

AI in the High School Classroom

Side 1: getting your own time back. Side 2: what students do with it.

THE WHOLE MENTAL MODEL, IN ONE SENTENCE

It predicts plausible next words — it does not look things up. **Treat it as a brilliant, tireless student teacher who has read almost everything and remembers none of it precisely.** You would let that person draft your rubric. You would never let them file a grade or cite a source you have not read. That instinct is the whole policy.

THREE RULES BEFORE YOU TYPE ANYTHING

- **No student identifiers, ever.** No names, IDs, birthdates, IEP text, discipline or health notes. Describe instead: "a 10th grader reading two years below grade level." You lose nothing.
- **Use the tool your district approved.** Consumer and district-licensed accounts are different products with different data agreements. Ask which one has a signed student data privacy agreement.
- **Assume anything you paste may be retained.** If it would be a problem in a screenshot, do not paste it.

The four-part prompt

Most disappointing AI output comes from a one-line prompt. Write five sentences, not one.

Part	Ask yourself	Example
ROLE	Who should it be?	<i>You are a 9th grade biology teacher in a Title I school.</i>
TASK	What exactly do you want?	<i>Write a 5-question formative check on cell transport.</i>
CONTEXT	What does it need to know?	<i>Students struggled with osmosis. Reading levels vary widely.</i>
FORMAT	What should it look like?	<i>A table: question, DOK level, answer, common misconception.</i>

Then do the part almost nobody does: read the output and say what is wrong with it. "Too easy. Question 3 gives away the answer. Make it harder and add a diagram-based item." The second draft is where the value is. Iterate at least twice before you judge the tool.

Eight jobs to hand off first

Copy a starter prompt, then add your grade, standard, and context.

Job	Starter prompt
Differentiate a text	<i>Rewrite the passage below at four reading levels (6th, 8th, 10th, 12th grade). Keep all key content. Add a vocabulary support box for the lowest level.</i>
Draft a rubric	<i>Here is my assignment and the standard it assesses. Build a 4-level analytic rubric with 4 criteria. Use student-facing language, not teacher jargon.</i>
Build a question bank	<i>Write 20 questions on [topic] spread across DOK levels 1-3. Tag each with its level. For multiple choice, make the distractors reflect real student misconceptions.</i>
Feedback starters	<i>Here is a rubric and an anonymized student paragraph. Draft 3 pieces of specific feedback: one strength, one priority fix, one next step. Do not assign a score.</i>
Parent communication	<i>Turn these bullet points into a warm, specific, three-paragraph email to a parent. Lead with something positive and end with one concrete request. Then give me a Spanish version.</i>
Sub plans	<i>Build a full day of no-prep, standards-aligned work for [course] on [topic] that a substitute with no content background can run. Include timing and what to do if students finish early.</i>
Unit skeleton	<i>Here are my standards. Draft a 3-week unit arc: objectives by week, sequence of lessons, and 3 formative checkpoints. Keep it editable — I will revise heavily.</i>
Accommodation ideas	<i>Give me 10 classroom supports for a student who struggles with working memory during lab activities. Rank them from easiest to hardest for me to implement.</i>

Where it is unreliable: citations, page numbers, quotations, statistics, current events, multi-step arithmetic, and anything specific to your students or school. It is strong on form and shape, weak on fact and specificity — supply the facts, let it handle the shape.

Sources: AI Assessment Scale v2.1 (aiassessmentscale.com, free for non-commercial use) · Liang et al. (2023), Patterns · "Faster Completion, Less Learning" (2026) · OECD Digital Education Outlook 2026. Tool names and free tiers change fast — check your district's acceptable use and data privacy policies first.

Design so they still have to think

SAY THE LEVEL OUT LOUD, ON EVERY ASSIGNMENT

The AI Assessment Scale v2.1 (Perkins, Roe, Furze & MacVaugh). Students cannot follow a rule nobody stated. Put the level in the header of the task.

Level	Name	What it means	Write on the assignment
1	No AI	Controlled conditions that exclude AI. Skills shown independently.	"Level 1 — No AI. Any AI use is an integrity violation."
2	AI Planning	Topic exploration, outlining, research. You assess the planning.	"Level 2 — Plan with AI. The writing must be yours."
3	AI Collaboration	AI helps draft and refine, but AI alone cannot reach the standard.	"Level 3 — Use AI, then tell me where and what you changed."
4	Full AI	AI involvement expected. You grade the direction and judgment.	"Level 4 — AI may draft. I grade your direction and critique."
5	AI Exploration	Creative AI use to solve problems or generate new insights.	"Level 5 — Surprise me. Document your process."

No level is better than another — these are different kinds of task, not steps from worse to better.

Redesign checklist

Run any assignment through these five. Fail three or more and it needs a redesign.

- **Stress-tested.** I pasted my own prompt into an AI and read what it produced in twenty seconds.
- **Level named.** The AIAS level is written on the handout, and students know what it permits and forbids.
- **Anchored.** It requires something only this class knows — our discussion, our lab data, yesterday's argument, this student's own draft.
- **Process collected.** Outline, annotated sources, version history, oral defense, or a reflection on what changed and why.
- **Disclosure is normal.** If AI is permitted, students say how they used it — so nobody has to be caught.

On AI detectors: a 2023 study found detectors misclassified over 61% of essays by non-native English speakers as AI-generated, while scoring native speakers near-perfectly, and accuracy drops another 20%+ on paraphrased text. Never open an integrity conversation with a detector score — collect process evidence instead.

Five protocols you can run next week

Protocol	How it runs	Best for
The tutor that will not tell	Student pastes the tutor prompt below, then their stuck problem. AI asks questions and hints, never answers.	Homework support, any subject
Hunt the error	You generate a flawed AI explanation in advance. Students find and correct it. You grade the critique.	Math and science, formative
The opposition	Student writes a claim, asks AI for the strongest counterargument, then answers it in writing.	ELA and social studies, argument
Feedback before submission	Draft plus your rubric in; student submits the draft, the feedback, and what they changed and ignored.	Any writing task, revision
Explain it back	Student teaches the concept to the AI, told to play a confused peer. Gaps surface fast.	Retrieval practice, any subject

No student access at your school? Protocols 2 and 5 still work — you run the AI in advance and students critique the output on paper.

The tutor prompt — paste this above any homework question

You are a patient high school tutor. I am working on the problem below.
Do NOT give me the answer or do any step for me.
Instead: ask me one question at a time to find out where my thinking breaks down. Give a hint only after I have made an attempt. If I am wrong, tell me I am wrong and ask what I would try next -- do not correct it for me. When I finally get it, ask me to explain why it works in my own words.

Make it yours: add your subject and "use vocabulary from our unit on ____." Model it once on the projector.

Before you leave today

By Friday, I will use AI to _____.

In my next unit, students will use AI to _____,

and I will grade _____.

The second blank matters more than the first.