

A Principal's guide to keeping AI honest in the classroom

by Brett Henebery 17 Nov 2025



As schools have familiarised themselves with the way AI works and the many ways it can be used to make life in classrooms and staffrooms easier, the equation for educators is no longer just about working faster – it's about working smarter.

Indeed, the real promise of this technology isn't merely speed or novelty, but its ability to make school life feel more human by slashing workloads, improving decision-making and helping educators connect more meaningfully with the young people they teach.

Since the Federal Government's Australian Framework for Generative AI in Schools was released, the challenge for principals is shifting from "should we use AI?" to "how do we make it work best for everyone?"

A thoughtful, purposeful approach to AI

With 40 years of teaching experience and more than 20 years as a Principal, Dr Paul Teys has seen how disruptive new technologies can be for schools.

A celebrated thought leader in educational leadership, Dr Teys now works with principals and executive leaders to help them navigate innovation, adapt to change, and lead confidently through times of disruption.

When it comes to Generative AI, Dr Teys says the technology itself is not the problem – the uncritical adoption of it is.

"For school leaders, the goal must always be to preserve the integrity of learning, ensuring technology serves pedagogy, not the other way around," Dr Teys told *The Educator*.

"A thoughtful approach begins with clarity of purpose - What specific learning challenge are we solving, and how does AI genuinely enhance the process?"

Dr Teys said leaders should apply four decision filters: pedagogical purpose, ethical integrity, cognitive development, and professional judgement

“Does it deepen inquiry, creativity, or feedback loops? How are data, authorship, and student agency protected? Will it promote critical thought or passive completion? Does it elevate the teacher’s craft, not replace it?” Dr Teys said.

“A purposeful strategy includes explicit instruction on AI literacy - helping students critique, verify, and improve on AI outputs rather than accept them unexamined. Teachers, likewise, need structured opportunities to test, review, and reflect before scaling use.”

Dr Teys said the test for any emerging technology remains simple: does it advance the school’s educational vision, improve learning outcomes, and uphold intellectual honesty?

“If not, it’s a distraction. AI, used well, can amplify great teaching; used poorly, it accelerates superficial learning.”

Curriculum design and foundational skills in the age of AI

Dr Teys said curriculum design now stands at a crossroads.

“Do we design for speed or for depth?” Dr Teys said. “In an era where AI can generate polished answers instantly, the responsibility of schools is to strengthen the thinking that underpins those answers.”

Dr Teys said a resilient curriculum must prioritise reasoning, writing, and inquiry as “deliberate, teachable processes.”

“Students should learn to interrogate AI, not imitate it,” he said. “Inquiry cycles, oral defences, reflective journals, and design thinking projects keep learning anchored in analysis, creativity, and evidence, the hallmarks of intellectual growth.”

Rather than excluding AI, schools should weave it into assessment design, Dr Teys said.

“Students can compare AI-generated responses with their own, critique the logic, and identify bias or error,” he said. “This builds metacognition and discernment, two foundational skills that define lifelong learners.”

Teachers, too, must be supported to rethink curriculum through the lens of “human advantage”, he added.

“That means doubling down on interpretation, empathy, ethical reasoning, and communication, domains AI cannot replicate. Ultimately, curriculum design should ensure students are not merely consumers of information, but constructors of meaning,” he said.

“By protecting and re-engineering foundational skills, we preserve what makes education profoundly human in a world increasingly shaped by machines.”