

Keep the thinking with the student

For coaching teams to run with a department or grade-level team. Bring devices, the AI tool your students already use, and one upcoming lesson per teacher.

MINUTES	SEGMENT	WHAT TEACHERS DO
0-5	Opening	Share the RAND finding: 67% of students think heavy AI use harms critical thinking. Ask: where have you seen it in your own room?
5-15	Be the student	Open the AI tool your students use. Ask it for the answer to tomorrow's assignment three ways: directly, with an excuse, and by claiming permission. Note what it did each time.
15-25	Name the target skill	Pick one lesson from the next two weeks. Write one sentence: "The thinking students must do themselves in this lesson is..." Then sort possible AI uses into fine to offload, offload with a check, and keep with the student.
25-35	Read a transcript	In pairs, read one student-AI conversation (from your platform, or the images in this post). Mark it with the look-fors: what the student typed, what came back, what the student did next.
35-42	Write the class rule	Turn your sort into three sentences students will see, one per group, in your own words.
42-45	Commit	Choose the lesson you'll try it in. Bring one student conversation, or one student's explanation without the screen, to the next PLC.

Look-fors when reading a student-AI conversation

WHAT TO LOOK AT	THE THINKING STAYED WITH THE STUDENT	THE THINKING MOVED TO THE AI
What the student typed	Their own attempt, or a question about one step	The assignment prompt, pasted in
What the AI sent back	A question, a hint, or one step	A finished paragraph or answer
What the student did next	Argued back, revised, tried again	Copied, submitted, moved on
Ask them to explain it	They can, in their own words, without the screen	They read it off the screen, or can't
How the work feels	Slower, with some wrong turns	Fast and smooth

Facilitator notes

- Run the "be the student" segment on the real tool, not a demo. Teachers learn more from ten minutes of trying to cheat than from any slide.
- Keep the target-skill sentence to one skill. If teachers write three, ask which one the assessment checks.
- Keep the focus on lesson design. Teachers should leave with a lesson where AI can't do the part that counts.
- Follow up in two weeks with one question: what did students say when you asked them to explain their work without the screen?

From "Is AI Doing Your Students' Thinking? A District Guide to Cognitive Offloading" by Jemel Fanfan, flintk12.com/blog/ai-critical-thinking-students-district-guide. Free to copy and adapt.