HOW AI TRANSFORMS TEACHING AND LEARNING: STORIES FROM THE FIELD

From Nine NAF Academy Educators

Bridging Industry and Classroom

Building Tomorrow's Success Today

Scaling Success Through Systems

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THE HUMAN STORIES BEHIND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

Dr. Chris Unger

Imagine walking into Don's Miami classroom, where students are creating professional beverage brands complete with AI-generated jingles, or observing India's students with disabilities confidently presenting their winning marketing campaign at Nationals Stadium. Picture LaTara's DC finance students discovering their neighborhood has five check-cashing stores but only one bank, then using AI to research why—and what they can do about it.

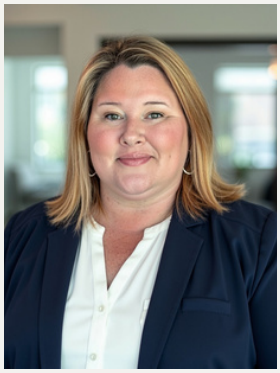
These aren't distant possibilities. They're happening today in NAF Academies across the country, where nine pioneering educators have discovered that AI's true power lies not in replacing human connection, but in amplifying it.

The Curriculum Collaborative Lab: Building a Community of Practice

Dr. Christine Rodriguez

These educators participated in NAF's Curriculum Collaborative Lab (CCL), where we created a community of practice around AI in education. With guidance from Dr. Chris Unger from Northeastern University, NAF's Director of Curriculum, Dr. Christine Rodriguez, and Dr. Brooke Rice, VP of Curriculum and Work-Based Learning, we brought together nine educators who varied dramatically in experience, industry focus, and comfort with AI. Some had never used AI tools, while a couple had already found impactful ways to leverage them for teaching and learning.

Our guiding mantra became: How can we leverage AI to accelerate and enhance teaching and learning?



Dr. Brooke Rice

Together, we explored tools to support lesson planning, differentiation, rubrics and grading, academy marketing, and much more. We leveraged platforms like Claude, Perplexity, ChatGPT, MagicSchoolAI, Canva, and others, discovering an essential truth: different AI tools help with different needs. There's no one-size-fits-all solution—the key is matching the right tool to the specific challenge.

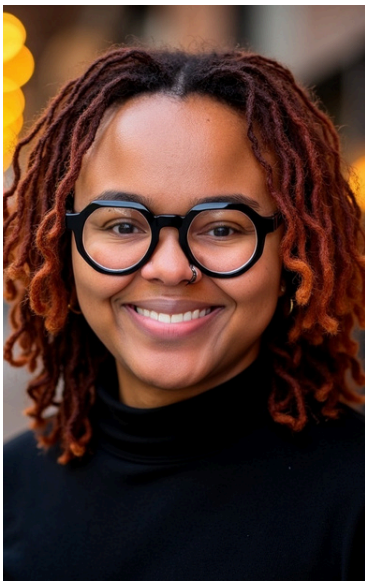
This collaborative work didn't just transform individual classrooms. These educators also informed and collaborated on NAF's new course, Principles of Hospitality, Events, and Tourism, and our groundbreaking AI Career Connections curriculum that can be implemented in any high school classroom.

About This Guide

This guide captures their stories—the challenges they faced, the breakthroughs they achieved, and the practical strategies they developed. More importantly, it shows how different types of educators can harness AI's potential while maintaining the relationships and rigor that make education transformative.

After reading the stories, you'll find an AI Implementation Guide to help you identify your educator type and get started with AI in your own classroom. Additionally, prompt libraries and links to the educators' favorite AI platforms are available as companion resources to provide immediate, actionable tools to jumpstart your journey.

THE CAREER TRANSITION EDUCATOR: BRIDGING INDUSTRY AND CLASSROOM



"The biggest thing is making it conversational—talk to it like you're assigning a task to a person."

April spent 17 years as a chemical engineer before entering the classroom three years ago. At Ramsay High School in Birmingham, she brings industry expertise in project management and quality assurance to the engineering academy. She faces a challenge familiar to many career-changers: translating complex industry knowledge into lessons that engage high school students.

The Breakthrough: AI as a Translation Partner

April discovered Magic School AI's potential as a bridge between her industry knowledge and student comprehension. She takes a pragmatic approach, using the platform's guided prompts to help her translate engineering concepts. Her systematic approach begins with clear parameters: "Create a lesson on thermodynamics principles for 11th grade engineering, 90-minute block schedule."

But the real value comes in the iteration. April emphasizes the importance of reviewing and verifying AI output for accuracy, and when initial outputs reflect college-level complexity from her industry background, she refines them. "The biggest thing is making it conversational—talk to it like you're assigning a task to a person," she explains. She'll prompt the AI to simplify content for students who just completed Algebra II, or replace theoretical explanations with hands-on demonstrations using everyday materials. Instead of teaching to herself or what would be a room of experienced engineers, she has found language, examples, and activities that make sense for teenagers.

The Hair Dryer and Pasta Bridges

April particularly values the platform's ability to suggest laboratory alternatives when expensive equipment isn't available. For visual learners, she requests: "Convert this text-heavy explanation into visual demonstrations and hands-on activities." The AI suggests using hair dryers to demonstrate heat transfer or building bridges with pasta to explain structural forces. This way, students can feel the transfer of heat happening…not just hear about or imagine it.

Meet April: From Chemical Plant to High School Educator

Benefits for April:

- Lesson planning reduced from hours to minutes
- Industry expertise translated into age-appropriate activities
- More time for relationship building and individualized support
- Confidence in pedagogical approaches
- Ability to focus on what matters: helping students understand complex concepts

Benefits for Students:

- Complex concepts made accessible through hands-on demonstrations
- Industry-relevant skills presented at appropriate learning level
- Increased engagement through practical applications
- Preparation for advanced technical coursework

Meet Sherece: From Marriott to Baltimore Classroom

Benefits for Sherece:

- Professional presentation materials that secure stakeholder buy-in
- Efficient content creation during time crunches
- Industry credibility maintained through high-quality materials
- Confidence in conference and workshop leadership
- Student research projects approaching professional consulting quality

Benefits for Students:

- Professional documents that open doors to employment
- Understanding of industry language and expectations
- Scaffolded learning that builds authentic skills
- Real job interviews and placements
- Professional-level market research capabilities
- Critical evaluation skills for distinguishing quality sources
- Entrepreneurial confidence backed by data-driven analysis
- Authentic business concepts attracting real investor interest

THE CAREER TRANSITION EDUCATOR: BRIDGING INDUSTRY AND CLASSROOM

"The citations were crucial. Students had to verify each claim through the source articles, learning to distinguish between anecdotal observations and market research."

Sherece transitioned from a 13-year career in Marriott operations and sales to teaching hospitality at National Academy Foundation High School in Baltimore, bringing industry expertise to 600 students. She transformed from AI resistant to enthusiastic advocate after it saved her during time crunches, helping her balance the demands of teaching, conference presentations, and curriculum development.

The Conference Success Story

Sherece's use of Claude for conference presentation materials demonstrates how AI can help educators share best practices professionally and efficiently.

Facing a 15-minute round-table session with strict constraints, Sherece prompted Claude: "Create a 15-minute round-table session on bell ringers and exit tickets for CTE teachers. Include hands-on activity where participants create their own examples. Must work with 8-10 people at a table with no technology."

But Sherece's industry experience taught her to prepare for challenges. "What if teachers ask about students who are chronically late and miss bell ringers?" she prompted. Claude generated differentiation strategies, including digital archives, makeup options during lunch, and peer teaching opportunities.

"The session was a hit," Sherece recalls. "Teachers left with immediately usable materials, and I felt like a professional presenter instead of a nervous new teacher."

The Resume Revolution

Perhaps Sherece's most powerful AI application came in teaching students professional resume writing. Her scaffolded approach begins with paper templates—ensuring students understand fundamentals before AI enhancement.

The "Oh My Gosh!" Moment

After students complete handwritten drafts, Sherece demonstrates live transformation using Claude: "Create a professional resume for a high school senior with the following experience: 6 months at Target as sales associate—helped with inventory, trained new employees, received employee of the month. Make it ATS-friendly with strong action verbs and quantify achievements where possible."

Students watch as "helped customers" becomes "Provided exceptional customer service to 50+ daily customers, maintaining 95% satisfaction rating."

A colleague observing this process exclaimed, "Oh my gosh!" at the transformation. Students used these AI-enhanced resumes to secure interviews at Marriott, Hilton, and local restaurants.

The Market Research Transformation
Sherece's most sophisticated application revolutionized how students approach hospitality entrepreneurship by combining traditional demographic tools with AI-powered market analysis.

From Data Collection to Market Intelligence
The multi-phase project began with students using niche.com to gather zip code demographics: income levels, age distributions, cultural backgrounds, and education levels. "Don't just collect numbers," Sherece instructed, "understand what they mean for hospitality businesses."

Students then brought this data to Perplexity with targeted prompts: "Based on these demographics [students pasted their data], identify underserved hospitality markets in this Baltimore neighborhood. Consider cultural preferences, income constraints, and existing competition."

The Venue Gap Discovery
One group investigating opportunities in Baltimore's hospitality scene discovered a significant gap in social venues. They asked Perplexity to analyze what types of venues were underserved based on their demographic data, requesting information on spending patterns and social preferences.

Perplexity provided comprehensive market analysis revealing preferences for upscale casual environments combining networking and entertainment—sports lounges with business networking events, coffee shops with coworking spaces, or restaurants with young professional happy hours.

The Citation Verification Process
"The citations were crucial," Sherece explained. "Students had to verify each claim through the source articles, learning to distinguish between anecdotal observations and market research."

Groups dove deeper into feasibility: "What are typical startup costs for a boutique coffee shop/coworking space in Baltimore?" and "Which Baltimore neighborhoods show rising commercial activity but still have affordable rent?"

The Professional-Quality Outcome
Final presentations required demographic rationale, competitive analysis, target market profiles, and revenue projections based on similar businesses. Several students expressed genuine interest in pursuing their concepts after graduation.

"They moved from 'I want to open a restaurant' to 'Here's an underserved market of 5,000 young professionals seeking weekday networking venues, with average discretionary spending of $200/month on dining and entertainment,'" Sherece noted.

One student's "Elevated Eats" food hall concept was so comprehensive that it caught the attention of a local developer, demonstrating the professional caliber of student work.

THE DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING SPECIALIST: LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

"AI really helps a lot, breaking everything down for me with my students. I don't have to stay up all night doing work."

India has been teaching since 2019, with a unique experience beginning her career virtually during COVID. She leads the first NAF academy exclusively supporting students with special needs at River Terrace in Washington, DC, teaching both hospitality and culinary with students in grades 6-12.

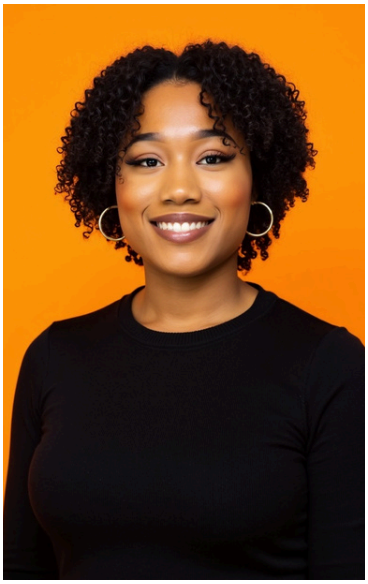
India uses AI extensively to create individualized education plans, differentiate instruction across three tiers of learning needs, and facilitate authentic projects despite limited resources. "AI really helps a lot, breaking everything down for me with my students. I don't have to take hours, my whole entire night, just staying up doing work," she explains. She's passionate about ensuring her students with disabilities have access to the same opportunities as their peers.

The System: Multi-Tiered Differentiation
India's revolutionary approach uses ChatGPT to create comprehensive lesson plans with three distinct tiers of support:

- **Tier 1**: Students needing minimal support
- **Tier 2**: Moderate assistance required
- **Tier 3**: Intensive support with significant modifications

"Most of my students are Tier 2 and 3," India explains, "so I need everything broken down into manageable steps."

The Process in Action
India uploads existing curricula along with student benchmark data, prompting: "Make me a modified lesson plan based on the pre-existing data I already gave you of my students to help make this lesson accommodate them."
For abstract concepts, she requests conversion: "Convert this text-heavy lesson into visual and hands-on activities appropriate for students with processing difficulties." The AI suggests using manipulatives for math, role-playing for social studies, and visual organizers for reading comprehension.



Meet India: Pioneer of Inclusive Excellence

Benefits for India:

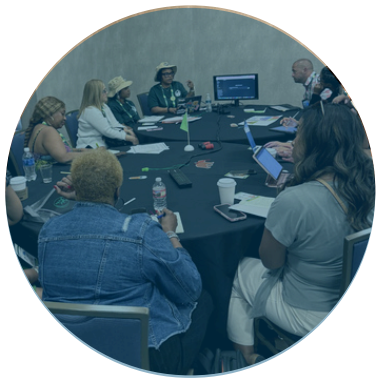
- Work-life balance restored: preparation time reduced from several evenings to one hour weekly
- Systematic differentiation ensures every student can access curriculum
- Professional validation through student competitive success
- Innovation leadership within the special education community

Benefits for Students:

- High expectations are maintained through appropriate scaffolding
- Authentic achievements proving capabilities to themselves and others
- Professional skills developed through accessible practice methods
- Confidence building through repeated successful experiences

The Competition Victory: Proving Potential

India's most powerful validation came when her students—often underestimated in academic competitions—won a marketing competition, creating a campaign for Ashanti and Ja Rule's concert at Nationals Stadium.



The Strategy

Using ChatGPT, India broke down complex marketing concepts: "Provide information about Ashanti and Ja Rule's careers and modify the language for three different learning levels." Students used traditional research first, then enhanced their work with AI tools.

"We used ChatGPT to brainstorm marketing approaches for different demographics," India explains. Students prompted: "What marketing techniques would appeal to people aged 18-29 in DC who like R&B music?"

For visual materials, students discovered Canva's AI independently. India notes: "My art teacher showed them, and suddenly they were creating professional logos and merchandise designs."

The AI-assisted ideation process led to innovative solutions: a TikTok dance challenge (suggested by ChatGPT as trending marketing), merchandise featuring AI-generated designs, and a voter template for song selection. Students voted on everything as a class, ensuring every student had ownership. They created custom t-shirts reading "River Terrace Marketing Team" with concert imagery on the front.

The Role-Playing Revolution

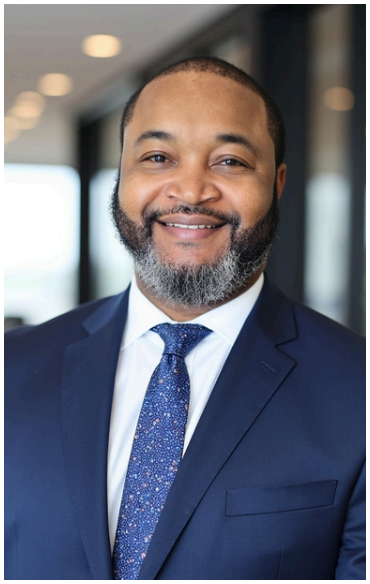
India transformed NAF's traditional role-playing activities using ChatGPT's interactive capabilities. Understanding her students need extensive scaffolding, she developed an "I do, we do, you do" approach.

The Customer Service Breakthrough

For cruise ship complaint scenarios, India demonstrated first on the classroom screen: "I typed the prompt: 'Act as an angry cruise passenger whose room isn't ready. I'm a hospitality employee.' Then I modeled appropriate responses while students watched."

Students observed professional language, problem-solving approaches, and de-escalation techniques. The text-based format provided crucial processing time for students who struggle with real-time verbal interactions.

"Students would coach each other: 'Don't say that! You're gonna get yourself fired!'" India laughs. The success translated to real situations—during hotel field trips, her students impressed everyone with their professional communication skills.



Meet Jeremy: From Convention Center to Leading Academies

Benefits for Jeremy:

- Administrative efficiency frees time for strategic planning and student relationships
- Professional fundraising success, building program sustainability
- Comprehensive curriculum development without external consultants
- Systems thinking approach is scalable across multiple pathways

Benefits for Students:

- More resources are available through efficient administration
- Authentic industry experiences through well-planned events
- Professional-quality curriculum prepares them for certification success
- Access to expanded program offerings through systematic growth

THE VETERAN PROGRAM BUILDER: SCALING SUCCESS THROUGH SYSTEMS

"AI makes our world smaller by bringing global resources to students."

Jeremy brings 15 years of hospitality industry experience, including extensive industry background from the Baltimore Orioles and Ravens, to his role as Director of Career Education at Warren Easton High School in New Orleans. He's transformed the hospitality program from an "undeveloped seed to nationally recognized beacon," now managing six career pathways serving hundreds of students.

But with great success comes great complexity. Jeremy faced mounting administrative demands that threatened to pull him away from what matters most: student relationships and program development.

The Administrative Revolution
Jeremy's partnership with Claude began with budget management—a task that consumed entire days each month while tracking multiple funding streams across career pathways.

The Budget Breakthrough
Jeremy uploaded Louisiana's CTE funding guidelines and his department's allocation spreadsheets, prompting Claude: "Create an Excel budget tracker for CTE programs with separate tabs for each funding source (Perkins, State CTE, Industry donations). Include automatic calculations, remaining balance alerts when under 10%, and dropdown menus for expense categories aligned with state requirements."

But Jeremy needed more functionality. Through iterative refinement, the system evolved to include:

- Monthly burn rate calculations and year-end projections
- Visual dashboard with at-risk program indicators
- Automatic flags for purchases requiring pre-approval
- Alerts 60 days before fund encumbrance deadlines

"What used to take me a full day each month now takes 30 minutes," Jeremy notes. "That efficiency means more resources reach students rather than being lost to administrative overhead."

The $25,000 Fundraising Triumph

Jeremy's most ambitious AI application came in orchestrating a fundraising gala at House of Blues that raised $25,000 while providing authentic industry experience for students.

The 12-Week Backward Plan
Starting 12 weeks before the event, Jeremy prompted Claude: "Create a complete project timeline for a fundraising gala at House of Blues supporting our culinary program. Work backward from the May 15 event date. Include sponsor outreach, student preparation, marketing milestones, vendor coordination, and week-by-week task lists."

The Sponsor Strategy
Knowing personalization was key, Jeremy requested: "Write sponsor invitation letters for three levels: Platinum ($5,000+), Gold ($2,500), and Silver ($1,000). Emphasize student impact, culinary program growth, and recognition benefits. Make each letter feel personal, not generic."

The AI created templates that Jeremy customized with specific sponsor histories and interests. "The sponsor response rate jumped from 10% to 35%," he notes. "The personalized outreach made them feel like partners, not just checkbooks."

Elevating Student Work
For menu descriptions, Jeremy prompted: "Write elegant descriptions for student-created dishes: Louisiana BBQ shrimp with aged cheddar grits, Creole-spiced duck with mirliton slaw. Emphasize culinary training impact and student creativity."

The AI-generated descriptions elevated student work to fine-dining status, helping guests understand they were experiencing professional-quality cuisine created by high school students.

The Curriculum Development Challenge
When Louisiana required a new Patient Care Tech certification, Jeremy faced the challenge of developing a comprehensive curriculum where none existed. Working with his anatomy teacher and school nurse, he used Claude to build course content from scratch.

The Systematic Approach
"We uploaded Louisiana's state standards and certification requirements," Jeremy explains, "then prompted: 'Create a year-long Patient Care Tech curriculum that prepares students for CNA certification. Include hands-on labs, medical terminology, patient interaction skills, and test preparation strategies.'"

When students struggled with EKG interpretation, Jeremy refined: "Break down EKG reading into 5-minute daily exercises with increasing complexity." Claude provided progressive exercises starting with basic rhythm recognition.

"What impressed me was when I asked for budget-conscious lab alternatives," Jeremy recalls. "It suggested using household items for wound care practice and creating patient scenarios with student volunteers."

Students now pass certification exams at significantly higher rates, with structured daily content replacing the previous "teach to the test" approach.

THE VETERAN PROGRAM BUILDER: SCALING SUCCESS THROUGH SYSTEMS

"Students accessed real-time job market data impossible to get from textbooks."

LaTara is a 28-year veteran educator who has spent 27 years at the same Washington, DC school, leading the finance academy serving 10th-12th graders. Her students have earned $7 million in college scholarships, with many attending prestigious universities. She converted from AI skeptic to Perplexity advocate after discovering its power for real-time information, using AI to help students research everything from historical economic events to current job markets. She believes AI empowers students to make informed decisions about their futures with current, relevant data. Students accessed real-time job market data impossible to get from textbooks, with shocking discoveries like only 20% of students having bank accounts.

The Research Revolution
LaTara's transformation began with Perplexity's ability to provide current, cited information that transformed her financial literacy curriculum from theoretical to immediately applicable.

The Banking Desert Discovery
One of LaTara's most powerful research projects connected historical financial injustices to contemporary banking challenges. Students used Perplexity to research how prosperous business districts were impacted by economic and political disruptions throughout history, including wealth destruction and long-term community effects.

The research led to shocking local discoveries: their neighborhood had five check-cashing stores but only one bank branch. Students calculated that families could lose $1,200 annually to predatory fees—modern-day financial barriers reminiscent of historical economic discrimination.

Meet LaTara: 28-Year Veteran Embracing Innovation

Benefits for LaTara:

- Curriculum that remains current with the rapidly changing financial landscape
- Student engagement through locally relevant examples
- Professional credibility through access to real-time industry data
- Efficient content creation, maintaining high-quality daily instruction

Benefits for Students:

- Access to professional-level job market intelligence
- Financial literacy is connected to their lived experiences
- Empowered decision-making about education and career paths
- Real employment outcomes through informed job searching

Connecting Finance to Student Reality Through Current Data

LaTara revolutionized her daily instruction by creating relevant scenarios using Perplexity's real-time information capabilities. Every Sunday, she spends 30 minutes making the week's warm-ups with specific prompts: "Create five 3-minute bell ringers about personal finance for high school students. Include scenarios about Cash App fees, saving for sneaker releases, and comparing phone plan costs."

Traditional mortgage examples became scenarios about financing PlayStations or calculating rideshare driver earnings. When student loan forgiveness dominated the news, LaTara created bell ringers explaining potential family impacts. Students started asking for extra bell ringers because they wanted to understand how these concepts affected their money.

Job Market Intelligence Training

LaTara's most sophisticated application taught seniors to use Perplexity's deep research function for professional job market analysis.

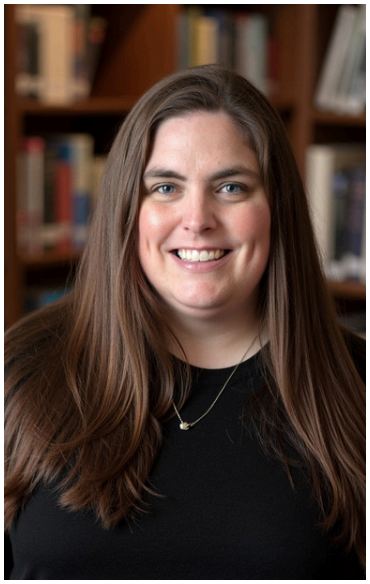
The Deep Search Demonstration

LaTara demonstrated the difference between basic and deep search: "Watch how the depth of information changes," she said, running a basic search for "hospitality jobs in DC" (17 sources), then activating deep research with the same query (49 sources, including government statistics and industry reports).

Students learned targeted queries: "Entry-level hotel positions in DC paying above $15/hour accessible by Metro red line" and "Which DC hotels promote from within and offer management training programs?"

The Salary Transparency Breakthrough

The real game-changer was salary transparency, empowering negotiation. One student was offered $13/hour and showed them that the average starting wages were higher for similar positions—she negotiated and got $16/hour. Students created personal dashboards updating weekly with new opportunities, discovering positions they hadn't known existed—like hotel social media manager or corporate dining coordinator.



Meet Amanda: IT Teacher Focused on Objective Evaluation

Benefits for Amanda:

- More objective grading practices by evaluating work against standards rather than past performance
- Complete curriculum development capabilities for new courses
- Enhanced student learning through conceptual AI partnerships
- Professional growth through systematic reflection on teaching practices

Benefits for Students:

- Fair evaluation based on achievement rather than performance history
- Professional-quality portfolio development through real-world projects
- Deep programming understanding through concept-based AI interaction
- Authentic skill development transferable across platforms and languages

THE CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATOR: BUILDING TOMORROW'S SKILLS TODAY

"ChatGPT doesn't know that Iyanna worked really hard on this essay or that Renada usually does better. It evaluates purely on the rubric criteria."

Amanda brings eight years of teaching experience to Milwaukee, including five in IT after transitioning from middle school science. She teaches intro to programming, cybersecurity, digital video production, and coaches robotics at a unique school where all 500 high school students participate in NAF academies. She's an early AI adopter who upgraded to the paid version of ChatGPT after seeing significant quality differences. "The paid version made a huge difference—the suggestions were more nuanced and practical," she notes. Amanda pioneered using AI to verify her grading consistency, valuing AI for both efficiency and objectivity.

The Bias-Checking Breakthrough
Amanda's most innovative application addresses a challenge every educator faces but few discuss: maintaining consistent standards across all student work. Her systematic approach compares her evaluations against AI assessment to identify patterns.

The Double-Blind Process
After grading assignments using established rubrics, Amanda copies both the rubric and student work into ChatGPT (removing student names and identifying information): "Evaluate this cybersecurity essay using the attached rubric. Score each criterion and provide justification. Explain your reasoning for each score."

She then compares ChatGPT's evaluation with her own, documenting discrepancies in a reflection journal.

The Pattern Recognition
"I discovered patterns I never would have noticed," Amanda reflects. "I was consistently grading struggling students more leniently—giving them credit for effort or improvement rather than achievement—and being harsher on typically high-performing students when they submitted average work."

For major assignments, she now implements a double-blind process: students submit work with ID numbers instead of names, allowing her to grade purely on quality before matching names to grades. ChatGPT's consistency helped her recognize when she was crediting improvement rather than absolute quality. ChatGPT doesn't know that Iyanna worked really hard on this essay or that Renada usually does better—it evaluates purely on the rubric criteria. This practice has made her rubrics more precise, as she discovered where her subjective interpretation filled gaps in unclear criteria. Student trust increased as grading became more transparent and consistent.

From Scratch to Success: Digital Video Production
When asked to create an entirely new Digital Video Production course, Amanda turned to ChatGPT for comprehensive curriculum development.

The Course Creation Process
Amanda began with ambitious prompts: "Design a year-long Digital Video Production curriculum where students manage school social media accounts. Include units on filming techniques, editing, analytics, content calendars, and brand management. Emphasize student leadership and real-world application."

But generic wouldn't work. She refined through iterative prompting: "Add collaboration opportunities with athletic teams" and "Include TikTok trends and Instagram Reels strategies specific to school environments."

The Real-World Integration
Students now run official school Instagram and TikTok accounts, document athletic events, and create promotional videos for school programs. When Amanda requested more student leadership elements, ChatGPT suggested having students pitch content ideas to the administration and track engagement metrics like real social media managers.

The curriculum included unexpected elements like media ethics discussions and digital citizenship, which Amanda hadn't initially considered but proved essential. Several students have landed social media internships based on their school work.

Programming Partnership, Not Replacement
Amanda's approach to AI in programming education focuses on understanding over solutions, fostering deep comprehension rather than quick fixes.

The Debugging Protocol
When students encounter programming challenges, Amanda models productive AI interaction: "Don't ask for the answer—ask for understanding."

A student struggling with Pac-Man mouth animation learns to prompt: "I have a Pac-Man game in Python where the mouth should open and close while moving. Here's my current code: [paste]. The mouth stays static. Explain the algorithm for smooth mouth animation based on movement direction without giving me the exact code."

The Translation Challenge
Since their coding environment uses a different syntax from standard Python, students must understand concepts well enough to implement them in their specific platform. "The magic happened in translation," Amanda explains. "Students had to understand the concept well enough to implement it themselves."

Students developed sophisticated debugging language: instead of saying "it doesn't work," they articulate specific issues like "the collision check happens too late in the game loop."

THE CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATOR: BUILDING TOMORROW'S SKILLS TODAY

“Instead of using weeks and weeks of research like we used to, students could immediately access current pricing and availability.”

Don brings 35 years of teaching experience to Alonzo and Tracy Mourning High School in Miami. His nationally distinguished academy has grown exponentially since 2012, and he teaches 350 students across eight periods covering hospitality, marketing, and entrepreneurship. He embraces multiple AI platforms for creative projects, from beverage branding to children's books, valuing AI's ability to spark essential industry discussions. One student asked, "What's going to happen to graphic designers?" which led to rich conversations about AI's role in the creative industries.

The Travel Project Revolution
Don transformed his decade-old world travel itinerary project using Perplexity to inject real-time data and authentic industry practices. The project had grown stale over the years, with students researching generic hotels and restaurants that might not even exist anymore.

From Stale to Current
He uploaded his original assignment to Perplexity with a comprehensive prompt: "Update this 15-day world travel itinerary assignment with current prices, actual hotels students can research, real restaurants with current menus, and accurate currency conversions. Include sustainable travel options and local customs considerations."

The Real-Time Transformation
Perplexity returned comprehensive updates, including specific hotels with current rates, restaurants with dietary options and price ranges, real-time flight costs, and visa requirements. Don particularly appreciated the inclusion of travel videos and virtual tours.

"Instead of using weeks and weeks of research like we used to, students could immediately access current pricing and availability," Don explained. Students now research actual hotels they could theoretically book versus generic "find a place to stay" instructions.

The real-time pricing taught practical budgeting with current economic conditions, while the verification process developed crucial digital literacy skills. This also freed up more time to work on the project and products.

Meet Don: 35-Year Veteran Embracing Innovation

Benefits for Don:
- Curriculum that remains current without constant manual updates
- Student work that matches professional industry standards
- Rich discussions about AI's impact on creative industries
- Authentic project outcomes that have the potential to attract entrepreneur interest

Benefits for Students:
- Experience with professional-quality creative tools
- Understanding of AI collaboration in creative industries
- Portfolio-worthy work opening doors to internships and opportunities
- Critical thinking about technology's role in their future careers

The Creative Revolution: Professional-Quality Student Work
Don's beverage branding project showcases AI's ability to democratize professional-quality creative work while maintaining educational rigor.

The Scaffolded Creative Process
Groups first brainstormed drink concepts, target markets, and brand personalities using traditional methods, ensuring original thinking before AI enhancement. Then Don demonstrated Gemini's capabilities with live examples.

The Logo Laboratory
Don demonstrates Gemini's capabilities with live examples, typing: "Create a logo for 'Kiss My Grits,' a southern comfort restaurant beverage featuring sweet tea. Use warm colors, mason jar imagery, and vintage Southern styling."

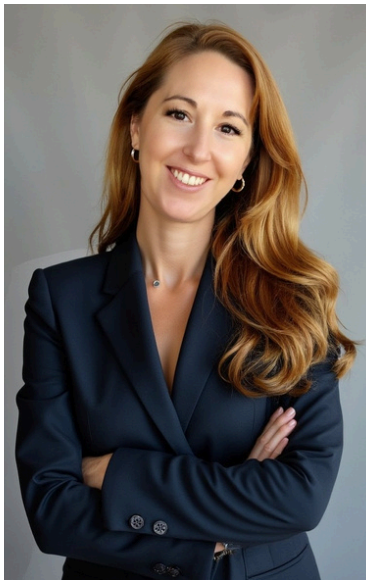
Students watch multiple variations appear in seconds, then learn iteration: "Add gold accents to suggest premium quality" or "Include subtle grits texture in the background."

The Jingle Generation
For music branding, students discovered Gemini's jingle capabilities: "Write a 30-second radio jingle for 'Sunset Splash' tropical drink targeting Gen Z consumers. Make it upbeat with reggaeton influences." The AI generated both lyrics and audio for multiple iterations.

The Critical Question
One student asked, "What's going to happen to graphic designers now?" sparking rich discussion about AI's role in creative industries. The project taught creative skills, AI literacy, and ethics, preparing students for rapidly evolving creative fields.

The Children's Book Adventure
Don's students also authored children's books about travel using AI for both text and illustrations. After Don demonstrated the process by creating his own children's book character (Luna Loo, a traveling sloth), students created their own travel narratives featuring original characters—from animals to creative choices like fire hydrants—using ChatGPT for text and Canva for illustrations.

Students wrote original stories about destinations from their travel projects, then used AI to generate consistent character illustrations and scene artwork. The combination of student creativity and AI capability produced books worthy of publication.



THE STUDENT MOTIVATION ADVOCATE: EXPANDING ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE

"I really couldn't imagine learning what I've learned about investing without having AI right there to answer my questions."

Kristy teaches hospitality to 150 students across four grade levels in Sanford, North Carolina. She brings an international perspective from her previous teaching experience in China and emphasizes personal finance alongside the hospitality curriculum. Initially cautious about AI, she became an enthusiastic advocate after seeing students master complex investment concepts independently. She values AI as a "personal tutor" while warning students not to "use this to replace your brain." Kristy believes AI democratizes access to expensive financial education: "I really couldn't imagine learning what I've learned about investing without having AI right there to answer my questions."

The Investment Tutoring Revolution
Kristy's most powerful innovation empowers students to use ChatGPT as personal investment tutors, addressing the overwhelming complexity that traditionally barriers young people from financial markets.

The Live Demonstration
After surveying seniors about their financial interests, Kristy discovered several who wanted to learn to invest but found traditional resources intimidating or prohibitively expensive. She began with a classroom demonstration:

"Watch me create a personalized learning plan," she told students, then prompted ChatGPT: "Create a 30-day learning plan for a beginner wanting to learn options trading. Include daily lessons with clear objectives, key terms to master, practice problems, and comprehension check questions. Make it appropriate for someone with high school math skills."

The Customization Revolution
Students watched the structured curriculum appear and then learned to customize it: "Now adapt this for your interests." One student interested in cryptocurrency prompted: "Adjust this plan for someone wanting to learn crypto trading instead of options. Include information about blockchain technology and different types of digital assets."

Another focused on sustainable investing: "Create a learning plan for ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) investing for beginners."

Meet Kristy: Global Perspective, Personal Finance Passion

Benefits for Kristy:
- Student engagement through personally relevant financial education
- Access to expensive tutoring resources she couldn't otherwise provide
- Professional-quality student research projects
- Authentic learning outcomes attracting genuine investor interest

Benefits for Students:
- Personalized 24/7 tutoring in complex financial concepts
- Judgment-free learning environment encouraging deep exploration
- Professional research skills applicable across subjects and careers
- Confidence in financial decision-making for their futures

The Judgment-Free Learning Environment
Students discovered they could ask unlimited follow-up questions, such as: "I don't understand implied volatility—explain it using a sports betting analogy." The AI's patient, non-judgmental responses enabled deep exploration of complex topics.

One student who thought investing was "for rich kids" ended up creating the most sophisticated swing trading strategy. He said the AI tutor never made him feel stupid for asking basic questions. Students reported spending hours in voluntary learning, with several opening practice investment accounts with parental permission.

The Research Sophistication
Kristy's demographic analysis project transformed traditional business planning by teaching students professional-level market research using AI-powered analysis.

From Dreams to Data
The project began with clear parameters: "You're not just dreaming up a business—you're going to prove it would actually succeed in Sanford." Students started with focused queries: "Analyze the demographics of Sanford, NC, including population size, age distribution, median household income, education levels, and current entertainment options."

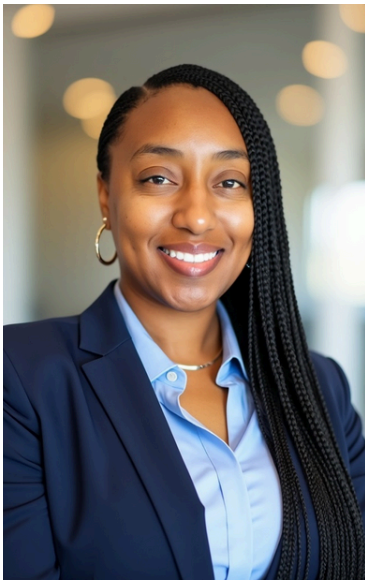
The Discovery Process
Students learned to dig deeper with follow-up prompts: "What entertainment venues have closed in Sanford in the past 5 years and why?" and "What do residents currently travel to Raleigh for that's missing locally?"

One group discovered Sanford lacked family entertainment for middle-income households with children under 12. They prompted: "Based on Sanford's demographics of 30,000 people with a median income of $45,000 and 35% having children, what family entertainment businesses have succeeded in similar-sized Southern towns?"

The Professional Outcome
The quality of student work has completely transformed. Instead of "I want to open a club," students presented data-driven proposals like "Based on 3,000 households with children and no indoor recreation options, a family entertainment center would capture X market share."

One student's escape room proposal was so thorough, complete with competitor analysis from neighboring towns, that a local investor expressed interest. Students learned business isn't about guessing—it's about research.

THE STUDENT MOTIVATION ADVOCATE: EXPANDING ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE



"One young lady who wanted to be an event planner saw herself in dozens of different versions and started crying because she'd never imagined herself that way."

Lakeshia brings 22 years of experience, including four years in CTE, to her Miami high school hospitality program. Her successful recruiting grew the program from 50 to 138 students, earning her an assistant teacher. She discovered AI's power through visual learning, particularly the "Future Self" portrait project, where students saw themselves in professional roles. Now she trains other teachers in AI integration. Lakeshia believes AI makes abstract career goals tangible: "Students who had never seen themselves in professional contexts suddenly possessed tangible images of their potential futures."

The Future Self Revolution
Lakeshia's groundbreaking portrait project demonstrates AI's psychological impact on student motivation and self-perception.

The Teacher Modeling
The project began with Lakeshia displaying her own AI-generated professional portraits on the classroom screen, immediately capturing attention as students saw their teacher transformed into various professional versions.

"Your turn to see your future," she announced.

The Detailed Visioning Process
Students wrote detailed descriptions of their dream careers, including specific roles, work environments, and professional attire. One aspiring hotel manager wrote: "I see myself as a luxury hotel general manager, wearing a tailored navy suit, standing in an elegant marble lobby with fresh flowers and crystal chandeliers."

Students uploaded casual selfies—often silly ones from their phones—then crafted specific prompts: "Transform this photo into a professional portrait of a hotel general manager in business attire in a luxury hotel lobby with warm lighting that suggests success and confidence."

Meet Lakeshia: Visual Learning Champion

Benefits for Lakeshia:
- Student motivation through powerful visual goal-setting
- Colleague respect and leadership opportunities through successful training
- Professional growth through innovative teaching methods
- Program growth through enhanced student engagement

Benefits for Students:
- Powerful visual motivation through professional self-imagery
- Increased confidence in career goal-setting
- Practical assets for college and job applications
- Psychological shift in self-perception and possibilities

The Emotional Breakthrough
Adobe Express generated multiple professional variations per student, showing them in different professional settings, outfits, and poses. "One young lady who wanted to be an event planner saw herself in dozens of different versions," Lakeshia recalls. "She started crying because she'd never imagined herself that way."

Students incorporated chosen portraits into vision boards, college application materials, and LinkedIn profiles. Many printed favorites to display at home.

"My mom framed mine," one student shared. "She says it reminds us both that I'm going places."

The Teacher Training Innovation
Lakeshia partnered with her school's AI teacher to design professional development that converted 25 veteran teachers from AI-resistant to active users.

The Peanut Butter Strategy
The workshop opened with Lakeshia's famous "peanut butter and jelly" exercise—teachers wrote instructions for making a sandwich, then watched someone follow them literally, demonstrating the importance of precise AI prompting.

"Teachers immediately understood why 'make me a lesson plan' wouldn't work," Lakeshia explains.

The Rotation Stations Success
She structured sessions with rotating stations focusing on different AI platforms:

- ChatGPT station: "Create a differentiated lesson for your most challenging class period"
- Perplexity station: "Find current resources for your most outdated unit"
- Magic School AI station: Assessment creation practice

"I deliberately showed my failed prompts first," Lakeshia notes. "Teachers needed to see that expertise takes practice."

The 90% Conversion Rate

Follow-up surveys showed 90% of participants actively using AI tools within two weeks, with teachers of students with disabilities particularly excited about IEP accommodation generation.

FINDING YOUR AI TEACHING COLLABORATOR

IDENTIFYING YOUR EDUCATOR TYPE

Are you a Career Transition Educator?

- Recently moved from industry to classroom
- Struggle translating complex expertise into student-friendly lessons
- Need help with pedagogical approaches and age-appropriate activities
- Want to maintain industry relevance while building teaching skills

LEVERAGE YOUR AI TOOLS

Start with: Magic School AI for guided lesson planning prompts, Claude for professional presentation materials

Are you a Differentiated Learning Specialist?

- Serve students with diverse learning needs
- Create individualized content across multiple subjects
- Spend evenings adapting materials for different ability levels
- Believe in high expectations with appropriate support

Start with: ChatGPT for multi-tiered differentiation and IEP goal creation

Are you a Veteran Program Builder?

- Manage complex programs with multiple stakeholders
- Handle administrative demands that pull you from teaching
- Develop new curricula or scale successful programs
- Need systems thinking for sustainable growth

Start with: Claude for administrative automation, Perplexity for current industry intelligence

Are you a Creative Technology Integrator?

- Teach technical or creative subjects
- Want students creating professional-quality work
- Focus on objective assessment and consistent standards
- Embrace innovation while maintaining rigor

Start with: Multiple platforms (ChatGPT for curriculum, specific creative tools for projects)

Are you a Student Empowerment Advocate?

- Focus on building student confidence and agency
- Want to provide access to high-quality resources
- Believe in personalized learning at scale
- Emphasize visual and engaging instruction

Start with: Visual tools (Adobe Express, Gamma AI) and research platforms (Perplexity)

GETTING STARTED: YOUR FIRST 30 DAYS

WEEK 1: FOUNDATION BUILDING

- Choose one category that matches your biggest challenge
- Sign up for the basic version of your recommended platform
- Try three simple prompts from your examples
- Document what works and what doesn't

WEEK 2: SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- Practice prompt refinement using successful examples
- Create one piece of content you can use immediately
- Share your experiment with a trusted colleague
- Identify one time-saving application

WEEK 3: STUDENT INTEGRATION

- Introduce students to one AI application
- Model proper use and maintain learning standards
- Require students to explain AI-assisted work
- Gather student feedback on experience

WEEK 4: REFLECTION AND EXPANSION

- Assess time saved and quality improvements
- Plan expansion to additional applications
- Consider upgrading to paid versions if needed
- Design colleague sharing strategy

SUCCESS PRINCIPLES FROM THE FIELD

MAINTAIN EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

AI should enhance learning objectives, not replace them. Every AI application should clearly support specific educational goals and student growth.

REQUIRE UNDERSTANDING, NOT JUST OUTPUT

Students must be able to explain their AI-assisted work. If they can't teach it, they don't understand it. This prevents mindless copying while building genuine comprehension.

START WITH HUMAN CONNECTION

India's success stems from using AI to strengthen rather than replace relationships. AI gives educators more time to actually connect with students because they're not drowning in paperwork.

ITERATE THOUGHTFULLY

April's systematic refinement approach proves crucial: the first output is rarely perfect. The magic happens in the conversation—refining prompts based on student needs.

DOCUMENT AND SHARE IMPACT

Jeremy's comprehensive tracking helps justify and scale innovations. When administrators see concrete time savings and improved outcomes, they become supporters rather than skeptics.

ADVANCED APPLICATIONS: YEAR TWO AND BEYOND

CROSS-CURRICULAR INTEGRATION

- Partner with colleagues to create interdisciplinary AI-enhanced projects
- Develop school-wide AI literacy standards
- Create shared prompt libraries and best practices

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

- Form AI educator groups for ongoing support
- Share failures and breakthroughs openly
- Mentor new educators in AI integration

STUDENT AI LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

- Teach students to evaluate AI outputs critically
- Develop ethical AI use policies collaboratively
- Create student AI mentor programs

PROGRAM INNOVATION

- Use AI for comprehensive program evaluation
- Develop new courses entirely around AI collaboration
- Create community partnerships leveraging AI capabilities

ADDRESSING COMMON CONCERNS

"WILL AI REPLACE TEACHERS?"

These stories prove the opposite—AI amplifies human capabilities rather than replacing them. AI makes educators better teachers because they have more time for what only humans can do: build relationships, inspire, and guide.

"IS IT CHEATING?"

The approach throughout these stories provides the framework: educators are teaching students to work with AI like professionals do—as a tool for enhanced capability, not as a shortcut to avoid learning.

"HOW DO WE ENSURE QUALITY?"

The scaffolded approaches throughout these stories show how to maintain academic rigor while embracing innovation—always starting with clear learning objectives and requiring student understanding.

"WHAT ABOUT CONSISTENT STANDARDS?"

Amanda's grading consistency system and India's differentiation tools demonstrate AI's potential to improve objectivity and personalization when thoughtfully implemented.

BUILDING SCHOOL-WIDE SUPPORT

START SMALL, THINK BIG

Begin with individual classroom applications that solve immediate problems, then scale based on success.

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING

Track time saved, student engagement improvements, and learning outcome data to build administrative support.

SHARE STORIES, NOT STATISTICS

Don's entrepreneur interest in student work and India's competition victory provide compelling narratives for stakeholders.

ADDRESS CONCERNS DIRECTLY

Acknowledge legitimate worries while demonstrating responsible implementation through clear policies and student success.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE IS HUMAN + AI

"These nine educators prove that AI's most significant educational value lies not in automating teaching but in amplifying human potential."

When April transforms complex engineering into hands-on discovery, when India's students win competitions, when Kristy's students tackle investment concepts once reserved for the wealthy—these aren't stories about technology replacing education. They're stories about technology enabling better education.

The Transformation Continues
Don's 35-year career perspective offers wisdom for the journey ahead. AI might be the most exciting development in education because it finally lets students create at the level of their ambitions.

That expansion—of professional tools, personalized tutoring, current information, and creative capabilities—represents AI's true educational promise. Not the elimination of human judgment, creativity, and connection, but their enhancement and expansion.

Your Story Begins Now
Every educator reading this guide has the opportunity to become a pioneer in their own context. Whether you're translating industry expertise like April, serving diverse learners like India, building programs like Jeremy, innovating with technology like Amanda, or empowering students like Kristy and Lakeshia—AI can amplify your existing strengths while addressing your specific challenges.

The question isn't whether AI will transform education—these stories prove it already is.
The question is whether you'll help shape that transformation to benefit every student you serve.

The Next Chapter
As LaTara's students discovered when they researched banking deserts and Sherece witnessed resume transformations, the most powerful educational moments happen when students suddenly see new possibilities for their lives. AI tools, thoughtfully implemented by caring educators, can create those moments at scale.

The future belongs to educators who embrace AI as a teaching partner, students who develop AI literacy alongside content knowledge, and schools that support innovation while preserving the human connections that make learning meaningful.

Your story—and your students' stories—are waiting to be written. The tools are ready.
The examples are proven. The only question remaining is: What will you create?

For more resources, implementation guides, and ongoing support in AI-enhanced education, visit our NAF-Does-That page, connect with the NAF curriculum team, and explore the specific tools and platforms featured in these stories. Remember: the best AI implementation starts with a single prompt, a willingness to experiment, and a commitment to student success.