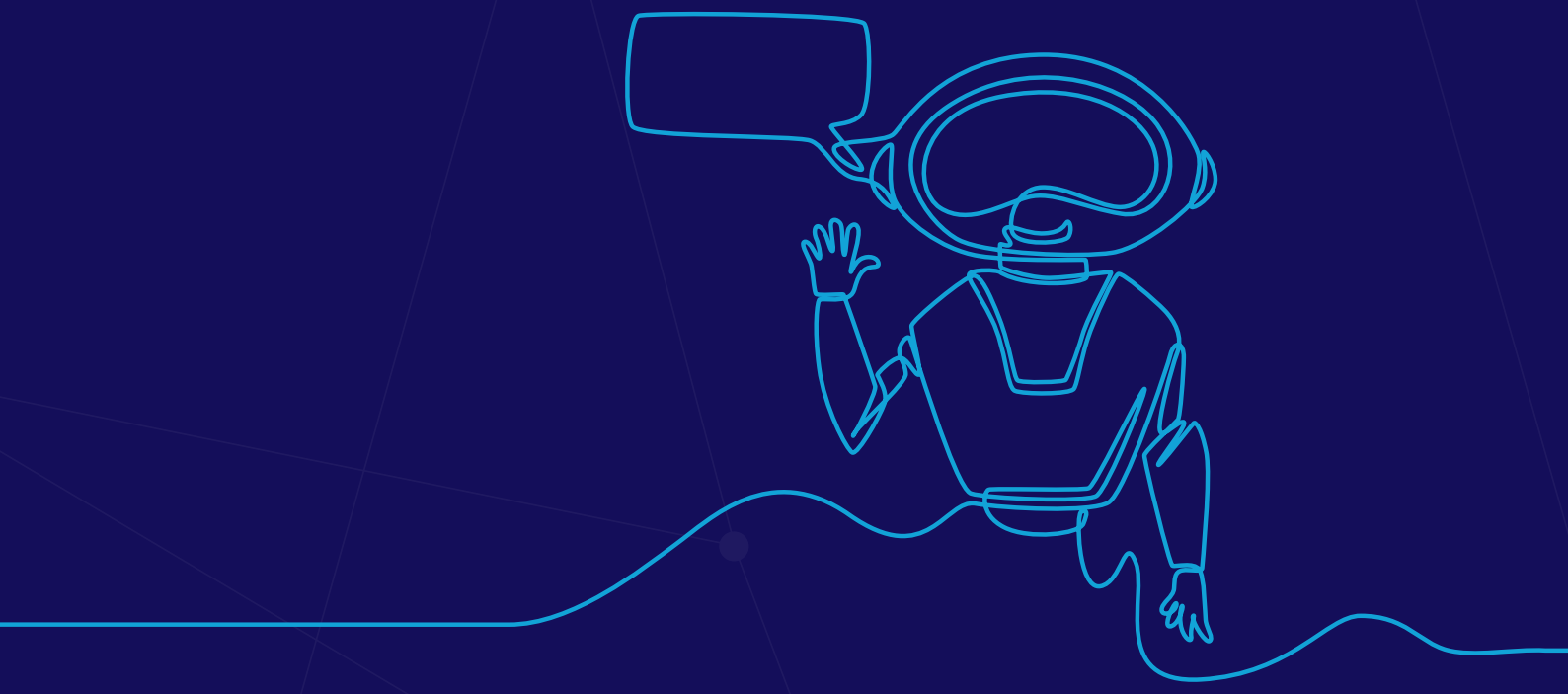
SENTRAL

AI Tools for Schools – Teachers

A rapid, practical guide for classroom teachers to use today

By Matt Esteman, in collaboration with Sentral



Why this guide?

Teachers don't need more admin – they need time back for planning, feedback and relationships. The tools below can remove friction, improve differentiation, and help you communicate clearly with students and families.

Use this document to:

- Spot high-impact classroom use cases.
- Run low-risk experiments in your own workflow first.
- Share what works (and what doesn't) with your team.

Rule of thumb

If a tool doesn't reliably save ~10–30% time on the task or improve student learning clarity, don't scale it yet.

Teaching responsibilities this guide targets

- **Planning & Preparation:** Unit/lesson design, resources, exemplars, success criteria.
- **Instruction:** Explanations, modelling, questioning, differentiation, accessibility.
- **Assessment & Feedback:** Formative checks, rubrics, comments, reports, moderation.
- **Classroom Management & Wellbeing:** Routines, restorative scripts, parent comms.
- **Professional Collaboration:** Team planning, meeting notes, observation feedback.

Data safety principles (read this first)

1. Do **not** paste personally identifiable student data into public tools. Use enterprise/education versions where available; turn off model training.
2. Keep a **human in the loop** for grades, sensitive communications, and published materials.
3. Gain **consent** before recording any meeting or lesson for transcription.
4. Begin with **low-risk inputs** (generic prompts, curriculum text) before trying student work.
5. Check outputs for **bias, accuracy and appropriateness** – especially texts, images and translations.

The tools and how teachers can use them

1. ChatGPT (OpenAI)

What it's for:
Drafting, idea generation, examples, rubrics, feedback banks, quick code/snippets for Sheets.

Classroom quick wins:

- **Planning:** Turn outcomes into a 3-lesson mini-sequence with success criteria and checks for understanding.
- **Differentiation:** Generate three reading levels of a text plus vocabulary and sentence stems.
- **Assessment:** Build a rubric with observable descriptors; create exemplar answers at A/C/E bands.
- **Feedback:** Produce comment banks tailored to common errors; convert to student-friendly language.
- **Comms:** Draft parent updates; translate into community languages.

Try-this-now prompt:
"You are an experienced secondary teacher. Using the outcome below, design a 60-minute lesson with: (1) activation, (2) explicit instruction, (3) guided practice, (4) independent task, (5) exit ticket. Include adjustments for EAL/D and high-ability. Outcome: …"

⚠ **Watch-outs:**
Fact-check and align to your syllabus. Don't upload student names or identifiable details.

2. Claude (Anthropic)

What it's for:
Long-document reading and summarising; creating clear, structured materials.

Classroom quick wins:

- Turn a dense article into a one-page student reading with guiding questions.
- Extract key concepts and misconceptions from a chapter and map to mini-lessons.
- Convert rough notes into a clean slide outline with speaker prompts.

Try-this-now prompt:
"From the attached article, produce: (a) a one-page student reading at Year 9 level, (b) 6 retrieval questions, (c) 2 short writing prompts."

⚠ **Watch-outs:**
Verify quotes and citations; keep your voice when finalising student materials.

3. Perplexity

What it's for:
Fast research with sources and citations.

Classroom quick wins:

- Build a reading list with short summaries for an inquiry unit.
- Gather multiple perspectives (with sources) for debate topics.
- Produce a quick brief on current events with balanced references.

Try-this-now prompt:
"Find 5 credible, student-friendly sources explaining . Summarise each in 2–3 sentences and state reading level where possible."

⚠ **Watch-outs:**
Follow links; preview for age appropriateness.

4. Gemini (Google) / Copilot (Microsoft)

What it's for:
AI inside Docs/Slides/Sheets or Word/PowerPoint/Excel/Teams.

Classroom quick wins:

- **Docs/Word:** Draft unit outlines, success criteria, and accommodations tables.
- **Slides/PowerPoint:** Build clean explainer decks from notes with images/alt text.
- **Sheets/Excel:** Generate formulas, auto-clean data (marks, attendance), create simple dashboards.
- **Teams/Drive:** Summarise long threads; pull tasks and deadlines into a checklist.

Try-this-now prompt (Docs/Word):
"Turn this unit plan into a one-page overview for students with checkpoints and deadlines. Keep language at Year 8 level."

⚠ **Watch-outs:**
Value depends on your tenant setup and licensing; organise your folders first.

5. Fireflies.ai / Otter.ai

What it's for:
Meeting recording, AI notes, action items, searchable transcripts.

Classroom quick wins:

- Capture team-planning notes and auto-generate task lists.
- Summarise parent/teacher meetings into agreed actions and follow-up email.
- Produce observation notes for peer coaching (with consent).

Try-this-now prompt:
Pre-brief: goals + agenda → record (with consent) → instant summary → copy actions into your planner.

> ⚠ **Watch-outs:**
> Avoid recording students without explicit permission; store files in your school tenant.

6. Canva / Adobe (Express & Creative Cloud with Firefly)

What it's for:
Fast, on-brand class materials and visuals with AI help.

Classroom quick wins:

- Turn a wall of text into a poster/infographic; export as PDF/PNG.
- Create quick exit ticket templates and printable station cards.
- Produce exemplars with annotations for modelling.

Try-this-now workflow:
Start from a curriculum-aligned template → paste your text → refine headings with Magic Write/ Firefly → lock brand elements → export.

> ⚠ **Watch-outs:**
> Check AI-generated images for appropriateness; credit sources.

7. NotebookLM (Google)

What it's for:
Build a "notebook" from your own sources; ask questions, generate outlines, summaries, quizzes.

Classroom quick wins:

- Create a unit notebook from articles, slides and notes → auto-generate lesson outlines, concept maps and quiz questions.
- Make a student study guide with flashcards linked back to readings.
- Build an FAQ for a new unit so students can self-serve clarifications.

Try-this-now prompt:
"Using the uploaded unit docs, produce: (1) a concept map, (2) 12 spaced-practice questions (short answer), (3) a glossary with student-friendly definitions."

Watch-outs:
Use non-sensitive materials; check accuracy of generated summaries and quizzes.

8. Diffit

What it's for:
Instantly levels and scaffolds texts; creates questions, vocabulary, and supports in multiple languages.

Classroom quick wins:

- Paste a source and generate versions at several reading levels with glossaries and guiding questions.
- Produce cloze passages, sentence frames, and writing supports for EAL/D.
- Generate comprehension checks and exit tickets aligned to the text.

Try-this-now prompt:
"Level this text to Year 7, Year 9 and Senior. Provide 8 vocab terms with student-friendly definitions, a 6-question quiz (mix of MC and short answer), and two writing prompts."

Watch-outs:
Review for accuracy and nuance; ensure reading levels match your cohort.

9. Goblin Tools

goblin.tools

What it's for:
Executive-function helpers (Magic ToDo, Formalizer, Judge, Estimate). Great for chunking tasks, tone-shifting, and planning.

Classroom quick wins:

- Break a complex assignment into student-friendly steps with estimates.
- Convert a draft email to a parent into a calm, professional tone.
- Sanity-check assignment instructions for clarity ("Judge").

Try-this-now routine:
*Paste your assignment → use **Magic ToDo** to chunk steps → share with students; use **Formalizer** to refine messages.*

Watch-outs:
Avoid sensitive data; review tone suggestions before sending.

Choosing the right tool for the job

- **Drafting & structure:** ChatGPT, Claude
- **Long-text to student-ready:** Claude, Diffit
- **Research with sources:** Perplexity
- **In-ecosystem (Docs/Office):** Gemini / Copilot
- **Collab & meetings:** Fireflies / Otter
- **Design & modelling:** Canva / Adobe
- **Study systems:** NotebookLM
- **Executive function & clarity:** Goblin Tools

Starter prompts you can reuse

- **Plan a lesson:** *"Design a 60-minute lesson with explicit instruction, guided practice, an accessible independent task, and a 3-question exit ticket. Include adjustments for EAL/D and high-ability."*
- **Differentiate a text:** *"Level this article to Year 7/9/Senior; add vocab (student-friendly), guiding questions, and a summary paragraph."*
- **Build a rubric:** *"*Create a rubric with 4 criteria (content, structure, evidence, language). Provide A/C/E descriptors with observable behaviours.*"*
- **Feedback bank:** *"From these common errors, create 20 feedback comments with 'what went well' + 'even better if' + next step. Keep student-friendly tone."*
- **Parent update:** *"Draft a 150-word update on our new unit, what success looks like, and 3 ways families can support at home."*

Teacher pathways to AI exploration

A safe 30-day adoption plan (teacher-led)

Week 1 – Explore (solo)

Pick two low-risk tasks (e.g., lesson outline, exit tickets). Time yourself now vs. with AI.

Week 2 – Pair (same subject/grade)

Co-plan one lesson with AI support; agree on templates and success criteria.

Week 3 – Pilot (one class or task)

Run a mini-pilot (e.g., AI-generated exit tickets + feedback bank). Collect student work time, your time saved, and clarity ratings.

Week 4 – Review & Share

Share outcomes with faculty; decide to stop, tweak, or scale. Save templates to a shared drive.

Classroom engagement & integrity

- Explicitly teach **how** AI can assist study (summarising, quizzing, planning) and where it's **not** acceptable (outsourcing thinking, plagiarism).
- Use **process evidence** (planning notes, drafts, oral checks) to ensure authenticity.
- Provide **choice**: AI-assisted or traditional path, with same success criteria.
- Keep families informed with short, plain-language updates and examples.

Piloting small experiments (templates)

Micro-pilot charter

- **Focus:** E.g., feedback bank in Year 9 History.
- **Guardrails:** No names uploaded; teacher reviews before release.
- **Success:** ≥20% time saved on feedback; student clarity ≥4/5.
- Timeline & Owner.

Evaluation rubric (score 1–5)

- Time saved
- Student clarity
- Ease of use
- Data/privacy fit
- Cost/benefit

What's not valuable (red flags)

- AI writing major portions of assessable work for students.
- Fact-light content, invented citations, or biased examples.
- Tools with no admin controls, data agreements, or age-appropriate safeguards.
- One-off shiny lessons that don't fit your program.

Minimum viable classroom policy (teacher talking points)

- **Purpose:** Reduce workload, improve clarity, support differentiation.
- **Green lights:** Drafting, summarising, scaffolding, generic feedback, study guides.
- **Red lines:** Uploading identifiable student data to public tools; unreviewed AI text in assessable work; automating grades.
- **Accountability:** Teacher remains responsible for accuracy, tone, and fairness.
- **Transparency:** Tell students when AI helped create a resource.

Setup checklist (teacher edition)

- Sign in with school account; confirm data settings.
- Create a folder for AI-assisted resources and templates.
- Keep a simple **prompt log** of what worked (share with your team).
- Build a small library of re-usable formats (exit tickets, rubrics, parent notes).

Your next three moves

1. **Choose one task** this week (e.g., exit tickets) and trial with ChatGPT or Claude.
2. **Pair with a colleague** to co-create a Diffit-levelled reading and share the template.
3. **Build a NotebookLM notebook** for your next unit and generate a student study guide.

This guide is intentionally brief and actionable. Use it to reclaim time for high-impact teaching and feedback while modelling safe, thoughtful AI use for students.

Let's continue the conversation

SENTRAL

You've explored the framework for AI in education; the next step is implementation. A powerful strategy requires a powerful platform.

Sentral is more than just a school management system; it's a strategic partner that streamlines everything from student data and reporting to payments and parent engagement, freeing your team to lead with confidence.

Schedule a strategic call:
Book a no-obligation demo with our team to see how Sentral can power your school's vision.

Discover the platform:
Learn more about how Sentral empowers educators across Asia Pacific.

www.sentraleducation.com

www.linkedin.com/company/sentral/

The Next Word

Navigating the complexities of AI in education requires more than just prompts; it requires a strategic partner. At The Next Word, we help school leaders move beyond the hype to build robust AI strategies, deliver practical staff training, and create ethical frameworks that enhance learning while managing risk. We ensure you lead the change, not just react to it.

Ready to build a future-ready school?
Book a complimentary, no-obligation AI strategy call with our education team to map your school's next steps.

www.nextwordnow.com

admin@nextwordnow.com

www.linkedin.com/in/mesterman/

SENTRAL

Scan the QR code to learn more about Sentral or visit www.sentraleducation.com