Smart Questions, Stronger Classrooms:

What Leaders Should Ask About AI in Education

Sharon Skretting, Dan VandenDungen, Richelle, Marynowski

Instructional Planning

Through real examples from a variety of existing AI tools, you'll explore how teacher input shapes impact and outcomes—and how to help your staff stay aligned with Alberta's TQS.

Guiding Question: *If I handed this lesson to one of my teachers, would it strengthen their ability to teach with purpose—or would it short-circuit their professional judgment?*

Name of Tool	MS Copilot/ Google Gemini	Teacher Time Machine	Brisk Teaching	Chat GPT	Magic School
Clarity of Purpose (outcomes first)	1	1	1	1	1
Teacher Voice/Input	1	1	1	1	1
Teacher Preparation	1	1	1	1	1
Customized Results	1	1	1	1	1

Food for Thought: Lesson planning isn't just about creating activities—it's about *intentionally designing for learning*. AI can speed up the process, but speed without direction risks leaving pedagogy behind.

- **Clarity of purpose.** Does the AI tool start with outcomes first, or does it jump straight into activities?
- **Teacher voice.** Does it leave space for teacher input—professional judgment, context, and knowledge of students—or does it "decide" the plan on its own?
- **Preparation for teaching.** Does the planning process help teachers think through how they'll *teach* the lesson, or just hand them a polished script?
- **Customization to context.** Does the tool generate results that are **responsive to your local standards, school priorities, and the unique needs of your students**?

Backward design reminds us that **outcomes guide assessment, and assessment guides instruction**. AI should serve as a *thinking partner*, not a replacement for teacher expertise.

See rubric criteria on next page.

Planning Questions:

- Does the AI tool start with **clear outcomes** and learning intentions, or does it focus mainly on activities?
- How well does the tool support **backward design** (outcomes → assessment → instruction)?
- Does the tool give teachers the ability to **customize** and add supports for their specific students?
- How does the tool help teachers **prepare to teach**—not just deliver—a lesson?
- Does the tool promote **teacher input and professional judgment**, or does it take control of the decisions in the planning process?

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AI Audit Tool for Educational Leaders

This AI Audit Tool is designed to help district leaders and administrators evaluate AI lesson planning tools across three critical domains: Instructional Planning, Assessment, and Inclusion. The rubric uses a 4-point scale (1 = Limited, 4 = Exemplary) to guide reflection and decision-making.

Instructional Planning

Clarity of Purpose

4 – Always begins with outcomes/standards before activities; backward design is clear and consistent.

3 – Often begins with outcomes, though some activities feel disconnected; backward design is present but uneven.

2 – Sometimes acknowledges outcomes but primarily generates activities; limited alignment to backward design.

1 – Jumps directly to activities with little or no connection to outcomes; backward design absent.

Teacher Voice

4 – Provides multiple opportunities for teachers to shape, adapt, and add their professional knowledge; teacher judgment is central.

3 – Allows for some teacher input but with limited depth; tool makes many planning choices automatically.

2 – Teacher input is minimal; tool drives most of the process with only small spaces for customization.

1 – Teacher judgment is bypassed; tool generates fixed plans with little to no opportunity for input.

Preparation for Teaching

4 – Guides teachers to think through instructional moves, strategies, and scaffolds; strengthens readiness to teach.

3 – Provides useful information for instruction but leaves some gaps in teacher preparation.

2 – Offers a polished script or outline with little attention to how teachers will actually teach.

1 – Produces activities or scripts that assume delivery without preparing teachers for instructional decision-making.

Customization to Context

4 – Fully responsive to local standards, school priorities, and diverse student needs; customizable at multiple levels.

3 – Connects to general standards/outcomes and allows some adjustments for context, but not deeply embedded.

2 – Provides generic results with limited options to align with local standards or student needs.

1 – Ignores local context and student diversity; outputs are generic and one-size-fits-all.

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Assessment

Through real examples from a variety of existing AI tools, you'll explore how teacher input shapes impact and outcomes—and how to help your staff stay aligned with Alberta's TQS.

Guiding Question: *Would this assessment help my teachers know what students understand, where they struggle, and how to move learning forward—or would it just generate marks in a gradebook?*

Name of Tool	MS Copilot/ Google Gemini	Teacher Time Machine	Brisk Teaching	Chat GPT	Magic School
Teacher Input	1	1	1	1	1
Alignment	1	1	1	1	1
Depth of Understanding	1	1	1	1	1
Feeback	1	1	1	1	1
Classroom Ready	1	1	1	1	1

Food for Thought: Assessment & AI

When AI generates an assessment, it's tempting to accept it at face value—after all, it's fast and polished. But true *assessment for learning* demands more:

- **Teacher input, not autopilot.** Does the tool allow teachers to **review, vet, and adapt** assessment questions—ensuring they are pedagogically sound and appropriate for their students—before they reach the classroom?
- **Alignment, not assumption.** Do the tasks align with your district's standards and outcomes, or are they generic placeholders?

- **Depth, not just recall.** Are the questions levelled using Depth of Knowledge criteria, moving students beyond “right answer” recall into explanation, application, and transfer?
- **Feedback, not just a grade.** Will the results give students and teachers actionable insights for next steps in learning?

See rubric criteria on next page

Assessment Questions: Are the assessment tasks/questions aligned to local standards/outcomes?

1. Do the questions show varied levels of Depth of Knowledge (DOK), moving beyond recall into analysis and application?
2. Does the tool allow teachers to choose and adapt assessment forms (formative, summative, performance-based, etc.)?
3. Is the output well-structured and classroom-ready, or would teachers need significant revisions before using it?
4. Does the tool generate assessments that provide feedback for learning (helping students and teachers see next steps), not just grades?

Assessment

Teacher Input, Not Autopilot

4 – Teachers can fully review, edit, and adapt assessment items; tool prompts teacher judgment and fosters pedagogical soundness.

3 – Teachers can adjust or modify questions, though options may be somewhat limited.

2 – Minimal ability for teacher review or adaptation; most items must be used as

generated. 1 – No teacher input; assessments are automatically generated and fixed.

Depth, Not Just Recall

4 – Consistently generates assessments across Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels, with strong emphasis on higher-order thinking.

3 – Includes some questions at multiple DOK levels but with uneven coverage; recall still dominates.

2 – Mostly recall-level questions with occasional higher-order items.

1 – Almost exclusively recall-based; lacks depth and variety.

Alignment, Not Assumption

4 – Assessments are clearly aligned with local standards/outcomes and customizable to district priorities.

3 – Generally aligned to standards/outcomes, though some items may feel generic.

2 – Limited alignment; assessments often generic and require significant teacher

revision.

1 – No evidence of alignment to standards/outcomes; disconnected from curriculum.

Feedback, Not Just a Grade

4 – Provides clear, actionable feedback that helps teachers and students see next steps for learning.

3 – Some feedback is offered, though it may be general or require teacher interpretation to be actionable.

2 – Feedback is minimal, vague, or focused primarily on correctness rather than growth.

1 – No feedback; tool only produces grades or scores.

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Inclusion

Through real examples from a variety of existing AI tools, you'll explore how teacher input shapes impact and outcomes—and how to help your staff stay aligned with Alberta's TQS.

Guiding Question: *If I were a student with unique learning needs, would I feel like this AI-generated plan saw me, included me, and set me up to thrive?*

Name of Tool	MS Copilot/ Google Gemini	Teacher Time Machine	Brisk Teaching	Chat GPT	Diffit
Teacher Input	1	1	1	1	1
Multiple Entry Points	1	1	1	1	1
Design from the Start	1	1	1	1	1
Practical Supports	1	1	1	1	1

Food for Thought: Inclusion

AI can churn out a "one-size-fits-all" lesson plan in seconds—but inclusion is never one-size-fits-all. True equity in the classroom depends on how well teachers can **adapt, scaffold, and differentiate** for the learners in front of them.

- **Multiple entry points.** Does the tool offer resources at varied reading levels or in multiple languages so every student can access the content?
- **Design from the start.** Are Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies embedded in the planning process—or treated as an afterthought?
- **Practical supports.** Does the output include real accommodations and scaffolds that teachers can use tomorrow, or does it assume every student learns the same way?
- **Teacher input in inclusion.** Does the tool allow teachers to **review, adjust, and select inclusion supports** so they truly match the needs of their students, rather than applying

generic or token options?

When inclusion is central, AI can help teachers design lessons that invite *all students* to engage, belong, and succeed.

See rubric criteria on next page.

Inclusion Questions:

- Does the tool embed Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies throughout the lesson or does the teacher have to add them after the fact?
- Can the tool generate resources at multiple reading levels or in different languages?
- Does it include accommodations and scaffolds that reflect real classroom needs (e.g., visuals, sentence starters, audio support)?
- Does the tool help teachers plan for diverse learners proactively, or does it assume one pathway fits all?
- Would students from historically marginalized or underrepresented groups feel seen, included, and supported by the outputs?

Inclusion

Multiple Entry Points

4 – Consistently generates resources at varied reading levels and in multiple languages; ensures all students have access.

3 – Offers some differentiation (reading levels or translation), though options are somewhat limited.

2 – Minimal supports for access; resources are mostly 'one level fits all' with rare adaptations.

1 – No options for varied reading levels or language supports; assumes a single access point.

Design from the Start

4 – Embeds Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies into the planning process from the beginning; inclusion is foundational.

3 – Includes some UDL strategies, though they may feel partial or added mid-process.

2 – Inclusion strategies appear as add-ons after planning is complete; not fully

integrated.

1 – No evidence of UDL or inclusion; planning assumes homogenous learners.

Practical Supports

4 – Provides concrete, classroom-ready accommodations and scaffolds (visuals, sentence starters, audio, etc.) that are adaptable to students' needs.

3 – Includes some useful supports, though teachers may need to add or refine them for classroom use.

2 – Supports are generic, vague, or impractical for real classroom application.

1 – No inclusion supports are offered.

Teacher Input in Inclusion

4 – Teachers can review, adjust, and select inclusion supports to ensure they are meaningful and context-specific.

3 – Some ability for teachers to adjust supports, though with limited flexibility.

2 – Teacher input is minimal; inclusion supports are largely pre-determined by the tool.

1 – No teacher input allowed; supports are fixed or absent.