PURPOSE BEFORE TOOLS

Start with the learning

Learning includes foundational subject knowledge, concepts, skills, and judgment. Begin there, then decide what role, if any, AI should play.

CORE PRINCIPLE

Start with the learning, not the tool.

The role AI plays should follow the purpose of the learning. This is a practical design principle consistent with LIF: identify the learning first, then set the boundary.

Three prompts for redesigning an assignment

1. **What foundational knowledge, understanding, skills, or capabilities should students develop?**
2. **What thinking must they retain to develop that capability?**
3. **Where could AI deepen, extend, challenge, accelerate, or enable the learning?**

THE QUESTION THAT SETS THE BOUNDARY

How can AI advance this learning without doing the learning for the student?

A PURPOSEFUL, PRO-AI POSITION

AI can expand what students can investigate, create, test, and revise. The goal is not to keep AI out. The goal is to use it where it strengthens learning while preserving the human thinking, judgment, and authorship the assignment is meant to develop.

SET THE BOUNDARY BY PURPOSE

Decide the role of AI

Review each assignment component separately. AI does not need one rule for the whole task.

ROLE	USE IT WHEN...	POSSIBLE USES
NO AI	The thinking or skill itself needs practice.	Recall, first attempts, observation, rehearsal, foundational technique.
AI AS SUPPORT	The student needs feedback, questioning, or coaching.	Brainstorming, practice questions, feedback, clarification, planning.
AI AS PRODUCTION TOOL	AI helps execute work the student understands and directs.	Drafting variations, formatting, image generation, transcription, editing.
AI AS COLLABORATOR	Dialogue can challenge ideas or expand possibilities.	Counterarguments, alternatives, simulations, critique, comparison.

The same AI use may be appropriate in one learning experience and inappropriate in another. Purpose determines the boundary.

PRIMARY ANALOGY: DIRECTOR / INTERN

The student is the Director. AI is the Intern. The Director sets the purpose, gives direction, checks the work, and remains responsible for the final decisions.

DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION

Coach or crutch?

APPLY THE SEE FILTER

Before approving an AI role, ask whether the use is:

Safe - protects people, privacy, and data

Ethical - respects consent, fairness, and authorship

Effective - genuinely helps achieve the learning purpose

MAKE LEARNING VISIBLE

Build the evidence

A polished final product may show achievement, but it may not show how understanding, judgment, or ownership developed.

Shift from final-product-only assessment. Gather evidence that makes the intended learning visible across the work.

PRODUCT

What the student created or performed.

PROCESS

How the work developed through sources, drafts, prompts, and revisions.

JUDGMENT

What the student accepted, rejected, changed, and why.

VERIFICATION

What the student checked, how they checked it, and what they found.

UNDERSTANDING

What the student can explain, defend, transfer, or demonstrate.

REFLECTION

What the student learned about the subject, the process, and their own choices.

There is no fixed process/product ratio. Assess the evidence that best demonstrates the intended learning.

Use Strategic Friction to reveal thinking



The pause before AI gives teachers something to compare. What changed, and was the change thoughtful?

FROM GENERIC TASK TO VISIBLE LEARNING

Retrofit an assignment

Example across subjects: research a topic and create a five-minute presentation.

OLD TASK	**"Research a topic and create a five-minute presentation."**
PURPOSE	Students understand the issue and communicate a defensible interpretation.
KEEP HUMAN	Selecting evidence, developing the position, evaluating sources, and deciding what matters.
AI CAN HELP	Generate counterarguments, explain difficult concepts, suggest organization, and critique a draft.
STRATEGIC FRICTION	The student establishes an initial position before asking AI to challenge it.
EVIDENCE	Initial thinking + sources + AI disclosure + decisions and revisions + final presentation.
VERIFICATION	A 60-90 second teacher conversation: explain an important decision, what changed, and why.

REFLECTION

"What did AI change in your thinking? What remained your decision?"

TRY THIS MONDAY

1. Name the learning. 2. Mark what stays human. 3. Choose AI's role. 4. Add one visible thinking checkpoint. 5. Ask one verification question.