

5 AI Essentials For K-12 Teachers Back At School

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5 Back-To-School AI Essentials For K-12 Teachers GETTY

As the new school year dawns, artificial intelligence is now a reality in classrooms around the world.

How can educators begin to harness this powerful technology without getting lost? I reached out to teachers across the globe to find out. Their expertise has helped outline a simple roadmap for any teacher finding their feet in this new AI era.

Here are five steps to get started:

1. Start Small

Discover your own repertoire of tools at your own pace. Ioannis Anapliotis, from Nea Paideia Schools in Athens, Greece, advises, "Don't try to revolutionize your entire teaching approach overnight. Begin with simple AI tools and applications. Then expand as you gain confidence."

This approach will help you to familiarize yourself with the capabilities of AI without feeling overwhelmed. Merissa Sadler-Holder, an educator in California, put it simply: "Pick one tool. Play, play, play! Once you're comfortable with that tool, select another."

Which tool will you pick? Here are [part one](#) and [part two](#) of my write-up on educators' favourite AI tools.

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2. Start With Personalization And Efficiency

While more and more use cases for AI in education are being developed, one of the most powerful applications is the ability to personalize learning experiences for your students. Ioannis suggests using "AI-powered content creation tools to help develop engaging



lesson materials and personalized learning resources." Differentiating student materials can be done in seconds with the right tools.

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Using AI is not about replacing what you do, but rather enhancing it. Finding efficiencies with these AI tools can help you focus on more important parts of your work. Harriet Benbow, an education support officer at PKC in Scotland, reminded us that, "A.I is an amazing tool for reducing workload- 'work smarter, not harder'."

3. Consider Existing Policies And Support

It's crucial to understand any existing school policies and any support already available. Maggie Layfield, from NetSupport in Georgia, advises, "First, make sure you know what your school/district's AI policy is (or if you even have one), and find fellow educators within your school who have successfully used AI and can give you some initial guidance."

This step is not just about compliance, it's about protecting students. Renee Dawson, an educational technology consultant in Georgia, reminded us, "Always stay mindful of protecting your students' data and confidentiality."

4. Prioritize Transparency To Build Trust



Maintain open communication with your students when you are using AI with them.

Doan Winkel, from John Carroll University in Ohio, suggests a collaborative approach:

"Tell students you're a newbie and want to learn with them. Ask them how they're using it. Ask them to do quick mini presentations on use cases. Basically, learn from your students."

Transparency builds trust between you and your students and can lead to richer learning experiences. Jessica L. Parker, a lecturer at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, shares her approach: "I disclose my AI use to students (e.g., for developing discussion prompts and personalized feedback based on their interests). In return, I expect students to disclose their AI use in assignments."

5. Collaborate With Colleagues

Your AI journey shouldn't be a solo endeavor. Collaborating with colleagues can enrich your learning and provide valuable support. Benjamin Sharratt, vice principal at GEMS Wellington International School in Dubai, suggests that you "Collaborate with colleagues across different subjects and year groups to share insights and refine your approach, moving from practice to confident implementation."

Daren White, academic technologies lead at Academies Enterprise Trust in the UK, suggests a simple yet effective approach collaborating: "Share your findings with colleagues and learn what works well, together!"

As you embark on your AI journey this school year, remember that when it comes to AI we are all in a process of continuous learning. By starting small, adhering to policies, maintaining transparency and collaborating with colleagues, you'll be in an optimal position to harness its potential.



The goal isn't to become an AI expert. AI is a means to an end. It's about building your competence and confidence. As Benjamin Sharratt put it: "Begin by embracing AI with a spirit of curiosity and openness. Experiment with different tools that cater to the diverse needs of your students, subjects and age ranges, and don't be afraid to make mistakes in the early stages."

For those feeling overwhelmed, Dr. Jennifer Chang Wathall from the University of Hong Kong offers reassurance: "It's ok to be firefighting in the beginning!" Learn from each experience and continually refine your approach, with your colleagues and students by your side.

I'll leave the last word with Dr. Cary Woods, business adjunct at Marian University in Indianapolis: "AI is not going away, so the sooner you embrace it as part of the academic process the better."

Part two of this article, covering steps six to ten, will be published on Saturday August 24, 2024.

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Tools above are a good start - however, the outputs of each of the responses are not verified. May I suggest YoChatGPT! for more collaboration and safe, and GUIDED use. Research has shown, guided use of genAI by students is better than unguided use.

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