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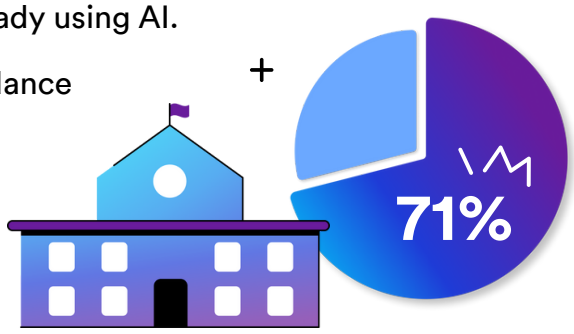
5 Things to Consider When Planning AI Adoption at Your District: An Evaluation Guide

How are districts approaching AI use in the classroom this school year?

When it comes to the technology impacting classrooms, we're at another inflection point. This school year, generative artificial intelligence (AI) is popping up in nearly every edtech solution, claiming to solve educators' biggest challenges. Wherever your district falls on the adoption curve, one thing is clear: Many teachers and students are already using AI.



While many districts haven't formalized training or guidance on when and how to use these tools, 71% of districts plan to use generative AI in at least some use cases this school year. And over about half of the states in the U.S. have some form of AI guidance for schools.

When it comes to AI use in schools, most tools fall into one of two buckets: **productivity tools** or **curriculum and instruction tools**. While productivity tools and chatbots like Gemini may have their place in new workstreams, this guide focuses on where we at Newsela think the most scrutiny and thoughtfulness should be directed when it comes to the classroom: curriculum and instruction solutions.

Our goal with this guide is to help you think through a framework that enables you to confidently evaluate which AI-powered curriculum and instruction tools and approaches will work best for your district as you consider your adoption plan. The outcome? **Purposeful solutions that actually support learning goals and student outcomes.**

Considerations for adoption

1. How will this tool **support student outcomes**?
2. How is this **tool easy to use** for both teachers and students?
3. What are the **specific pain points** this tool would solve?
4. How does this tool improve **equitable access** to **high-quality learning and teaching**?
5. How does this tool **protect privacy** and handle data responsibly?

As educators, you want to feel confident in the safety and positive impact of the tools you choose for your classrooms.

When it comes to evaluating any emerging technology, there's a wealth of research and guidance from trusted organizations like Common Sense and Digital Promise based on decades of evaluating and adopting previous emerging technologies. We've synthesized the key ideas and—combined with our team's depth of pedagogical and technology expertise—have created a simple framework of considerations to keep in mind as you think through your district's approach to AI adoption. One thing to remember: When evaluating an AI tool or feature, it's important to look at the totality of what the tool offers, not just the AI functionality.

Tip: Use the notes section to plan your district's AI use cases and tool selection.

These are the questions we also asked ourselves as we were developing Luna, our own AI-powered teaching assistant across Newsela and Formative.

When evaluating AI tools for your classrooms, ask...

How will this tool support student outcomes?

	Add your notes!
How does it **support or enhance the learning objectives** of your district? How does it support curriculum or **standards alignment**?	
What research is there to support the **efficacy** of this tool in a classroom environment?	
How does it build on current **learning science research and pedagogical frameworks** for engaging students in the learning process?	
How are resources produced by this tool **vetted for accuracy, classroom-readiness, and content sources**?	
If there is a **student-facing chatbot function**, how does it enhance deeper thinking and align to instructional goals?	

How is this tool easy to use for both teachers and students?

How efficiently can educators **distribute content and activities to their class**? Does the tool minimize the number of steps and screens required to hand off an assignment?	
How does this tool fit into the **lesson planning process** of your teachers and PLCs?	

In what ways does it *really* **save teachers time**? How are **sources cited** and what **pedagogical frameworks** does it use to generate outputs?	
What **controls or visibility** do teachers have in student-facing features? Do students have **guidance on how to prompt and interact with AI features**?	
What **support and professional learning** is available for this tool?	

What are the specific pain points this tool would solve?

How does it support **differentiation** and personalized learning?	
What are the **ideal use cases** for this tool?	
Does this tool primarily **support teachers**? Students? How so?	
Which **subjects, grade levels, and instructional formats** can benefit from this tool?	

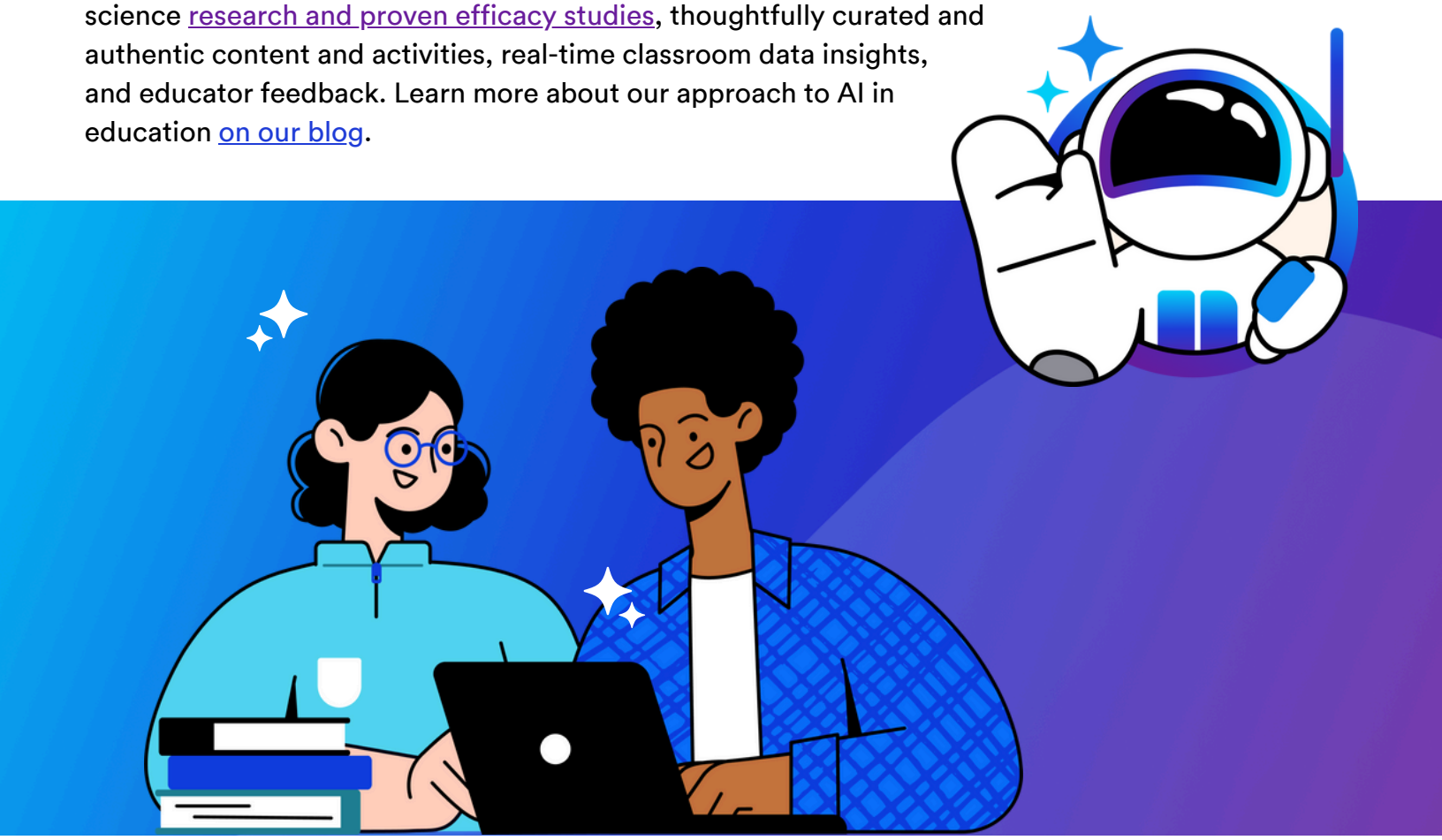
How does this tool improve equitable access to high-quality learning and teaching?

What **accessibility** features are available for students with disabilities or language needs?	
Is it **flexible** enough for different classroom environments and teachers' varying tech savviness?	
What inputs are used to train the models? Does this tool provide insight into how it's **minimizing bias** in its outputs?	
How does it support **gathering data and insights about student learning** so that instruction can be adjusted to meet the needs of individual students?	

How does this tool protect privacy and handle data responsibly?

Does it comply with **FERPA, COPPA**, and your district's privacy policies?	
Is it **transparent about what data is collected and how it is used**? What security measures are used to **protect your data**?	
How does this tool **interact with students**? If there is a **chatbot function**, how are responses' sources shared with students? What student information does the chatbot retain?	

At Newsela, we apply this same framework as we build out Luna, our AI-powered teaching assistant. Luna is purposeful, research-backed technology developed on our foundation of over a decade of K-12 pedagogical expertise, learning science research and proven efficacy studies, thoughtfully curated and authentic content and activities, real-time classroom data insights, and educator feedback. Learn more about our approach to AI in education on our blog.



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