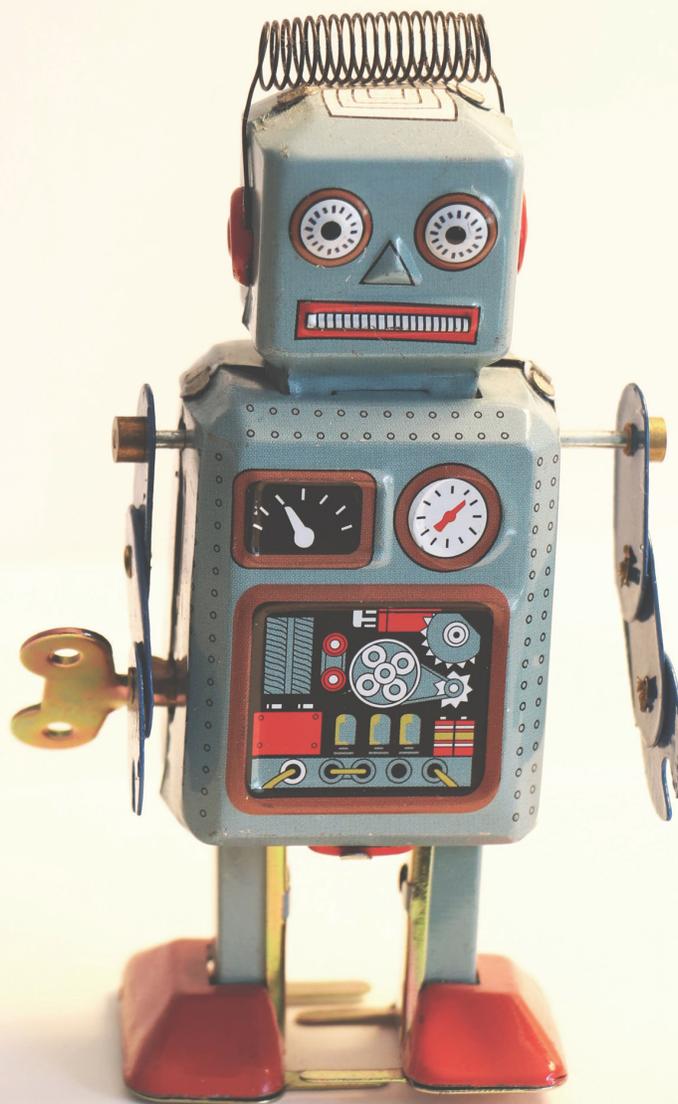# transformation
R&D
REPORT

VOL 1   SUMMER 2023

a people-centered organization
LIVING IN AN AI WORL

VENTURES

Mount Vernon Ventures is a Transformation R&D Company, an integral part of The Mount Vernon School Organization, based in Atlanta, Georgia. Ventures has a team of industry recognized experts and practitioners partnering with educators and leaders all over the world to strengthen brand identity, deepen organizational innovation, scale community impact, and build a transformative curriculum.

Mount Vernon Ventures publishes a quarterly Transformation R&D Report, analyzing impactful topics in education for leaders and professionals navigating a complex world. Exploring the drivers, signals, and trends affecting the education sector, we serve schools by conducting extensive research, synthesizing ideas, identifying their implications, amplifying their potential, and providing recommendations for any school to consider.

a people-centered organization
LIVING IN AN AI WORL█

Lead Writer & Researcher: Jared Colley

Contributors: Katie Cain
Dr. Brett Jacobsen
Kristy Lundstrom
Ann Marsh Rutledge
Jennifer Santi
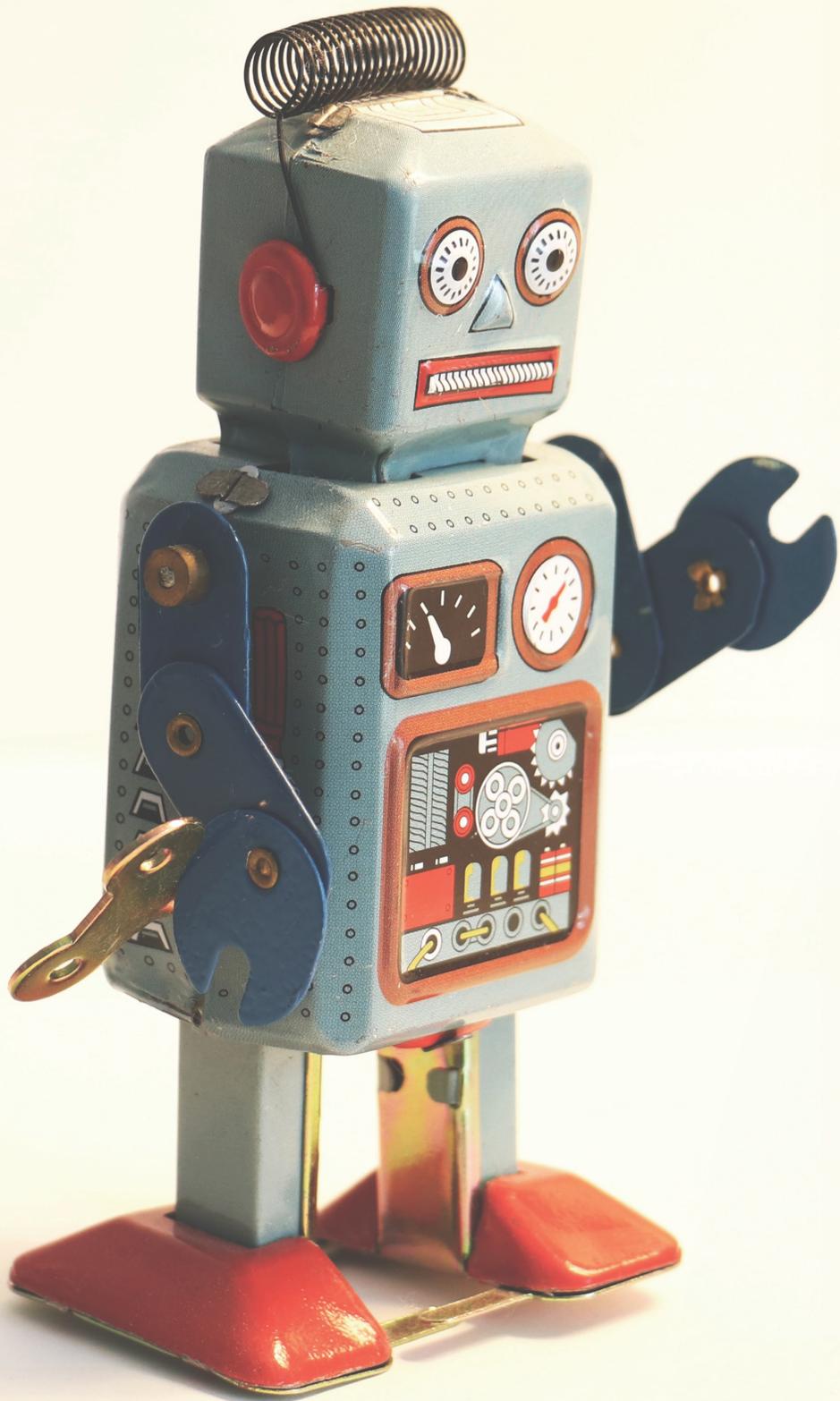
contents.

introduction.

Establishing the Context

Artificial Intelligence has been around since the latter half of the 20th century, but what is new is the fact that all of us will now have to respond to its expanded presence in our devices, homes, schools, and organizations. All of us will knowingly and inevitably experience the impact of AI. Some of us had the option, before this moment, to remain unaware of the fact that already much of this technology, on a less sophisticated scale, has been part of our lives for some time: think of auto-fill text features, voice assistants like Alexa, or adaptive tutoring programs like ALEKS. Still, when OpenAI, at the end of 2022, released its latest Large Language Model, ChatGPT, for public use, the discomfort of the uncanny was felt by many of us. It was a startling, but familiar, feeling whose reverberations revived, for us, that same sense of dread we felt when, for the first time, we heard the news that a global pandemic was rapidly spreading across our planet.

Moments of technological acceleration and transformation demand sound judgment and strategic leadership because rapid technological shifts provoke a widespread sense of anxiety and trepidation, both in the workplace and in society at large. Leaders feel the discomfort as well, revealing the need to assess the situation with realistic frameworks that ground our perspective as people-centered leaders so misconceptions do not prevent us from seeing the opportunity in front of us—in this case, the opportunity for human capability, not to be replaced, but to be amplified and extended through new technological capacities.

Thinking about the rise of AI technologies in the context of an interconnected planet makes people's apprehensions all the more visceral.[1] What becomes clear is that this is not just about the arrival of AI. The vast knowledge repository called the internet also implies that "what you know" may be losing currency in the post-knowledge economy. And if machines are performing tasks, calculations, and scores of music equally as well as (and even better than) humans, and what you know carries less and less value, how are we as leaders facing this predicament from a people-centered perspective of care and collaboration?

As school leaders, we ensure that our organizational values, the principles and beliefs that guide the behavior and decision-making of an organization, serve as a foundation for creating a culture and a shared vision that aligns with the school's purpose and mission. We know leaders play a crucial role in establishing and communicating the values of their organization, as they are responsible for creating a culture that supports those beliefs and commitments. In this current context, leaders also need to put values into action when thinking about preparing for AI's impact on the learning organization's people, on an organization's plans for protection, on proposals for putting the technology into practice, and lastly, on questions for program offerings. Identifying the implications for people, protection, practice, and programs assists a leader when defining and shaping an organization's position in response to technologies like AI—a position rooted in the institution's cultivated values.

Every school of thought on how to respond to the rise of AI is grounded in certain values and assumptions. Where "Dystopians" see the threat of replacement, "Utopians" see opportunity to redefine ways that humans live. In between are "Technology Optimists" and "Productivity Skeptics," one betting on more tempered optimistic outcomes while the

other doubts whether technological assistance will really lead to an increase in meaningful impact. Depending on context, environment and the values we operate from, any of these are likely realities, but leaders who prioritize the human advantage will have the edge. Understanding not just what machines can do better but also what humans thrive at doing helps us maintain "Optimistic Realism" when identifying the opportunities before us.[2]

> **What becomes clear is that this is not just about the arrival of AI. The vast knowledge repository called the internet also implies that "what you know" may be losing currency in the post-knowledge economy.**

Thinking about implications through this lens makes the real concerns more clear: What can machines do better than humans? And what can humans do better than machines? But most importantly, what do humans need to learn and do to thrive in an age of intelligent technology? It demands us to take inventory of what we can do better as a biologically intelligent species, while also asking us to think more critically about why we require students to do certain things. Do we ask students to write only for the purpose of conveying information? If so, should we automate it with

generative Large Language Models like ChatGPT? Perhaps we also ask students to write because it gets them to slow down and think critically and reflectively, and we know how important that is to their identity development. Put this way, we can understand more precisely why humans will continue to write, paint, and score music, regardless of machinic capacities.

People-centered leaders also should consider Ruben Puentedura's SAMR model for determining the usefulness, purpose, and value of integrating new technologies like AI. Instead of asking which jobs will be replaced, for instance, we should consider what will AI technologies truly substitute for in terms of tasks and processes (not jobs and people). What can AI technologies augment or modify? And what processes, operations, or tasks might we redefine with the aid of cognitive technology? "This is not a race against machines," writes one author. "If we race against them, we lose. This is a race with the machines. You'll be paid in the future based on how well you work with robots."[3] Working well with machines will be an essential competency for thriving in the age of intelligent technology, meaning the combination of human excellence and technological acceleration is how we will get far in a race whose destination is a "life well-lived" in the age of AI. It is necessary to keep in mind that these machines demonstrate "artificial" intelligence, albeit superhuman at times, but intelligence that pertains to specific tasks, whereas what makes human intelligence "authentic" is that we can learn anything.[4] We shouldn't mistake one form of intelligence for the other, regardless of how fast and mesmerizing our computers can be.[5]