

FROM SPARK TO PRACTICE

How Adult Education and Literacy Teachers Perceive and Use GenAI Tools to Create Learning Resources

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Texas Center for the Advancement
of Literacy & Learning
EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT



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Acknowledgments

Thank you to the dedicated **teachers** who took the time to try something new, share their creations, and offer feedback on the GenAIMS experience.

We also acknowledge our partners at TCALL, who served as champions and saw the value of this work:

Dr. Glenda Rose, Managing Director, for being a disciplined visionary and helping us hone the scope of the PD and tailor it to the needs of adult educators in Texas.

Ashly Winkle, Associate Director, DEPD, for her role as a fellow tech enthusiast and creative PD provider, brainstorming with us from the very first stages of ideation and collaborating with us all the way through.

Ryan Lett, Program Coordinator I, for leading the coordination of GenAIMS, fitting the PD into the bigger picture of Texas AEL PD opportunities, and spending time and effort on making this an excellent PD for the educators she cares deeply about.

Suggested Citation:

Riggs, R., Vanek, J., & Goumas, J. (2025). *From spark to practice: How adult education and literacy teachers perceive and use GenAI tools to create learning resources*. World Education, a JSI initiative.

Abstract

Recent advancements in generative AI (GenAI) highlight a pressing need for professional development (PD) among adult education and literacy (AEL) teachers. This report examines the GenAIMS (GenAI Maker Space) professional development (PD) initiative led by World Education, an initiative of JSI, for the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL). GenAIMS PD trained a cohort of AEL teachers in Texas on the responsible and effective use of GenAI. Using a qualitative case study and mixed methods program evaluation, we explored teachers' perceptions and program effectiveness. Teachers perceived GenAI as highly useful, preferring to leverage it as a "starting point" for accelerating idea generation and creating adult-relevant, contextualized materials, rather than a tool for creating a final product. However, their expressed enthusiasm for this strategy was tempered by the necessity for significant human effort to refine outputs, manage issues of accuracy/bias, and address various moral dilemmas about the technology. We conclude that sustained GenAI adoption in AEL settings requires institutional support for training, paid licenses, and time for experimentation, alongside a pedagogical focus on the topics of prompting, critical evaluation, and ethics to ensure that GenAI technologies meet their promise of serving as augmented intelligence in the hands of teachers.

What We Learned

Through the GenAIMS professional development initiative, we gained valuable insights into how adult educators perceive the integration of generative AI in their practice:

- **It's a "starting point" for instructional design.** Rather than producing final, classroom-ready products, teachers value GenAI as a cognitive partner that helps them overcome "blank page paralysis," brainstorm ideas, and generate initial drafts or "skeletons" for lessons.
- **It helps with differentiation, contextualizing, and efficiency.** Educators successfully leveraged GenAI tools to create level-appropriate, adult-relevant materials, such as workplace-focused grammar lessons and differentiated reading passages, which are time-consuming to produce.
- **Human oversight is essential.** Despite the speed of GenAI, teachers consistently emphasized the need for significant human effort to refine outputs, verify accuracy, and ensure content is culturally and contextually appropriate for adult learners.
- **Teachers need structured, institutional support.** For GenAI to reach its full potential as a teacher tool for "augmented intelligence," teachers require more than just access; they need paid time for experimentation, subsidized licenses, and training that prioritizes prompting strategies, critical evaluation, and ethics.

This study underscores that while teachers find use for GenAI in adult education, they need and want the skills to actively lead the technology rather than passively use it in their practice.

Background

Recent advancements in generative AI (GenAI), particularly the enhanced capabilities of large language models (LLMs), have resulted in increased occupational exposure for educators and educational administrators (Felten et al., 2021). As generative AI for education continues to evolve, perceptions of its usefulness remain mixed. The technology shows potential for enhancing learning, yet it also raises important concerns, such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, academic integrity, over-reliance on automated supports, the ecological consequences of the large data centers that are used to support AI, and the risk of widening existing inequities when access, guidance, and use are unevenly distributed. Current research suggests that targeted professional development can equip teachers to navigate these risks and better manage GenAI's inherent limitations (Chen et al., 2025). Yet, without such support, problems will persist. Historically, educational technology (edtech) has failed to live up to its promise due

to many factors, including a lack of teacher preparation (UNESCO, 2023). A recent survey of over 600 educators in federally funded adult education programs found that fewer than 11% reported receiving professional development on using digital tools (Nguyen & Cacicio, 2025). This research suggests that a lack of teacher training on the use of GenAI tools may limit their effective use in adult education settings. From March to April of 2025, World Education (World Ed), an initiative of JSI, partnered with Texas A&M's Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning (TCALL) to facilitate a hybrid professional development opportunity called the GenAIMS (GenAI Maker Space). GenAIMS was designed to build on World Ed's success in implementing its EdTech Maker Space (ETMS) approach to teacher PD, which leverages edtech to create open educational resources (OER). In the ETMS, teachers develop and apply skills in using educational and workplace digital tools as they design high-quality, reusable OER; this form of PD has served as a mechanism for simultaneously strengthening teachers' technological knowledge and skills while expanding the availability of OER in the historically resource-constrained area of adult education (Vanek et al., 2023). When ChatGPT became the fastest-growing application in history, teachers quickly began using it to develop learning materials. In response to these new GenAI opportunities, World Ed adapted its EdTech Maker Space approach to help educators create and improve Open Educational Resources (OER), incorporating AI literacy concepts into ETMS for the first time.

In the Fall of 2024, we partnered with TCALL's Distance Education PD Center (DEPDC) to co-design the GenAI Maker Space and recruited the first cohort in early 2025. This group of 18 adult education and literacy (AEL) teachers based in Texas engaged with the content and each other through four 90-minute synchronous Zoom sessions over six weeks, each meeting concluded with an exit ticket and was followed by a homework assignment. GenAIMS participants learned core principles for effective use of GenAI, including prompting and evaluation strategies to support the development of relevant, level-appropriate OER for AEL students. They also addressed issues regarding responsible use of GenAI, including ethical concerns, such as algorithmic bias and environmental impact. The training did not focus on specific tools; rather, it introduced broad categories of applications, selected through the co-design process, including the popular chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT) and out-of-the-box teacher tools (e.g., Brisk) that the TCALL team had approved for statewide use. This report shares insights into teachers' perceptions and use of GenAI, as well as which aspects of the training contributed to their growth.

Methodology

The research described in this report responds to two central questions:

- (1) What does participant engagement reveal regarding how in-service adult educators perceive and use GenAI tools?
- (2) How might future iterations of the training be improved?

To evaluate the program, we used a mixed-methods design, collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data to describe patterns of engagement and identify opportunities to strengthen future training. For teachers' perceptions and use, we conducted a qualitative case study analyzing data through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989).

Data Sources And Collection

Data collection occurred during and after the PD and included the sources and collection methods laid out in Table 1. We included a range of diverse sources to support triangulation (see Mathison, 1988; Tracy, 2020). Data were gathered to examine how AEL teachers engaged with the GenAIMS PD, how they perceived and applied GenAI tools, and how the training could be improved to better support their practice.

Table 1. Data Sources and Collection Methods

	Description	Purpose
Pre- and Post-PD Surveys (Appendix A and B)	Administered at the beginning and end of the PD series, the survey included items on participants' roles, comfort with digital tools, and perceptions of GenAI's benefits and limitations.	Assessed changes in digital comfort and GenAI perceptions; established baseline characteristics.
Recorded Zoom Sessions	Synchronous meetings were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized; transcripts served as the primary qualitative dataset.	Provided examples of engagement, learning processes, and evolving perceptions during the training.
Workbooks (Appendix C)	Structured tasks completed between sessions to apply GenAI tools to instructional activities.	Illustrated how participants practiced and implemented GenAI in authentic contexts.
Exit Tickets (Appendix C)	Short reflections submitted after each session.	Tracked self-reported perceptions, challenges, and feedback across the PD series.
Participant Tracker	Attendance and completion data to track each participant's engagement.	Enabled us to examine feedback from participants who had different levels of engagement.

GenAIMS participants voluntarily opted into the research via a recruitment survey and provided informed consent for all data collection activities. They were still welcome in the PD if they opted out of the research; however, their participation data were not included in the data set.

Theoretical Framework

To address the first question about how adult educators perceive and use GenAI tools, we examined teachers' self-reported perceptions and use of GenAI using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). As shown in Figure 1, TAM proposes that, influenced by external variables, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence one's intentions to use a technology and are early predictors of actual technology use.

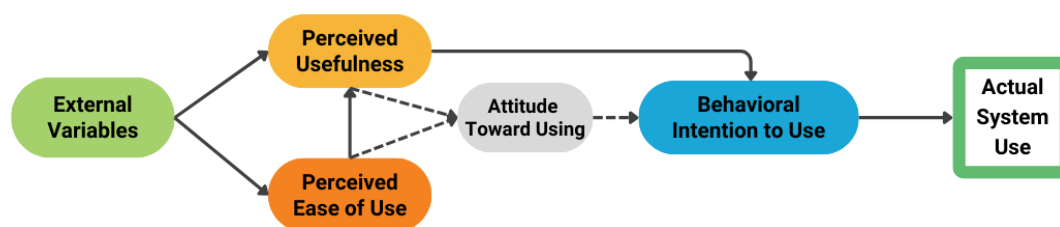


Figure 1. Technology Acceptance Model

While the TAM is typically used to predict technology adoption patterns, we leveraged it as an organizational and analytical framework to sort and interpret qualitative data. For this reason, we used the original model rather than a more recent, more complex one, such as the Unified Theory of Acceptance

and Use of Technology 2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012). We drew on some of the original TAM themes to drive analysis in the latter phases of coding.

Participants

The GenAIMS cohort represented a diverse cross-section of adult education professionals from various institutions in Texas, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Texas GenAIMS Cohort Characteristics

Institution Types Represented	Community colleges, public libraries, school districts, and non-profit organizations
Professional Roles	Instructors (largest group), curriculum specialists, instructional designers, administrators. Many participants reported serving in multiple roles, reflecting the “wearer of many hats” nature of adult education.
Subjects Taught or Supported	Workforce Development, ESOL (beginner, intermediate, advanced), Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE/HSE/GED)

Representation across participants was balanced, and over half identified as working in multiple areas, such as ABE and Workforce, or at multiple levels of ESOL.

The cohort consisted of 38 initial registrants, 18 participants who joined at least one session, and 10 who responded to the post-PD survey. The group possessed diverse prior experience and expertise using GenAI. In the pre-PD survey, while the majority of the group reported feeling “moderately” to “very” comfortable using general digital tools for instruction, their specific familiarity with Generative AI was highly stratified. From the pre-PD survey, it was clear that the cohort included both “every day” power users who had used tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot for complex tasks, and absolute beginners who reported having used AI “less than once a week” or not at all.

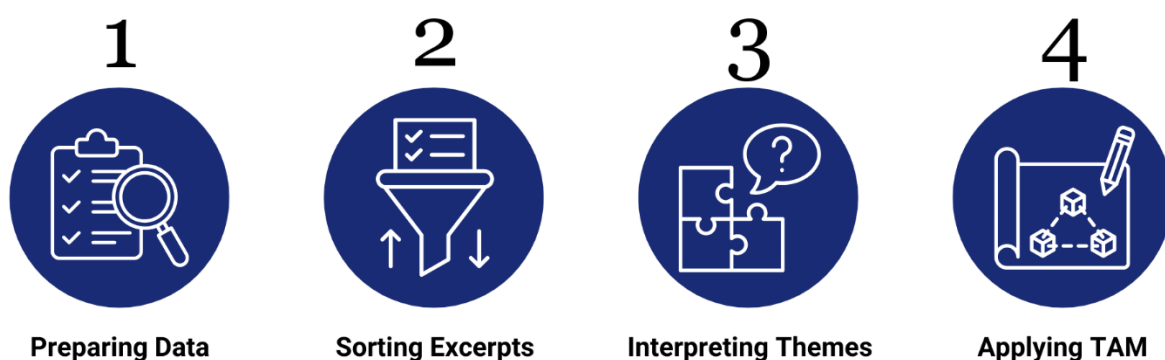
Data Analysis

We used basic descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative data from the pre- and post-PD surveys, administered during registration and at the end of the six weeks. We used the data to gain insights into the cohort’s composition and to gather feedback on participation. The instruments used for data collection are listed in Table 1. Each instrument, except for the transcripts and participant tracker, is provided in the appendices.

We analyzed the qualitative data as a team using a step-by-step, collaborative process to ensure consistency and accuracy. After cleaning and anonymizing the interview transcripts, our team of three researchers reviewed the data and grouped responses according to the study’s key questions. We then looked for patterns in the data, refining and combining ideas into a smaller set of shared themes. The team met regularly to discuss and resolve differences to arrive at these themes, which were then applied across interview, workbook, and survey responses. The most common themes focused on how educators worked with AI-generated output, barriers to use, usefulness, ease of use, and personalization. Our last step was to organize excerpts of the data labeled with these themes according to TAM: 1) Perceived Usefulness, 2) Perceived Ease of Use, and 3) External Variables. Using TAM as an analytical

framework, we analyzed what teachers said about the factors that influence their intention to adopt. The general steps of our process are depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Data Processing and Analysis



Findings

This section presents findings aligned with our two research questions (RQs) about educators' perceptions and use of GenAI: (RQ1) how adult educators perceive and use GenAI tools, and (RQ2) how future iterations of the professional development might be improved. We begin by sharing responses to RQ2, the program evaluation, because more participants completed the evaluation activities, and we wanted to provide a picture of PD quality. Then, we share findings driven by RQ1, which describe educators' perceptions and use of GenAI.

Program Evaluation

The program evaluation of GenAIMS draws heavily on descriptive statistics and qualitative feedback from the pre-PD survey and post-PD survey, along with data collected regarding participation in various activities, a Participant Tracker. This evaluation focuses on three key areas: teacher engagement, confidence and relevance, and intention to change. The first two categories provide insights for content and logistics of future training, while the final category examines how the training influenced the "Behavioral Intention to Use" dimension of the TAM framework. Before describing what we learned, it's important to note that, prior to the PD, teachers had already shown a strong belief in GenAI's value, with 60.53% agreeing that "Generative AI enhances teaching." Furthermore, they were already frequent users of digital tools for instruction, with 41.03% reporting daily use, setting a high baseline for technological engagement before the GenAIMS training began.

Teacher Engagement

The participants displayed a wide spectrum of engagement and output. A dedicated group of seven high-engagement participants successfully attended all sessions and completed all workbook activities, using the technology to generate lesson plans, administrative correspondence, and student-facing materials. Conversely, a segment of seven low-engagement participants struggled to produce artifacts or attend sessions, with several requiring significant "nudging" or failing to complete the initial modules. Despite

these disparities in execution, the collective motivation across the group remained consistent according to the pre- and post-survey data: a desire to move beyond basic exploration to master safe, efficient strategies for integrating AI into adult learning environments.

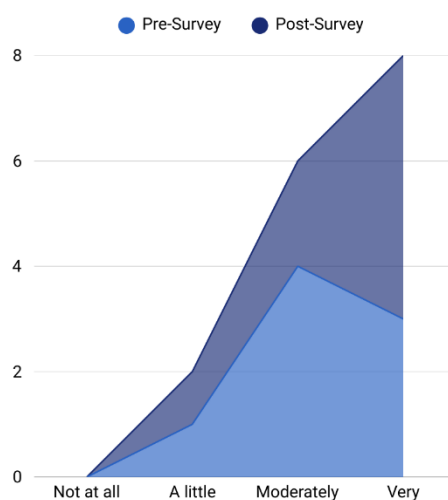
According to the post-PD survey, the structure and facilitation of the PD seemed to contribute positively to participant engagement, though logistical factors posed challenges in attendance. The full GenAIMS PD was designed for four synchronous sessions, but attendance varied. Of the 10 post-survey respondents, six participants attended all four sessions. The primary reported reasons for non-attendance were scheduling conflicts, which ranged from family emergencies to work requirements, such as meetings.

Most participants expressed appreciation for the facilitators, responding that the way facilitators set up and ran the synchronous sessions “definitely supported my engagement.” One participant specifically noted, “I think the facilitators were amazing and the lessons/activities were helpful and engaging!” They viewed the combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities favorably, with all 10 post-survey respondents indicating it “supported” or “definitely supported” their engagement. Interestingly, practical issues with the technology interface were noted as a barrier. One participant reported that the Learning Management System “definitely made my engagement difficult.” Another requested an adjustment to “limit the number of tabs we need to have open,” presumably during the synchronous sessions.

In the next iteration of GenAIMS, we have planned several adjustments to address the barriers to participation described above. At the time of writing, the four training sessions are being transformed into standalone modules that teachers can take online, independently, with the option to attend synchronous, facilitated, follow-up meetings with a cohort. Additionally, since the GenAIMS PD, the DEPDC has procured a license for a new, more user-friendly LMS, which should reduce the friction.

Confidence and Relevance

According to survey and exit ticket data, the PD increased teachers' confidence in using GenAI and reinforced its perceived value for both their practice and their learners. Most teachers started with some basic knowledge, but the training appeared to move them from “trying things out” to feeling confident using AI in their teaching. As a cohort, the teachers' average confidence on the pre-survey was 2.56, which placed them between “A little” and “Moderately” comfortable with GenAI. The post-survey average was 3.50, bumping confidence up to “Moderately” and “Very” comfortable. Figure 3 shows the increase in confidence level for the 8 participants who completed both the pre- and post-surveys.



The respondents also gave high ratings (over 80% somewhat or strongly agree) that the following topics are important for their teaching practice:

- Basics of AI: Understanding of what GenAI is and how it works
- Mindful Use: Understanding the implications of GenAI, including ethical considerations (e.g., environmental, user data and privacy, platform transparency)
- GenAI Tools: The types of GenAI platforms / tools available and how they can be used

- GenAI Prompting: Strategies for effective prompting and fine-tuning/refining of GenAI outputs
- GenAI Use Cases: Examples of how GenAI can be strategically leveraged to fill learning resource gaps, such as lesson plan development, generating student exercises, contextualizing/leveling existing resources
- Evaluating Outputs: Resources for evaluating GenAI outputs based on factors such as bias and accuracy

In open-ended responses, participants sought tiered training, including an "advanced class" and content on specific program features (e.g., image generation for ESL). They also requested guidance on policy regarding AI use.

Intentions to Change

After the PD, participants articulated concrete plans for integrating GenAI into their teaching, with a focus on differentiation and efficiency. In the post-PD survey, participants articulated intentions to modify their practices. They said they would:

- "USE IT MORE!"
- "use AI to customize lessons to different levels."
- "use it to refine my resource and lesson creations"
- "I hope to use AI more for differentiation, and I hope to access or explore the OER more."

Notably, participants didn't reserve their comments just for the integration of GenAI; some included comments about what they learned about OER. In the post-PD survey, one instructional designer articulated a specific intention to "access or explore the OER more (which I used to use before AI)" as part of their goal to improve instruction quality and save time. Another participant explicitly stated their post-PD goal was to "broaden my usage of OER content."

The pre- and post-PD survey data suggest an increase in GenAI use. Pre-PD survey data showed 17.95% of respondents used GenAI "every day"; the post-PD survey data showed 60% of respondents using GenAI "every day." In exit tickets, over half of respondents reported applying what they learned shortly after the first two sessions (58.8% after Session 1 and 50% after Session 2). The teachers' examples of in-class application included:

- using Diffit to create an alternate version of a lesson for lower English proficiency levels
- integrating AI to help students with resumes and professional communication
- using MagicSchool AI to create presentations, quizzes, and worksheets

Each assignment in GenAIMS was designed to be directly applicable to the participant's context. They had options on how to focus their work, including the ability to choose which tools to experiment with, what standards to align their work to, and what to create based on recent or upcoming lessons. Figure 4 shows how one teacher who completed all four sessions used ChatGPT to generate a lesson plan,

Canva AI features to create the learning artifact (a webpage) for the lesson, and Google Forms to develop the formative assessment.

Figure 4. Example of a participant's work



Exit ticket responses show us that concerns about accuracy and the need for output evaluation remain a central theme, indicating that mindful integration is required. Of course, this mindfulness was encouraged and promoted in the teacher training. One teacher specifically mentioned the need to “validate the generated content carefully for ... inaccuracies.” These concerns echo a consistent theme in the course, namely, that teachers, whether for ethical or functional reasons, need to carefully check and refine content created by GenAI.

Evaluation Summary

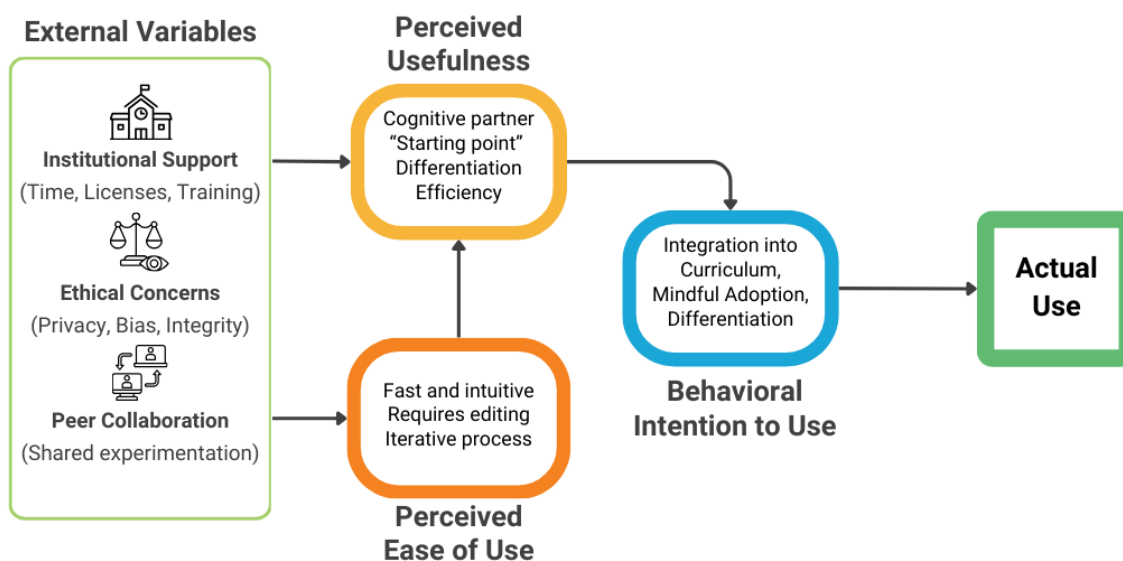
With respect to RQ2, the evaluation indicates varied levels of participation alongside consistently strong engagement with the goals of the GenAIMS professional development. Attendance and artifact completion were shaped by logistical constraints and platform usability, yet survey and qualitative feedback suggest that the PD's structure, facilitation, and blend of synchronous and asynchronous activities generally supported engagement. This engagement was associated with increased confidence, strong perceptions of relevance, and clear intentions to change practice, particularly to support differentiation, efficiency, and instructional resource development. Evidence of early application and increased reported frequency of GenAI use following the PD suggests that engagement extended beyond participation to initial instructional experimentation, while ongoing concerns about accuracy highlight the continued need for mindful and evaluative use of GenAI in practice.

Participants' Perceptions and Use of GenAI

Next, we address (RQ1) how in-service adult educators perceive and use GenAI tools. Our findings, based on analyses of transcripts and workbooks from the full GenAIMS cohort, describe how in-service adult educators engaged with GenAI. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model, we identified the factors that shaped their experiences, their sense of how easy the tools were to use, their perceptions of GenAI's usefulness, and the ways they ultimately incorporated it into their work. This follows the sequence suggested by TAM, which describes how a person's perceptions regarding how useful a technology is and how easy it is to use it shapes their intent to and actual use of the technology. Figure 5 shows a summary of how our

findings fit in with the constructs of TAM that we used in our analysis process: external variables, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and intention to use.

Figure 5. Findings organized by the TAM



Generative AI is fast and intuitive, but not effortless.

This study captures teachers' perceptions of the effort required to integrate GenAI tools into their daily instructional practices. Prior research has shown that perceived ease of use influences both perceptions of usefulness and intention to use technology, with ease of use also helping to overcome initial resistance to adoption (Alharbi & Drew, 2014).

"I think you always have to check the output... I'm always changing something."

Across the cohort, teachers commented positively on the speed with which tools generated responses to their prompts, quickly interpreting data, simplifying language, or producing lesson content. This immediacy likely contributed to perceptions of convenience and efficiency. At the same time, teachers consistently emphasized that using GenAI effectively still required considerable human effort and expertise. Participants talked about the need to continually edit and refine AI-generated materials, explaining that while GenAI could provide a strong "starting point," it rarely produced classroom-ready outputs. As one teacher noted, "I think you always have to check the output... I'm always changing something." Others observed that even structured or pre-made prompts did not always yield content aligned to the desired language level or grade. Additionally, some found that free versions of GenAI tools required additional tweaking to achieve the right tone or accuracy, leading one teacher to conclude that "sometimes it would almost be easier to do it myself." These findings suggest that their perceptions of ease of use were tempered by the iterative nature of working with GenAI. Teachers could engage with it quickly and intuitively, yet still needed to invest time and professional judgment to make the results instructionally valuable.

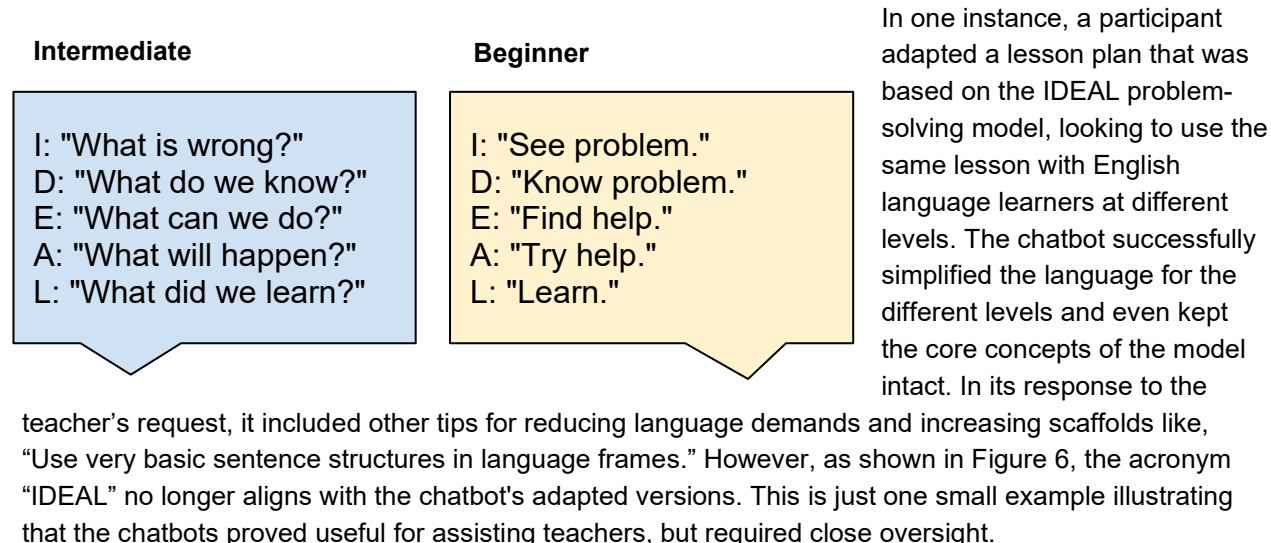
Taken together, the participants' descriptions of their experiences suggest that they think GenAI tools are fast and intuitive, but this does not automatically translate into effortless use. Perceived ease of use improved with training and practice, yet teachers' ongoing need to monitor, revise, and contextualize outputs complicated the straightforward TAM assumption that ease of use simply feeds into usefulness.

Generative AI is useful as a starting point but not for a final product.

Perceived usefulness reflects the extent to which teachers believed GenAI enhanced their instructional practice, and across the cohort, this perception strengthened throughout the PD experience. Even before the PD, most participants already viewed GenAI positively, with over half agreeing that “Generative AI enhances teaching.” After the PD, their reflections indicated not just sustained confidence but a deeper understanding of how to use the tools purposefully. Many expressed explicit intentions to “use it more,” to “customize lessons to different levels,” and to “refine [their] resource and lesson creations.” Several noted plans to embed GenAI tasks into syllabi and curricula, signaling a shift from initial curiosity to active integration into instruction.

A major driver of perceived usefulness was the technology's role in supporting differentiation and efficiency. Instructors described GenAI as especially valuable in adult education contexts where they must “adapt materials for different levels” with limited prep time; as one teacher put it, AI “saves time” by generating differentiated activities quickly. Tools like Diffit helped produce alternate versions of lessons for lower-level English learners, reducing the burden of creating multiple pathways for diverse classrooms. Educators also emphasized the scarcity of leveled materials that feel appropriate for adults, noting that simplified resources often appear “too childish” or “too generic.” GenAI addressed this gap by enabling the creation of texts and tasks that were both accessible and age-appropriate. Some examples of these activities included workplace-focused grammar lessons, themed reading passages, mock websites, and differentiated dialogues drawn from authentic transcripts, all of which demonstrate how GenAI supported relevance and level-appropriate design.

Figure 6. Example of acronym adapted for two levels



Teachers frequently described GenAI as a cognitive partner that supported their thinking and design processes. Rather than evaluating usefulness based solely on final outputs, they emphasized how the tools helped them overcome “blank page paralysis,” brainstorm new ideas, and organize instructional content. One participant captured this sentiment when he explained that AI “will give me something that I can use as a starting point.” Similarly, another noted that when he found himself “in a rut,” AI-generated ideas nudged him toward new instructional approaches. Teachers regularly highlighted how GenAI helped them generate outlines, structure thoughts, or turn loosely formed ideas into coherent drafts.

“It is not a replacement for what I do, but it gives me a spine to build from.”

Teachers also described GenAI as a kind of teaching assistant that expanded what they could imagine or produce. They used it to generate quizzes, reading passages, and fill-in-the-blank exercises, and then they used those outputs to create more interactive tasks. One participant explained, “It is not a replacement for what I do, but it gives me a spine to build from.” Others echoed this metaphor, describing GenAI as “starter dough” or a “skeleton” they could shape into richer instructional materials. At the same time, teachers’ perceptions of usefulness were tempered by recognized limitations. Some noted that simplified texts could become overly formal, “flowery,” or infantilizing, while others raised concerns about accuracy, inclusivity, bias, and the possibility that AI might rely on “stolen or copyrighted content.” Several participants pointed out that the time required to edit AI outputs sometimes offset the time saved, though others countered that even imperfect drafts were “still better than starting from scratch.”

Ultimately, usefulness for adult educators was also tied to real-world relevance. Workbook artifacts showed strong efforts to contextualize materials: math based on workplace- and health-related problem-solving, vocabulary for employees of a handicap-accessible van company, resume-building tasks, and industry-specific elevator pitches. Across the cohort, participants said that GenAI was especially helpful when it enabled teachers to create authentic, learner-centered materials more efficiently. Taken together, the findings suggest that GenAI’s greatest value lies not in full automation but in its ability to accelerate idea generation, support differentiation, and help educators focus on high-value instructional decisions while maintaining relevance to adult learners’ lives.

Teachers need time, paid licenses, opportunities for training and experimentation, and transparency to make the most of GenAI.

While perceptions of ease of use and usefulness revealed much about how teachers experienced GenAI, their intentions to adopt and sustain use were also shaped by a constellation of external variables. These contextual and personal factors included cost, time, skill level, training, and opportunities for experimentation and collaboration. In the adult education context, where teachers often navigate resource constraints and diverse learner needs, these variables sometimes played a decisive role in whether GenAI tools became routine parts of practice.

Cost. Pricing tiers emerged as an important factor influencing perceptions and adoption. Teachers noted that free versions of tools “need more tweaking” and offer fewer options for input and export formats. This increased the labor required to prepare materials. Premium versions were viewed as more efficient but often unaffordable. Some teachers paid out of pocket to access advanced features because “it saves time and improves the quality of what we do,” while others rejected the expectation of self-funding and argued that subscription models undermine equitable AI integration.

Time. Time surfaced as both a motivator and a barrier. Teachers juggling multiple jobs and roles, as many in adult education do, found it difficult to experiment with or learn new tools, even when they

recognized GenAI's potential to save time in the long run. The learning curve around prompting, evaluating, and editing could feel steep, and the time required to refine outputs sometimes eroded perceptions of utility. One participant explained that while GenAI sped up initial drafting, "the time it takes to edit what it gives you is frustrating." One participant explicitly acknowledged having "a load of" time to "play around and experiment," and he recognized this as a privilege not all teachers shared. Another decided to build and share repositories of materials for her colleagues, which was partially a response to these time constraints, as she sought to ensure that part-time staff benefited from her own experimentation.

Training. Teachers' self-perceptions of their competency also influenced adoption. Some associated GenAI primarily with advanced capabilities such as statistical analysis or complex data interpretation and felt unqualified to use it beyond basic tasks. Others felt intimidated by the idea of "prompting correctly," even as they recognized that detailed prompts improved results. The prompt framework introduced during training helped reduce some of these barriers. One teacher reflected that a "simple sentence was really helpful" once they understood how to direct the tool effectively. Three categories of skills emerged as essential: prompting, critical thinking, and teaching knowledge. Educators needed to be able to articulate detailed, context-rich prompts, apply critical judgment to evaluate and revise outputs, and draw on strong andragogical expertise to decide what was appropriate for adult learners.

Experimentation and Collaboration. Experimentation emerged as a powerful enabler of adoption. Teachers described trying multiple GenAI tools, comparing outputs from general-purpose chatbots like ChatGPT and Gemini with those from education-specific tools like Diffit and MagicSchool.ai, and combining GenAI tools with productivity and edtech platforms. For instance, one teacher generated ideas using a chatbot, refined them in a spreadsheet, and formatted them in a word processor. In workbook plans, teachers envisioned blending GenAI outputs with tools such as Kahoot, Quizizz, Google Docs, Edpuzzle, and Canva webpages for interactive, blended instruction. Experimentation was often social. The cohort regularly exchanged ideas, compared outputs, and discussed successes and failures with peers during sessions and in exit tickets, valuing the training as a space to "play around," share, and refine new practices together.

Moral Dilemma and Trust. More than with traditional educational software, GenAI introduced a set of ethical concerns that caught teachers in a moral dilemma and likely influenced their ultimate adoption. Across the cohort, teachers questioned data privacy, the fairness of AI tools, the environmental impact of large-scale computation, and the use of copyrighted or "stolen" content in model training. They also noted that AI detection tools were unreliable and discriminated against learners with diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Taken together, these external variables demonstrate that adoption was not determined by the technology alone. Conditions such as institutional support for training and licenses, available time to experiment, professional skill levels, and ethical stances toward AI mediated both perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, ultimately influencing whether GenAI became a sustained part of teachers' practice.

Recommendations

The findings point to several implications:

1. **Center prompting, evaluation, and ethics in PD:** GenAI training should focus less on tool overviews and more on how to write effective prompts, critically evaluate outputs, and address ethics. This includes accuracy, bias and representativeness, privacy and data use, and what responsible use looks like with adult learners.

2. **Give teachers space to experiment and shape tool choices:** Participants needed time to try tools, compare outputs, and refine workflows. Programs should provide paid time and collaborative spaces for experimentation and explicitly involve teachers in selecting and piloting GenAI tools, rather than purchasing tools without classroom input.
3. **Build capacity, not just tool collections:** Across the cohort, GenAI was most effective when combined with strong teaching knowledge and critical judgment. Investments should prioritize teacher capacity building and clear institutional guidance for responsible use, with licenses and tools chosen to support those goals rather than the other way around.

Conclusion

The GenAIMS professional development program aimed to equip adult education and literacy (AEL) teachers with the knowledge and skills to use GenAI responsibly and effectively when creating learning resources. The mixed-methods case study revealed that AEL teachers are highly receptive to GenAI, viewing it as a powerful tool for accelerating the instructional design process and creating relevant, differentiated materials for adults. Crucially, teachers perceive GenAI's utility as a “starting point”—a cognitive partner for idea generation and drafting—rather than a source for classroom-ready final products.

Through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model, the research shows that initial high perceptions of usefulness were strongly reinforced by the PD. However, the path to adoption is mediated by a complex set of external variables. While GenAI tools are fast and intuitively usable at the surface level, teachers consistently highlighted the significant human labor required to refine outputs, ensure accuracy and contextual relevance, and navigate ethical concerns like bias and data privacy. External factors, particularly institutional support for paid licenses and dedicated time for experimentation, emerged as important influences on teachers' intentions for sustained use.

Ultimately, the successful, long-term adoption of GenAI in AEL settings hinges on opportunities to develop new skills, institutional support, and a focus on ethics. Effective professional development must prioritize skills in prompting and critical evaluation, shifting the focus from tool features to thoughtful human-AI collaboration. Institutions can support teachers by providing paid licenses and allocating professional time for experimentation and curriculum integration. By addressing these needs, GenAI can realize its potential as augmented intelligence, enabling AEL teachers to focus on high-value instructional decisions and effectively serve the diverse needs of adult learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Pre-PD Survey

These are the parts and questions from the training pre-survey, including question types and response options. The survey was administered via Google Forms. The first page of the survey included a brief introduction, a video recorded overview of the training objectives and activities, and logistical information, like the dates of the synchronous meetings.

Part 1: Basic Information

1. Name

Type: Short Answer

2. Email

Type: Short Answer

3. Name of Program or Organization

Type: Short Answer

4. What is your role?

Type: Multiple Choice (Select all that apply)

Options: Instructor, Administrator, Professional Developer, Curriculum Specialist, Instructional Designer, Other

5. What do you teach?

Type: Multiple Choice (Select all that apply)

Options: Workforce Development, Literacy + Beginner ESOL, Intermediate + Advanced ESOL, Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE, HSE, GED), Other

Part 2: Technology & AI Experience

6. How comfortable do you feel using digital tools to learn?

Type: Likert Scale

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

7. How comfortable do you feel using digital tools to teach?

Type: Likert Scale

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

8. How often do you use digital tools for instruction?

Type: Frequency Scale

Options: Every day, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, Less than once a week

9. How comfortable do you feel using generative AI?

Type: Likert Scale

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

10. How often do you use GenAI?

Type: Frequency Scale

Options: Every day, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, Less than once a week

11. What are the names of the apps in which you're using GenAI?

Appendix A. Pre-PD Survey (cont'd)

Type: Short Answer

12. What do you primarily use GenAI for?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

Part 3: Attitudes & Perspectives

13. Rate the degree to which you agree and disagree with the following statements:

Type: Multiple Choice Grid

- **Sub-statements:**

1. Generative AI enhances teaching.
2. Generative AI produces outputs (media, text, etc.) that are representative of diverse teachers and learners.
3. Generative AI is a technology that is accessible to the learners I work with.
4. Generative AI improves learning for the adults I teach.
5. Generative AI is useful to the adults I teach in their personal lives.
6. Generative AI is safe for teachers and learners to use.

Options per row: Agree, Neutral, Disagree

14. If you'd like to provide further commentary on your ratings, you can do so here.

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

Part 4: Participation & Consent

15. Tell us a little bit about what you hope to learn and do in the GenAI Maker Space!

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

[Research Notice for Informed Consent]

16. Do you understand the information provided to you in the research notice and agree to participate?

Type: Multiple Choice

Options: Yes, No

Appendix B. Post-PD Survey

These are the parts and questions from the training post-survey, including question types and response options. The survey was administered via Google Forms. The first page of the survey included a note of gratitude to the participants along with a reminder of the research aims.

The Post-PD Survey used the same core questions regarding Basic Information as the pre-survey (Appendix A).

Part 2: Participation & Motivation

6. What motivated you to register for a professional development series on GenAI?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

7. How many sessions did you attend?

Type: Multiple Choice

Options: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4

8. What prevented you from attending more of the synchronous sessions?

Type: Multiple Choice (Select all that apply)

Options: Content not relevant/interesting; Stressful to do PD online; Unsure how to find session info; Time conflicts; More work/time than anticipated; TCALL PD Portal (Cornerstone) challenges; Other

9. What topics related to AI in education are most interesting to you?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

10. What adjustments do you recommend that would enable/encourage you to participate more fully in the future?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

11. If you missed any sessions, what prevented you from attending the synchronous sessions?

Type: Multiple Choice (Select all that apply)

Options: Content not relevant/interesting; Stressful to do PD online; Unsure how to find session info; Time conflicts; More work/time than anticipated; TCALL PD Portal (Cornerstone) challenges; Did not miss any sessions; Other

Part 3: Engagement & Facilitation

12. To what extent did the Learning Management System contribute to your engagement?

Type: Linear Scale

Options: Definitely made my engagement difficult, At times made my engagement difficult, Made no difference, At times supported my engagement, Definitely supported my engagement

13. To what extent did using Zoom for the synchronous PD sessions contribute to your engagement?

Type: Linear Scale

Options: Definitely made my engagement difficult, At times made my engagement difficult, Made no difference, At times supported my engagement, Definitely supported my engagement

14. To what extent did having both synchronous and asynchronous activities contribute to your engagement?

Type: Linear Scale

Appendix B. Post-PD Survey (cont'd)

Options: Definitely made my engagement difficult, At times made my engagement difficult, Made no difference, At times supported my engagement, Definitely supported my engagement

15. To what extent did the workbook "Practice" activities contribute to your engagement?

Type: Linear Scale

Options: Definitely made my engagement difficult, At times made my engagement difficult, Made no difference, At times supported my engagement, Definitely supported my engagement

16. To what extent did the way the facilitators set up and ran the synchronous PD sessions contribute to your engagement?

Type: Linear Scale

Options: Definitely made my engagement difficult, At times made my engagement difficult, Made no difference, At times supported my engagement, Definitely supported my engagement

17. To what extent did the way the facilitators communicated with and supported you between the synchronous PD sessions contribute to your engagement?

Type: Linear Scale

Options: Definitely made my engagement difficult, At times made my engagement difficult, Made no difference, At times supported my engagement, Definitely supported my engagement

18. What suggestions do you have for supporting future participants' engagement in this training?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

Part 4: Relevance

Questions 19–24

Type: Multiple Choice (Likert Scale)

Options: Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree or disagree, Somewhat agree, Strongly agree

- **Statements:**

- 19. Basics of AI: Understanding what GenAI is
- 20. Mindful Use: Ethical considerations/privacy
- 21. GenAI Tools: Types of platforms available
- 22. GenAI Prompting: Effective prompting and fine-tuning
- 23. GenAI Use Cases: Resource gaps/lesson plans
- 24. Evaluating Outputs: Bias and accuracy

Part 5: Feedback & Future Practice

25. What recommendations do you have for the topics covered in this training?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

26. After participating in this PD, what, if anything, do you hope to change about your teaching?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

27. What support will help you make those desired changes?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

Part 6: Post-Training Tech & AI Experience

28. How comfortable do you feel using digital tools to learn?

Appendix B. Post-PD Survey (cont'd)

Type: Likert Scale

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

29. How comfortable do you feel using digital tools to teach?

Type: Likert Scale

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

30. How often do you use digital tools for instruction?

Type: Frequency Scale

Options: Every day, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, Less than once a week

31. How comfortable do you feel using GenAI?

Type: Likert Scale

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

32. How often do you use GenAI?

Type: Frequency Scale

Options: Every day, 2-3 times a week, Once a week, Less than once a week

33. What are the names of the apps in which you're using GenAI?

Type: Short Answer

34. What do you primarily use GenAI for?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

Part 7: Final Takeaways

35. Rate the degree to which you agree and disagree with the following statements:

Type: Multiple Choice Grid

Options: Agree, Neutral, Disagree

- **Sub-statements:**

1. GenAI enhances teaching
2. GenAI produces representative outputs
3. GenAI is accessible to my learners
4. GenAI improves learning for adults
5. GenAI is useful in personal lives
6. GenAI is safe for teachers and learners

36. Further commentary on your ratings.

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

37. Do you have any further comments or feedback regarding your takeaways from this PD?

Type: Paragraph/Long Answer

Appendix C. Workbook and Exit Tickets

Participants completed their assignments in a Google Doc shared with the facilitators. Each assignment culminated with a link to the exit ticket, which was delivered using Google Forms.

Session 1: The Basics of GenAI and Prompting

Practice

 Generate a set of exercises that contextualize academic learning objectives using [Texas Adult Education Content and Literacy Standards](#), [Texas Digital Literacy Content Standards](#), [subject-area frameworks relevant to adult learners](#), and a range of activity types.

1. Write a learning objective relevant to the subject you teach.

Students will be able to...

2. Fill out the table.

Subject (Math, ESOL, ELA)	Context (e.g., financial / health / digital literacy, civics, workplace)	Type of Activity (e.g., word problem, reading passage, quiz, etc.)

Example: I want to teach math in the context of financial literacy using word problems.

3. Choose a chatbot that you will use to generate the exercises.

- [ChatGPT](#) - no account needed
- [Gemini](#) - free for Google users (personal account)
- [Copilot](#) - no account needed
- [Claude](#) - free to create an account
- [HuggingChat](#) - free to create an account

Appendix C. Workbook and Exit Tickets (cont'd)

4. Draft your prompt.

Role	
Action	
Context	
Example	
Format	

5. Share the result! (link or text)



Exit Ticket

Part 1: Basic Information

1. **Name** (Short answer)

Part 2: Reflect on Prompting

2. **How close was the output (result) to what you originally intended?** (Likert Scale)

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

3. **What could you do next time to produce a better result?** (Paragraph/Long Answer)

Part 3: My Progress

4. **Did Session 1 make you feel more confident about using GenAI effectively?** (Likert Scale)

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

5. **Since Session 1, have you applied what you learned with your classes?** (Multiple Choice)

Options: Yes, No

6. **If yes, what did you do?** (Paragraph/Long Answer)

7. **If no, why not?** (Paragraph/Long Answer)

8. **How has your opinion of GenAI changed since before Session 1?** (Paragraph/Long Answer)

9. **What concerns or questions do you still have about the use of GenAI in your teaching?**

(Paragraph/Long Answer)

Session 2: Strategic AI Integration

 Practice

 Differentiate an activity so that you have two versions of an activity that would teach the same standard/skill.

1. Align to Standards and Frameworks

In Session 1, we discussed using AI to generate contextualized learning materials. When we co-create and share resources, it’s helpful to see how they align with existing standards and frameworks. Decide what standards and skills your AI-generated materials will align by following the steps below.

What standard are you teaching?

Choose from the [Texas Adult Education and Literacy Content Standards 2.0](#) if you teach ELA, Math, or ESOL. Choose from [Texas Digital Literacy Content Standards](#) if you teach or want to integrate digital literacy. Otherwise, select a standard relevant to your class.

In what context?

Context	Skill
Choose from the dropdown.	Choose a topic from the subject-area frameworks .
Select one	

2. Explore Existing Materials

You don’t have to start from scratch when using AI. You can use OER, ideas from your publisher materials, or even content you’ve already generated with AI! Take a look at some of the open educational resources you can consider drawing from in the table below.

Appendix C. Workbook and Exit Tickets (cont'd)

Subject	Open Educational Resources
 Reading / Language	Reading Skills for Today's Adults (Includes readings across multiple topic areas)
 Math	Khan Academy PhET CK-12
 Language/ESOL	"Let's Get to Work" - Intermediate ESOL Course A Closer Read
 Digital Literacy	DigitalLearn.org
 Financial Literacy	Consumer Finance Protection Bureau Consumer.gov
 Workforce Preparation	Teaching Employability Skills Industry-specific Lesson Plans for Reading and Writing • TDL (Bridge 1 Bridge 2) • Health Sciences (Bridge 1 Bridge 2) • Manufacturing (Bridge 1 Bridge 2)
 Health Literacy	MyPlate Staying Healthy for Beginners Staying Healthy (Intermediate)
 Civics Education	Preparing for the Oath

My Existing Resource

What existing material can you use to teach the standard and skill you selected?

Select one	
-------------------	--

 **Reminder:** Think about how uploading files, returning to existing chatbot prompts, or even using Chrome extensions like Brisk can jumpstart the next task you do with generative AI.

Appendix C. Workbook and Exit Tickets (cont'd)

3. Differentiate with AI

Combine your use of prompting strategies, AI tools, and existing materials to create two versions of an activity. Make sure both versions target the same learning objectives. Think about it this way, if you bring these two versions into your class tomorrow, and have one learner use one and the other use the other, will they get the same quality learning experience?

- a. What aspect of differentiation are you going to target? **Select one**
- b. Share the two activities in the table.

Version 1
Version 2



Exit Ticket

Part 1: Basic Information

1. Name (Short Answer)

Part 2: Reflect on Differentiating

2. How close was the output (result) to what you originally intended? (Likert Scale)

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

3. When thinking about using GenAI to personalize learning for your class, what benefits and limitations has this exercise revealed? (Paragraph/Long Answer)

Part 3: My Progress

4. Did Session 2 make you feel more confident about using GenAI effectively? (Likert Scale)

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

5. Since Session 2, have you applied what you learned with your classes? (Multiple Choice)

Options: Yes, No

6. If yes, what did you do? (Paragraph/Long Answer)
7. If no, why not? (Paragraph/Long Answer)
8. How has your opinion of GenAI changed since before Session 2? (Paragraph/Long Answer)
9. What concerns or questions do you still have about the use of GenAI in your teaching? (Paragraph/Long Answer)

Session 3: Taking It to the Classroom

 Practice

 Design at least one edtech activity using the content that you generated using GenAI. This activity may pick up from the content you’ve started generating during Sessions 1 or 2, or it may be something that you develop using a content aim / context. Regardless, the goal is for you to create an activity that you will share during our Activity Showcase during Session 4 on Wednesday, April 9, 2025.

1. Considerations for Designing Activities: Strategy Before Tools

In Session 1, you were asked to generate a set of exercises for a specific subject area (ELA, Math, ESOL), within a specific context (e.g., health literacy, workplace), and using a particular format (word problem, reading passage, quiz, etc.). In Session 2, you experimented with differentiating the outputs (e.g., language, learner levels, interest/relevance).

As you’ve completed these activities, it is possible you’ve had an idea in mind for what the final activity might look like. You may already be working toward developing an activity for a particular specific skill or context using a classroom routine you do on a regular basis, such as role play, reading and discussion questions, or math word problems.

What will students be doing? How will they be doing it?

Building off of the work that you have done to this point, or starting completely from scratch, **identify your strategy for the learning activity** you are developing by answering the following questions:

What is the content & the goal for learning?	What will students be doing?	How will they be doing this (with or w/o tech)?

2. Selecting an Activity Format and EdTech Tool

There are lots of different options for *delivering* your activity. Ideally, it is best to select tools and replicable activity types that you use on a regular basis (e.g., routines). This makes it easier for you to create activities routinely (as opposed to re-inventing the wheel each time); it also creates a familiar and replicable experience for learners.

Appendix C. Workbook and Exit Tickets (cont'd)

What are students doing?	Activity Types	Edtech Tool Examples
Speaking and Listening	Role play Listen and respond	Youtube Flip Smartphone camera Smartphone audio notes Text to speech tools
Reading and Writing	Reading passages Writing prompts	Google Docs Microsoft Word PDF
Answering / Responding to Questions	Survey / Polls Discussion Threads Collaborative Whiteboards Worksheets Quizzes	Menti Kahoot Padlet Google Docs Google Forms

Need 💡 inspiration for what edtech tool is best suited for your activity idea? Check out these resources to explore popular edtech tools and how they are used:

- [Top Tools for Learning](#) | This annual survey lists the top 100 tools for learning and categorizes them for how they are used for teaching and learning. We recommend focusing on the tools listed in the *Communication and Collaboration* and *Content Creation and Management* sections.
- [Edtech Integration Strategy Toolkit](#) | This resource allows you to explore edtech activity routines based on a) how you wish to integrate technology within your instructional practice, b) the types of edtech tools you wish to use, and c) the digital skills you wish to focus upon by using technology. Click on the “EdTech Tools” tab to explore various edtech tool types and routines that leverage these tools.

3. Create Your Activity!

Once you’ve chosen the right tool, create your activity and then use this checklist to review it:

My activity includes a title, description & guidance.

The activity meets the credibility criteria.

The activity is relevant to adult learners/contexts.

The activity’s learning and support features will effectively engage and challenge the learner while scaffolding their learning.

The activity is designed to allow for meaningful engagement for all learners.

Appendix C. Workbook and Exit Tickets (cont'd)

The activity is open and reusable by others (e.g., it can be adapted, shared, or downloaded).

? Need a reminder about what these design criteria include? Read the descriptions in [the Activity Design Guide](#).

4. Share

Add your final product to this spreadsheet: [link]

👉 **Remember!** Please make sure whatever you share here is able to be accessed by your facilitators and peers. If it is a Google file, go to “Share” and adjust settings to “Anyone with the link - Viewer.” If it is another URL, open your browser in Incognito mode and paste the URL to test if the link can be accessed by anyone.



Exit Ticket

Part 1: Basic Information

1. Name (Short Answer)

Part 2: Reflect on Delivering AI-Generated Content to Learners

2. What did you find most helpful? (Mark only one oval)

Options: Understanding how to evaluate AI-generated content; Exploring different tools to deliver learning to students; Knowing all the criteria I can use to evaluate any learning resource; Other

3. When thinking about using GenAI to develop lesson activities, what benefits and limitations has this exercise revealed? (Paragraph/Long Answer)

Part 3: My Progress

4. Did Session 3 make you feel more confident about using GenAI effectively? (Likert Scale)

Options: Not at all, A little, Moderately, Very

5. Since Session 3, have you applied what you learned with your classes? (Multiple Choice)

Options: Yes, No

6. If yes, what did you do? (Paragraph/Long Answer)
7. If no, why not? (Paragraph/Long Answer)
8. How has your opinion of GenAI changed since before Session 3? (Paragraph/Long Answer)
9. What concerns or questions do you still have about the use of GenAI in your teaching? (Paragraph/Long Answer)