PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT · GUIDE

Teaching in the age of *AI*.

The STAR framework for bringing AI into teaching without losing the learning.

José Picardo · Azimuth

azimuth

THE STAR FRAMEWORK

A simple compass for a *noisy* moment.

STAR keeps four things human while AI helps with the rest. The leadership task is less about what AI can do and more about what should stay human: let it take the marking, planning and reporting, and protect the relational, responsive knowing of children that makes a lesson succeed.

S

SPARK

Ignite curiosity

Learning begins with a spark that lights curiosity. AI can widen the stimuli teachers draw on, but it is human wonder and skilful curation that turn a spark into shared inquiry.

PRACTICAL USES OF AI

Contrasting provocations. Generate opposing viewpoints to spark debate.

Differentiated hooks. Adapt a prompt for different ages without losing its core.

Immersive scenarios. Create images or simulations that make the concept itself tangible, not just decorative.

Persona dialogues. Simulate a Q&A with a historical or literary figure.

Talk scaffolds. Generate sentence stems to structure discussion.

T

THINK

Shape meaning

Thinking is where learners wrestle with ideas, and the effort matters. It is the productive struggle of working something out, with one eye on their own thinking, that builds understanding. AI can prompt and explain, but it risks doing the thinking for them.

PRACTICAL USES OF AI

Multiple explanations. Generate analogies; students judge which works best.

Adaptive retrieval. Quizzes that keep recall effortful but successful, never just easier.

Source interrogation. Compare AI summaries with the text to spot gaps or bias.

Misconception analysis. Surface common errors for students to correct.

Reasoning critique. Dissect AI examples to expose flaws and alternatives.

A

ACT

Apply knowledge

Understanding becomes durable through practice, problem-solving and the productive struggle of grappling with hard ideas. AI can widen the chances to apply learning, but meaning is secured only when learners do the effortful work themselves.

PRACTICAL USES OF AI

Virtual experiments. Simulate complex or unsafe experiments safely.

Writing feedback. Instant feedback on clarity while ideas stay with the learner.

Language partners. Rehearse fluency through adaptive conversation.

Adaptive problem sets. Questions that adjust to keep the challenge effortful as a learner progresses.

Scenario simulations. Role-play tasks where choices shape outcomes.

R

REFLECT

Make connections

Reflection is a metacognitive act: revisiting ideas, noticing how you learned, and making the connections that prepare you to transfer them. In an age of AI summaries, the human task is to interpret, critique and converse.

PRACTICAL USES OF AI

Personalised prompts. Tailored questions to deepen reflection.

Compare summaries. Students summarise the discussion, then compare with AI's to see what they missed.

Speech feedback. Analyse clarity, fluency and vocabulary.

Interpretive critique. Compare student and AI reflections to debate meaning.

Map critique. Students build the concept map; AI flags gaps or missing links.

THE STAR CYCLE

A continuous loop, not a *checklist*.

A spark ignites curiosity, which leads to thinking, acting and reflecting, before fresh questions spark the next turn. AI can enrich every stage. Only human judgement secures depth, meaning and purpose.

S → T

A spark that does not lead to thinking is entertainment. Curiosity has to become cognitive work.

T → A

Thinking that is never applied fades. Learners need to use ideas to keep them.

A → R

Action without reflection is just activity. Reflection is where it turns into understanding.

R → S

Good reflection raises new questions, and the cycle begins again, a little deeper each time.

A NOTE OF CAUTION

Cognitive offloading hands the machine the mechanical work, the storage, the formatting, the first draft, and can free a learner to think harder. Outsourcing the thinking is the opposite: when AI does the weighing, reasoning and struggling, the learning leaves with it. The test is simple. Did the tool clear space for thought, or take its place?

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This is a question of value, not efficiency.

FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

What to hand over, what to keep

Hand to AI

Marking, planning, summarising, reporting, and surfacing patterns in pupil data. This is work AI does well, and it was never the heart of teaching.

Keep human

Relationships, judgement, encouragement and challenge, and the responsive knowing of children built up over months. It does not show on a spreadsheet, and it is the part most worth protecting.

About José Picardo

José Picardo is an educator, school leader and consultant, and the author of *Using Technology in the Classroom* (Bloomsbury). He works with schools and trusts on strategy, professional development and leadership.

Bring STAR to *your* staff.

For keynotes, workshops or consultancy on AI in schools, visit azimuth.org.uk or email jose@azimuth.org.uk.