

Dear Student,

Picture this. You are scrolling on social media when you see this ad:

“Hey students: Your professor doesn’t want you to know this...,” the eye-catching advertisement reads, before introducing a new artificial intelligence tool capable of performing countless tasks. These undertakings range widely, from crafting literature reviews and extracting data from PDFs to identifying shortcomings in scholarly literature and drafting entire sections of academic papers. There is seemingly no assignment this AI platform cannot perform. As these capabilities stream across the top of the clip, a young person your age chews potato chips, casually, in the background. Like a television show or a sporting event, research, too, is now something one can watch play out passively before their very eyes, courtesy of AI and all the technology offers.

This short video, which has amassed hundreds of thousands of views since it first surfaced online in the fall of 2025, is a single option in a vast ecosystem within which anyone can read, write, and research with AI.

While AI is and will become even more useful and important, such tools overlook a key dimension of learning: educating oneself is not effortless. It is through the energy we expend, the time we invest, and the struggles we overcome that we acquire new skills, broaden our intellectual horizons, and experience personal growth. Learning is not a destination to be reached as quickly as possible. It is a journey, during which we gradually hone multiple kinds of intelligence. But what types of thinking are central to learning?

At **Polygence**, we believe in nurturing numerous forms of intellect. This conviction is captured in our name, with poly meaning “multifaceted,” and gence referring to “intelligence.”

When it comes to the art of thinking, three kinds of intelligence stand out.

- There is critical thinking, which enables us to assess information, ask insightful questions, and advance original arguments. In an age where AI promises immediate answers, critical thinking equips us to appraise evidence, evaluate claims, and generate new knowledge.

If critical thinking invites us to scrutinize what is, creative thinking encourages us to question what could be. Whether approaching enduring questions with fresh perspectives, placing different fields of study into dialogue, or reimagining the shape research may assume, creative thinking goes hand-in-hand with critical thinking and enables us to draw connections,

spark discussion, and speak to wider audiences.

- Undergirding both of these practices is comparative thinking. In a highly interconnected world, it is incumbent upon us to think across borders. In traversing boundaries, placing the past and present into conversation, and reflecting on the relationship between our academic work and lived experience, we can acquire a deeper understanding of our individual interests and global context.

Together, these skills form the foundation of a new Polygence initiative: **The Thinking Lab.**

The Thinking Lab is first and foremost a community where one can cultivate lifelong skills, at an early age, in the company of peers who are passionate about expanding their horizons, engaging with others, and making a difference in the world around them. At the center of this interactive experience are a series of workshops. Led by our mentors on a monthly basis, these lively sessions will cover pressing topics that will prepare you to confidently embrace your own future. Among the subjects we will address are “How to think critically,” “How to do self reflection,” “How to ask good questions,” “How to change your mind,” “How to disagree without being disagreeable,” and “How to think collaboratively.” In navigating these topics, Thinking Lab participants will sharpen their abilities to think critically, independently, and reflectively. These skills, in turn, will better prepare you not only for college, but for a life of learning well beyond it. The art of thinking, after all, is not limited to students. It empowers us all to tackle bigger questions, including who we want to be in the world, how we relate to one another, and what sort of society we wish to live in.

As educators devoted to developing a new generation of thinkers, we hope you will join us. Much more than a series of regular workshops, The Thinking Lab will serve as a dynamic home for students who wish to practice the art of thinking with others from around the world at a point in time when it has never been more important to do so. We look forward to seeing you in The Thinking Lab, and helping you develop the knowledge and skills the future demands!

Happy thinking,

*Dr. Andrew Simon*