The Importance of AI Education
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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is slowly but surely growing from its nascent stages as a black-box, all-knowing technical phenomenon in STEM, to an incredibly impactful tool that is being extensively implemented in all aspects of our society. It is prevalent in our day-to-day lives- like asking Alexa for the weather or Google Maps to take you home. This is easily seen, for instance, in local science fairs where Middle/High Schoolers are using such technology to assist in solving problems they are passionate about, across a broad spectrum of applications. My own journey in AI started in middle school, where as part of an all-girls FIRST robotics team, we used a computer-vision algorithm to detect and help improve the mental health of astronauts on long distance space flights, hand-in-hand with behavioral scientists from NASA. This project placed 2nd at the 2019 FLL World Championships, inspiring me to continue exploring the many ways AI could be used in our world for the better.

This summer, as a rising sophomore, I had the privilege to attend an intensive, AI-centered program through Stanford University. The incredibly enlightening experience I had there, as well as the plethora of new opportunities that opened up for me, got me thinking- is there a way to improve accessibility to AI? This is all the more important for today's youth, since not only is this technology affecting how we go about our day, but it is setting up a world of unexplored territory that they are inherently tasked with the responsibility to lead.

Thus, it felt only fair that all of us had the same sort of exposure to accessible, impactful AI education. Without this spreading of awareness, enabling us as youth to understand what the "transformed future" I speak of could look like, it is impossible to bring AI in our society to its fullest potential in an informed, exploratory manner. Bytes of AI is an example of a curriculum that strives to plant the seed of inspiration allowing anyone to learn of the infinite possibilities and run with it. Since AI itself is so ubiquitous in its application- be it in the criminal justice system, language processing, mathematics, or assisting medical professionals in delicate surgeries-, the way we approach AI education must also encompass such diversity in perspective. By opening up AI's potential in fields ranging from the arts to the sciences and beyond, while presenting it in an approachable way, Bytes of AI achieves just that.

What is so beautiful about the whole concept of Bytes of AI is that it shows us just how all-encompassing AI is. One could be interested in data structures and the human sciences, and go on to explore computational biology, finding the intersection between the two. Or perhaps they are passionate about social justice, and work towards making AI in our policing systems more equitable. In short, the scope is endless. I truly believe that AI can be for all of us, regardless of background, interest, or goals, and that we should embrace it for all that it has to offer. We need this wide range of approaches- especially important for the underserved, unrepresented population- that helps mitigate systemic bias in the AI system, truly creating and putting it to work for everyone. Bytes of AI, or a focus on AI education in general, is a catalyst for innovative thinking and inspired research, opening up opportunities and equipping a generation of thinkers with the knowledge and inspiration that might just change the world.