appreciated them as mechanisms to ensure students were completing their own work. This perspective highlights the perceived value of these tools in upholding academic standards. However, other participants expressed mixed or negative feelings. P14 initially indicated indifference, stating that it *"doesn't matter to me"* if these tools are utilized, but later conveyed fears of being falsely accused of cheating. This sentiment of concern over potential false accusations from AI cheat checkers or other surveillance tools triggering false positives was echoed by several other participants. P13 succinctly explained this concern, stating that submitting an assignment was *"a little bit risky right now; you have the risk of accusing a student who's actually written something, and then that just discredits their work."* Compounding the issue, P15 expressed frustration over increased software-based surveillance measures, such as GoGuardian[3], which they reported their teacher used in an attempt to counteract AI cheat checker *"false positives."* This further exacerbated their discontent with the surveillance environment at school.

To contextualize these perceptions, four participants provided insights into both traditional and software-based surveillance methods employed by teachers to ensure academic integrity. These students discussed how teachers used traditional anti-cheating techniques, such as manually tracking students' progress for irregularities in content mastery and closely monitoring their writing styles. P12 noted, *"she knows if you use [ChatGPT] or not,"* and later mentioned that *"apparently, every teacher studies how you write your essays, or every English teacher."* Similarly, P6 observed that *"teachers keep track of your writing."* P4 also mentioned that their teacher walked around the classroom to monitor student activity on their Chromebooks in conjunction with AI cheat checkers.

On the technical side, P12 expressed concern about potential repercussions from using ChatGPT on her school Chromebook, although it was unclear if the site was officially blocked. In the same vein, P4 believed that teachers could restrict the number and type of tabs a student could open. Complementing P4's perception, P15 reported that their teacher used GoGuardian to monitor and manage students' online activities on school-issued devices in real-time—as discussed earlier in this section.

The implications of increased surveillance of students and use of academic integrity tools in a "post-ChatGPT" educational environment complicated our participants' feelings about having their work and activities tracked at school. The increased scrutiny of their submissions instilled a chilling effect, where participants felt concerned that their authentic work might be mistakenly identified as AI-generated, complicating trust relationships between students, teachers, and school-deployed monitoring and AI detection tools.

6.2 Students' Perceptions of Inconsistent and Uneven Consequences for ChatGPT Use

Despite the implementation of an embargo on ChatGPT, whether through explicit school policies on plagiarism or directives from individual teachers, participants reported widely varying enforcement and consequences.

[3]GoGuardian is a software tool used by schools to monitor and manage students' online activity on school-issued devices. It blocks access to certain websites and applications [1].

Some students shared stories of clear disciplinary action. Eight participants reported peers who had faced consequences for using ChatGPT, which were typically treated as academic integrity violations. For instance, P14 described a situation where a large number of students in her class had been caught using ChatGPT via Google Classroom detection—*"the class got in trouble"* and students who cheated were given zeros on their assignments. Similarly, P18 recalled an incident where a student generated a five-page essay using ChatGPT and was subsequently given in-school detention.

Others described more lenient responses. P6 and P13 noted that peers caught using ChatGPT were simply required to speak with their teachers about their alleged illegitimate use, without formal punishment. P11 added that the most significant repercussion they had seen was a teacher expressing frustration with the entire class.

Still, three students indicated that there was a lack of enforcement, noting that no peers had been accused or caught using ChatGPT. This lack of enforcement could be attributed to the absence of detection tools for identifying ChatGPT usage, as these participants were unaware of any such tools being employed in their schools.

These accounts illustrated the inconsistent application of ChatGPT-use policies. While some students witnessed serious consequences, others described minimal or nonexistent enforcement. This inconsistency highlights the need for clearer and more consistently enforced policies to uphold academic integrity and ensure fair, equitable educational practices in the face of evolving AI capabilities.

6.3 Students' Strategies for Evading Consequences for ChatGPT Use

Despite efforts to restrict their use, students persisted in using ChatGPT in educational settings. To circumvent restrictions, students reported that they devised various novel workarounds. Some of these workarounds were simple. P12 mentioned a classmate who used their smartphone to access ChatGPT during an in-school assessment, bypassing restrictions on school-issued Chromebooks. The most prevalent workaround, however, involved augmenting the AI's output to blend it with their own work.

Augment Output by Hand. Eight participants talked about a range of augmentation practices when using ChatGPT for their academic work, varying from minimal to significant augmentation of AI-generated content. P11 adopted what appears to be the most prevalent strategy of keeping the AI-generated main idea intact while rephrasing it into her own words, a method echoed in the interviews of P1, P9, P11 and P14. P9 highlighted that her peers *"change up the words and some of the ideas and sentences"* to make the content more original and evade AI detection tools. She reasoned that *"if you type in the same thing and ChatGPT will give you the same thing, and if each student will get the same thing, everyone's going to know that they cheated."* Similarly, P5 acknowledged that one of her friends used ChatGPT and edited the output to sound more *"natural."* Lastly, P6 confidently claimed that *"pretty much everybody in English [class]"* employed this method of augmentation where the output was edited to make it sound more natural.

For those who used ChatGPT for assistance, a strategy was to revise the outputs of ChatGPT into their own voice. For instance, P18 employed ChatGPT after he had written the essay to correct mistakes; he then subsequently revised the output to ensure it maintained his personal voice. This was an example of minimal use as the inputs into ChatGPT were the student's own work and the output was further edited by the student.

Augment Output Computationally. In one notable case, P6 reported that *"a lot of kids would pretty much have [ChatGPT] write their essay, and then I think they said they would use a paraphrase tool."* P6 outlined a sophisticated software pipeline for output augmentation that many of his peers utilized. Students first employed an AI to generate their essay and then used a paraphrase tool, called Quillbot [3], to reword the entire text, making it appear as their own. Subsequently, these students ran the text through an AI cheat checker. If flagged, they then used Grammarly [2] to paraphrase the text once more to circumvent detection.

This process, which P6 credited to TikTok, eliminated the need for a student to manually rewrite or engage with the ChatGPT-generated text. Instead, students optimized their approach to evade AI detection computationally,

marking a notable departure from the rest of the participants' reports on how they—or their peers—evaded detection by rewriting the text through their own effort. This indicated a growing sophistication in how students integrated ChatGPT into their academic routines, employing multiple platforms to mask ChatGPT involvement.

Augment Output and Preemptive Disclosure as a Strategy of Legitimization. In another singular example, P18 informed his teachers via email that he intended to use ChatGPT strictly for error correction purposes and would then refine the ChatGPT outputs. He encouraged his teachers to run AI detection tools *"if they think something's fishy"* in his submission. By disclosing his use of ChatGPT ahead of time, and encouraging the use of AI detection tools if the teacher found the submission suspicious, P18 aimed to demonstrate transparency and assure his teachers of his commitment to academic integrity. Thus, he preemptively guarded against consequences for having used ChatGPT.

Across these strategies, our participants demonstrated growing sophistication in navigating institutional restrictions on ChatGPT. Rather than disengaging from AI tools, they adapted their practices—through rewriting, automation, or selective transparency—to minimize risk, revealing how enforcement regimes shaped not *if* students used AI, but *how* they did so.

7 Discussion

Our study revealed that student participants navigated a patchwork AI governance landscape, where acceptable ChatGPT use was shaped by teacher discretion, legacy academic integrity norms, and their own judgments of what was permissible. Enforcement was uneven, with inconsistent disciplinary consequences and the use of monitoring tools, prompting participants to develop varied strategies to manage risk and evade detection rather than disengaging from AI tools. Although this study captured an early phase of ChatGPT adoption, these dynamics are likely to persist, and intensify, as schools contend with increasingly capable AI systems, including the purportedly more capable "agentic" models [4].

7.1 Informal Governance and Youth Policy-Making for GenAI

Our findings showed that the absence of explicit or consistent school-wide guidance (Section 5.1) did not produce a regulatory vacuum. Instead, students in our study independently and consistently converged on a shared distinction between assistive and substitutive GenAI use (Section 5.2): using ChatGPT to support thinking was legitimate; using it to replace thinking was not. This reflects a governance gap and the notion of *patchwork governance* of digital platforms, where communities and individuals develop and enforce standards outside the centralized moderation of the platform [30, 100]. Here, that process operates within an institutional setting where students function as de facto GenAI governance actors, producing norms grounded in peer expectations, classroom dynamics, perceptions of instructional quality, and moral reasoning about effort, learning, and fairness.

Our findings thus suggest that ambiguity in AI policy may be harmful. It actively shaped whose use was legitimized, whose was penalized, and who bore the consequences of misinterpretation, raising concerns about equity, accountability, and procedural justice. Indeed, this redistribution of GenAI governance placed the burden of ethical decision-making on students, while the authority remained centralized. This trend is reflected in some of the largest school districts in the country. For example, Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) AI guidance encourages high school students to use GenAI for formative feedback, while its approved tools registry classifies major GenAI platforms as unavailable for student use, with no mechanism to reconcile the contradiction [91, 92]. This pattern aligns with classic accounts of ceremonial adoption [68], where governance is signaled but not operationalized. Guidance, tool registries, and enforcement coexist without coordination, signaling AI governance but shifting interpretive responsibility onto students and teachers.

Policy Takeaway. Districts should audit policies for internal coherence (e.g., ensure recommended GenAI uses are actually allowed within approved tool lists). For example, CPS-style guidance [92] could be operationalized

by pairing recommended uses (e.g., GenAI for draft feedback) with an approved tool pathway or classroom-level exception process. State frameworks, such as California's guidance on "AI as an enhancer, not a substitute" [19], offer a starting point, but require local translation into enforceable classroom rules and documentation practices. Additionally, schools should move beyond generic academic integrity frameworks and adopt discipline-specific, participatory AI policies recognizing students as AI governance stakeholders.

7.2 Why Detection and GenAI Cheat Checkers Fail as Governance Mechanisms

Institutional responses to ChatGPT, as experienced by our participants, frequently relied on GenAI content detectors and other technical enforcement mechanisms (Sections 6.1 and 6.3), despite documented unreliability and bias [31, 62], reflecting a governance approach misaligned with responsible AI principles [36, 51, 53, 56]. Rather than deterring misuse, GenAI detection tools and capricious GenAI rule enforcement (Section 6.2) incentivized concealment (Section 6.3), reinforcing an adversarial dynamic between students and institutions.[4]

From a governance standpoint, these tools are unlikely to achieve their intended purpose and may be harmful. They risk expanding surveillance infrastructures under the banner of academic integrity [47, 60, 63] while undermining trust, student agency, and student privacy. Indeed, K-12 schools often lack the resources to effectively vet their educational technology for potential privacy harms [21]. Importantly, our findings do not imply schools lack alternatives; surveillance-based GenAI rule enforcement is not inevitable. Detection-based governance presupposes that GenAI use is a discrete, identifiable act separable from student work. This assumption is increasingly misaligned with contemporary software, where GenAI is embedded as an ambient feature within everyday productivity tools (e.g., Microsoft 365 [69], Google Workspace [42], Adobe Reader [5]), shaping writing, revision, and research without a clear boundary to a standalone chatbot. The relevant governance question shifts from *if* GenAI was used to *how* student understanding is demonstrated when GenAI mediation is routine.

Policy Takeaway. Schools should reconsider the use of GenAI content detectors and resist enforcement regimes premised on pervasive monitoring or automated behavioral inference. Beyond well-documented concerns about reliability and equity [31, 62], these approaches depend on an increasingly untenable premise that GenAI use can be cleanly identified and separated from student work. Currently, many state-level K-12 policies continue to rely on the outmoded assumption that anything computer-mediated can be treated as GenAI-free [26, 65, 74, 78, 104]; states should revisit these policies to avoid scarce resources being spent on ineffective GenAI detection regimes. Policy makers could instead support guidance and resources that help schools critically evaluate GenAI tools, e.g., a universal checklist, and revisit how to evaluate learning outcomes since GenAI use is increasingly harder to distinguish. This could be a boon for smaller districts who do not have the resources to generate bespoke GenAI policies.

8 Limitations and Future Work

Our qualitative sample is small and geographically constrained to the United States. Institutional policies around AI use vary widely across school systems and national contexts, meaning our data may not reflect the full range of classroom practices globally. To extend these findings, future work could employ larger-scale, nationally representative surveys to provide a more comprehensive view of students' experiences with ChatGPT. It could also include students from more diverse racial, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. Additionally, researchers could investigate how students in other countries and educational systems experience and interpret AI governance, enabling cross-cultural comparisons of institutional policies and classroom norms.

Additionally, researchers could examine how other generative AI tools—such as Gemini [41] or Claude [7], which were less popular or not yet available when this study was conducted—shape students' experiences and

[4]Engaging in a Pyrrhic "arms race" with students distracts from more pedagogically-aligned solutions, as even outdated models can evade detection [89].

classroom dynamics. Future work can also engage teachers, administrators, and policy makers to inform schools' GenAI policies. Indeed, we invite the FAccT community to build on this work to advance equitable AI governance and interrogate how AI can support student-AI collaboration while minimizing misuse. Finally, comparing AI governance across middle school, high school, and college contexts could also inform best practices for AI integration across educational settings.

9 Conclusion

Our study of 18 high school students found that participants' experiences of ChatGPT use were characterized by GenAI governance that was largely patchworked and implicit. We captured their perspectives during a "natural experiment" in which schools were integrating ChatGPT before governance practices had stabilized. Students navigated unwritten AI rules, shaped by teacher discretion and legacy academic integrity norms, and had to evolve their understanding of acceptable GenAI use. GenAI rules were uneven and inconsistently enforced, powered by monitoring and AI detection technologies. In response, students developed creative strategies to manage risk and circumvent GenAI detection. These accounts highlighted students' limited agency and the unequal distribution of responsibility and accountability in current GenAI governance regimes. Based on our findings, we suggest that effective AI governance in schools should treat students as active participants in shaping norms, provide clear guidance aligned with learning goals, and move beyond surveillance or detection-focused GenAI rule enforcement in an era where AI is embedded in everyday work.

Endmatter

Generative AI Usage Statement: No generative AI tools were used to write this paper.

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A Interview Protocol

Below are the relevant sections of the High Schooler Privacy Attitudes Interview Guide.

Part 1: Opening

My name is [NAME] and I'm a researcher from [REDACTED]. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with me.

[For under 18 participants] Let's take a minute to review both your parental permission and assent form for the interview.

[For over 18 participants] Let's take a minute to review your consent form.

I'm part of a research project that is studying the use of educational technologies in schools, and, more specifically, student privacy attitudes and practices online. I'd like to talk to you about your experiences using EdTech tools in school and what sorts of websites you visit online. It's okay if you don't know the answers to any of the questions — we're not trying to test you. In addition, you do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

I'd like to record this Zoom call so that my team can create a transcript of our conversation. Your identity will be kept confidential, and any quotes we use – in research papers or presentations – will not have your name attached to it. You can stop the interview at any time.

Do we have your permission to record the call?

Part 2: Student Background

To start, I just want to get some background information about you, your school, and what technology you use in school. Often called EdTech products.

- Could you tell me a bit about yourself and your school?
  - What are your preferred pronouns?
  - If you are comfortable answering, do you identify as trans?
  - If you are comfortable answering, do you identify as non-binary?
  - What grade are you in?
- Do you do other extracurricular activities?
  - Do you have to provide the school any extra information because of your extracurricular activities?
- What subjects do you take in school? E.g., AP Bio, College Prep English
- Does your school use a lot of technology?
  - What sorts of technology do you use in school?
  - Do you have a school issued device?
    - If so, what is it and how often do you use it compared to your peers?
    - Do you ever use your own device(s) at school? When and why?
- Going through your class schedule, what sorts of technology products do you use in each class?
  - What are their names and what do they do?
  - How often do you use them?
  - Tell me what you use these for? In-class activities? Assignments? Grades? Homework? Anything else?
  - Have you ever used an assistive AI like Grammarly in school?
    - What about outside of school?
- Have you ever used a generative AI like ChatGPT in school?
  - What about outside of school?
  - Tell me about school policies around using generative AI for schoolwork like ChatGPT?
    - Are there policies around cheating?
    - What do you think about these policies? Are there any steps you take to ensure your work can be checked for being your own and not that of a generative AI?
- Have you seen ChatGPT on TikTok/social media

Part 4: EdTech and Monitoring

Great, now you may be aware that EdTech products allow teachers to monitor student activity and coursework. In this next section, I'd like to dig into your experiences and views on this – if applicable. Again, if you need clarification for a term or sentence feel free to ask – this isn't a test!

- Are there other technologies that you feel schools use to monitor students' information or actions online? If so, could you describe them?
  - Are you familiar with any of the following products: Gaggle, Bark, Securly, GoGuardian, LanSchool
- Circling back to generative AI, has there been an incident where a student was accused of using generative AI on an assignment?
  - If so, how did this make you feel?

Part 5: Privacy and Data Collection From EdTech Tools

Moving on, this section will probe your feelings about data collection and the tools used in the classroom. If you don't use these tools just say "I don't use them." Again, if you need clarification for a term or sentence feel free to ask – this isn't a test!

- How do you feel about assistive AI tools like Grammarly collecting your data?
- How do you feel about generative AI tools like ChatGPT collecting your data?

B Codebook With Quotes

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The codebook table with quotes is a landscape table and starts on the next page.

Table 3. Codebook With Quotes. Parent codes are in bold.

Code	Description	Example Quote
Low Consequences		
Data Collection	Students view that there are few consequences for their data being collected by AI	"I think it's also fine because I mostly use it for school." (P2)
Lack Of School AI Policy	Schools do not have an official AI policy	"I think since it's still relatively new, they haven't made any policies on it." (P4)
First Exposure		
First Exposure	How students were introduced to ChatGPT	"I think my mom sent me a TikTok. I think that's what happened." (P16)
Usage Of ChatGPT		
Substantive Generation	Students use ChatGPT to generate content that may be a (partial) solution to the assignment	"Writing emails to troop leaders or my captain is super easy now. I just enter a prompt of what I want and it'll create a formal business email. " (P1)
Explanation	Students use ChatGPT to explain concepts	"I don't understand physics at all. So I had to use ChatGPT to understand physics. And it just gave me the equation breakdown." (P6)
Light Assistance	Students use ChatGPT for assistive, not generative, tasks	"I couldn't figure out how to word a certain phrase or sentence, I would use it to help me reword it." (P11)
Amusement	Students use ChatGPT for entertainment	"I would still tinker around with it because I thought it was pretty funny." (P15)
Usage At School	Examples where students use ChatGPT at school	"So I started using it a lot for my assignments [at school]." (P1)
Usage At Home	Examples where students use ChatGPT at home	"Oh, heck yeah. [I use ChatGPT at home] for emails really." (P1)
School Attitudes Towards ChatGPT		
Existence Of School Policy	Details the surrounding school policies on AI	"My English teacher is the only one that's ever brought it up, 'Don't use ChatGPT.'" (P12)
Encouragement Of Use	Examples where the school or teachers encourage AI use	"In one of my classes, actually, CS, we explored a little bit with ChatGPT. " (P3)
Technical Tools		

Table 3 continued from previous page

Code	Description	Example Quote
AI Checkers	Discuss use of or feelings about AI checkers	"I've gotten concerned because I don't want to get caught, obviously. The new applications such as Zero AI or ZeroGPT have come out saying that they can detect it, but the problem I found is those AI checkers are really bad. Someone uploaded the constitution into a checker and it said the entire constitution was plagiarized by AI. " (P1)
Surveillance Of Students	Students discuss how teachers surveil them in school as it relates to AI	"Through GoGuardian, she saw [students] working on it, it would say that it was by ChatGPT." (P15)
Student Attitudes Towards ChatGPT		
Ownership Of Work	Students discuss "owning their work" when they use ChatGPT	"It's not authentic when you use a robot to write how you feel or your story." (P6)
Perception Of ChatGPT Intelligence	Students perception of ChatGPT intelligence/capabilities	"I thought it was a great tool before using it. But then after using it I realized it wasn't so great, because especially in math." (P2)
Philosophical Stances		
Only Assistance	Student position of restricting ChatGPT to assistance only	"You could have it check your grammar, but having it change your entire essay is wrong."
Students' Ideal School Policy	Students discuss what their ideal AI school policy	"I feel like it would be better to be treated as more of a translator, or a summarizer. I don't think that it's something that should be used to write your assignments for you, or to really do your work for you." (P5)
Negative Emotions Of Usage	Students discuss negative feelings they have towards AI usage	"No, I really don't trust AI. We're really scared to use AI, especially on paper." (P14)
Cheating		
Accused Of Cheating	Students discuss cheating accusations involving ChatGPT	"When we were writing our personal statements, my English teacher had mentioned that someone was using an AI to write their whole personal statement, and so then she got upset at the class." (P11)

Table 3 continued from previous page

Code	Description	Example Quote
Fears Of Cheating	Students discuss fears cheating accusations involving ChatGPT	"I'll still go back and correct it, because I know a lot of teachers do use AI checkers, so that's a worry." (P11)
Is Not Cheating	Students identify what constitutes as NOT cheating with AI	"I also think that having it check your grammar is fine." (P6)
Is Cheating	Students identify what constitutes as cheating with AI	"It feels like cheating when... they just use it to immediately solve their problem." (P15)
Workarounds		
Augment Output	Students discuss augmenting ChatGPT's output to avoid detection	"I usually do it myself because when I ask it to make it more casual, tone it down, it becomes way too casual, like I'm talking to my friend. So I have to manually edit it." (P1)