



Building a **Community of Writers**: Harnessing Productive Struggle in the Age of AI



noredink



Dr. Tanya Baker

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Literacy Director
NoRedInk



Kelly Rickert

Customer Success
Operations

Today



Friction by Design



(Re)Claiming Writer Agency



Q & A



Learnings from the Field: Panel on AI



Q & A



Feedback and Ideas for next time





**Becah
Busselle,
PhD**

Associate Director of the Digital Fluency at WestEd

- Former classroom teacher
- Leads national initiatives connecting learning science, design, and technology integration
- Authored ***Friction by Design***, a framework for intentional AI integration in education
- Whenever I can I like to trade my screens for ski slopes, forest trails, and somewhere new.

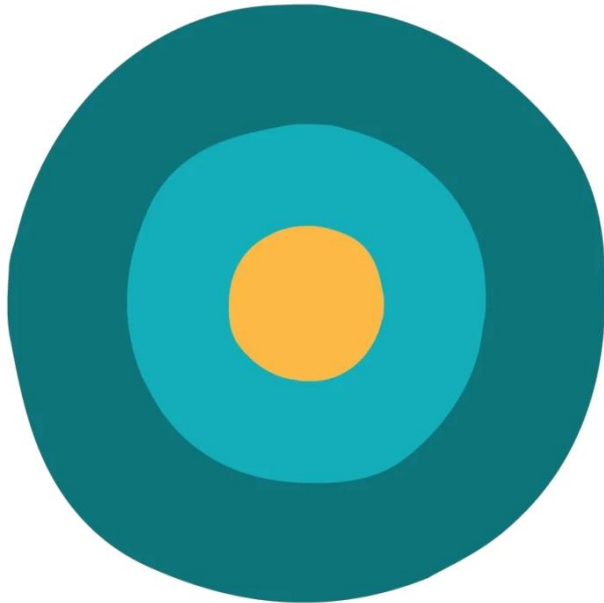




Friction by Design: **A Framework for** **Centering Learning in the** **Age of AI**

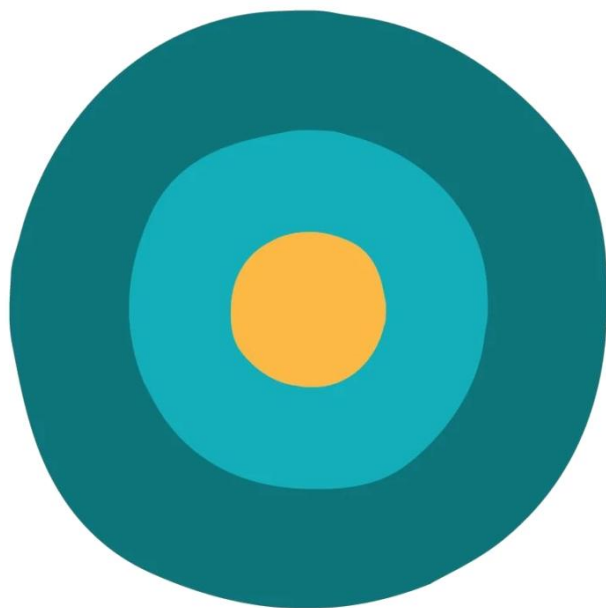


Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development



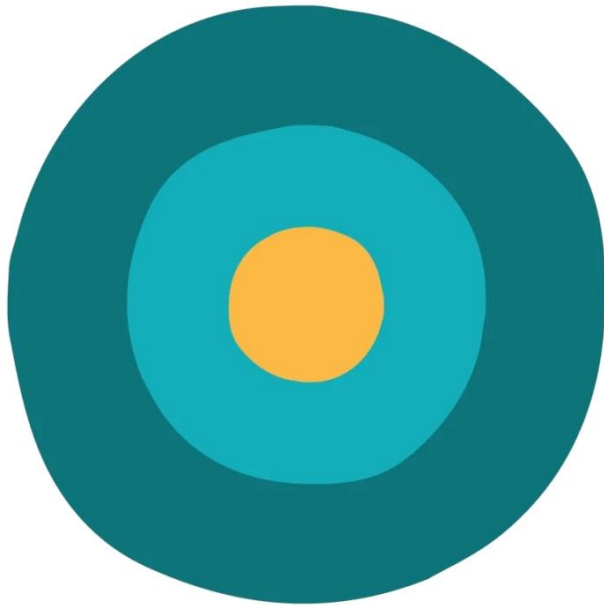
- Tasks the learner ***cannot*** do even with assistance.
- Tasks the learner ***can do*** with assistance.
- Tasks the learner ***can do*** without assistance.

AI & the Zone of Proximal Development



This is where learning happens.

AI & the Zone of Proximal Development



AI is really good at mimicking learning.



This is where learning happens.



AI & Learning:

The Core Tension



Five Lenses

**Cognitive
Ownership**



**Productive
Struggle**



**Social
Sense-Making**



**Activation
Energy**



**Access
Barriers**



PRODUCTIVE FRICTION

Cognitive Ownership



Cognitive Ownership refers to the student's role as the thinker, the one generating ideas, making decisions, and constructing meaning. This is friction we must protect. When AI takes over this role, students may appear successful without actually learning. Designing with AI requires us to shift our focus from what is produced to who did the thinking and how.



PRODUCTIVE FRICTION

Productive Struggle



Productive Struggle is the kind of challenge that pushes students just beyond their current understanding. It's the effortful engagement that makes learning stick. This is friction we want students to stay with; it's messy, uncomfortable, and essential to growth. AI can help students remain in the stretch zone, offering support without erasing the challenge itself.



PRODUCTIVE FRICTION

Social Sense-Making

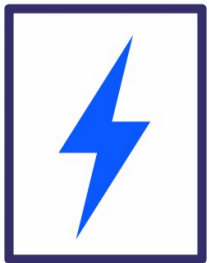


Social Sense-Making happens when students build understanding through discourse, disagreement, and shared inquiry. This kind of friction is generative. The uncertainty and vulnerability of collaborative learning aren't flaws; they're essential. AI's ability to instantly deliver answers shouldn't replace these moments of shared sense-making.



UNPRODUCTIVE FRICTION

Activation Energy



Activation Energy is friction that makes it hard to begin: a blank page, a vague prompt, the weight of uncertainty. Without a clear invitation, students may stall before learning takes shape. AI can help make the entry feel meaningful, spark curiosity, or nudge students to lean in. It can offer just enough structure to begin while keeping the thinking with students.



UNPRODUCTIVE FRICTION

Access Barriers



Access Barriers are structural obstacles that block students from participating fully: dense language, rigid formats, or unclear expectations. This is unproductive friction. It introduces struggle without supporting thinking. For many learners, especially those with diverse needs, AI can be a powerful tool for reducing these barriers.





**Kristen
Hawley
Turner,
PhD**

Chair of Education in the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies at Drew University

- Research focuses on the intersection between technology and literacy
- Co-author of **Teaching Writing in the Age of AI: Strategies for Teachers of Secondary Students**
- Co-founder of the Screentime.me research project and the *Technopanic: Living and Learning in a Digital Age* podcast
- Mother of twins who blogs about being an empty-nester at fillingtime.org



(Re)Claiming Writer Agency

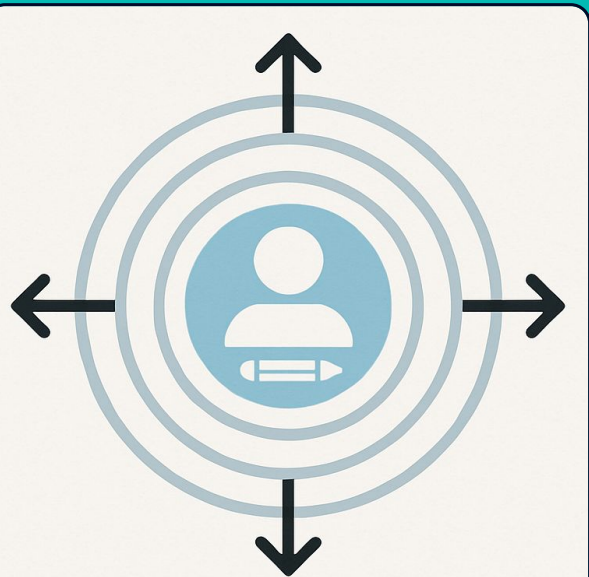
AI can scaffold or shortcut learning.

The difference lies not in the tool, but in the way we design.

Being and Becoming a Writing Teaching in an Age of AI

What is writing? What do writers do? What are effective practices for teaching writing?

- Built from personal experience as a teacher of writing
- Informed by NWP and NCTE professional communities
- Anchored in [NCTE guiding principles](#) and [definition of literacy](#)
- Explored through inquiry with genAI tools
- Balanced between enthusiasm and technoskepticism



Writer at the Center

The background is a solid blue color. There are several abstract, organic shapes in a darker blue shade. These shapes have dashed yellow outlines. One shape is in the top-left corner, another is in the bottom-left corner, and a larger one is on the right side. The text 'WHAT IF?' is centered in the upper half of the image.

WHAT IF?

**GenAI as a writing
partner**

GenAI as...

Thinking Partner

Research Assistant

Co-writer

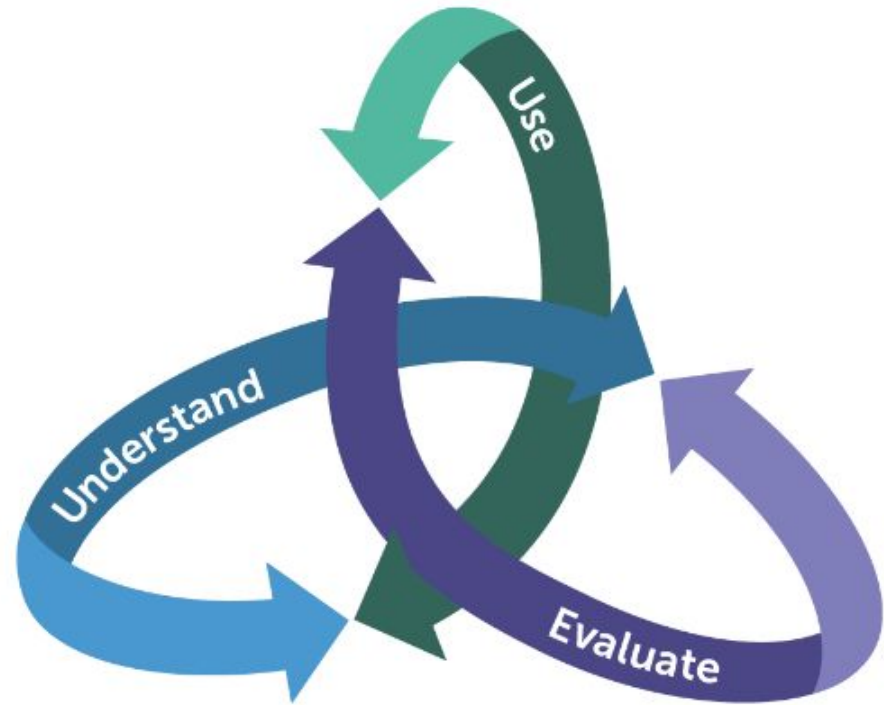




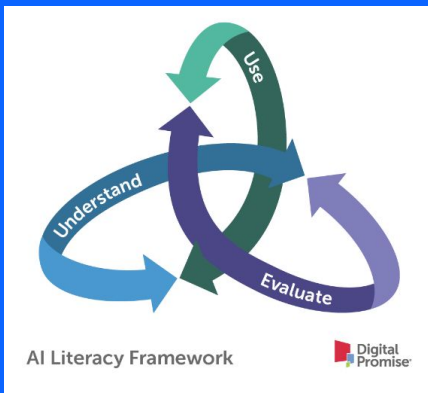
**What does that mean
for designing
instruction?**



Claim Agency



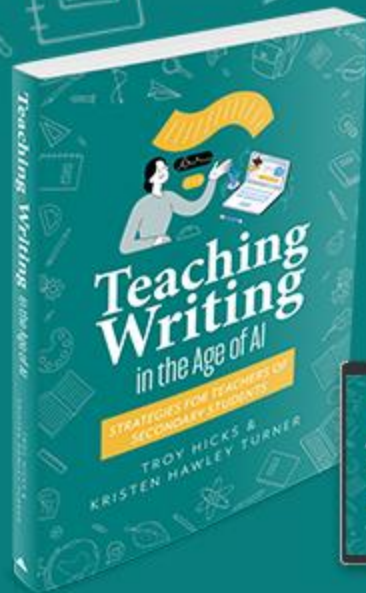
AI Literacy Framework



Get comfy.

Get skeptical.

Get smart.



Teaching Writing

in the Age of AI

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHERS OF
SECONDARY STUDENTS

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KRISTEN HAWLEY TURNER

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amazon



Solution Tree

Learnings From the Field

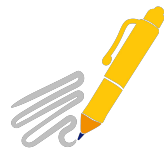




**Jill
Stedronsky**

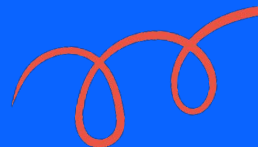
***Language Arts Teacher, Bernards Township | adjunct
Professor at Drew University***

- Current teacher leader and former co-director of Drew University's National Writing Project
- Co-founder of *Finch Writing Club*
- Author of articles that test the boundaries of traditional ELA education
- Avid cyclist, skier, swimmer and NYC lover!



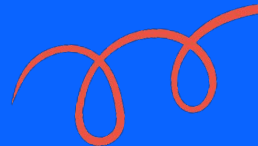


**Can you give an example
of what it is to organize **a
classroom as a writing
community?****





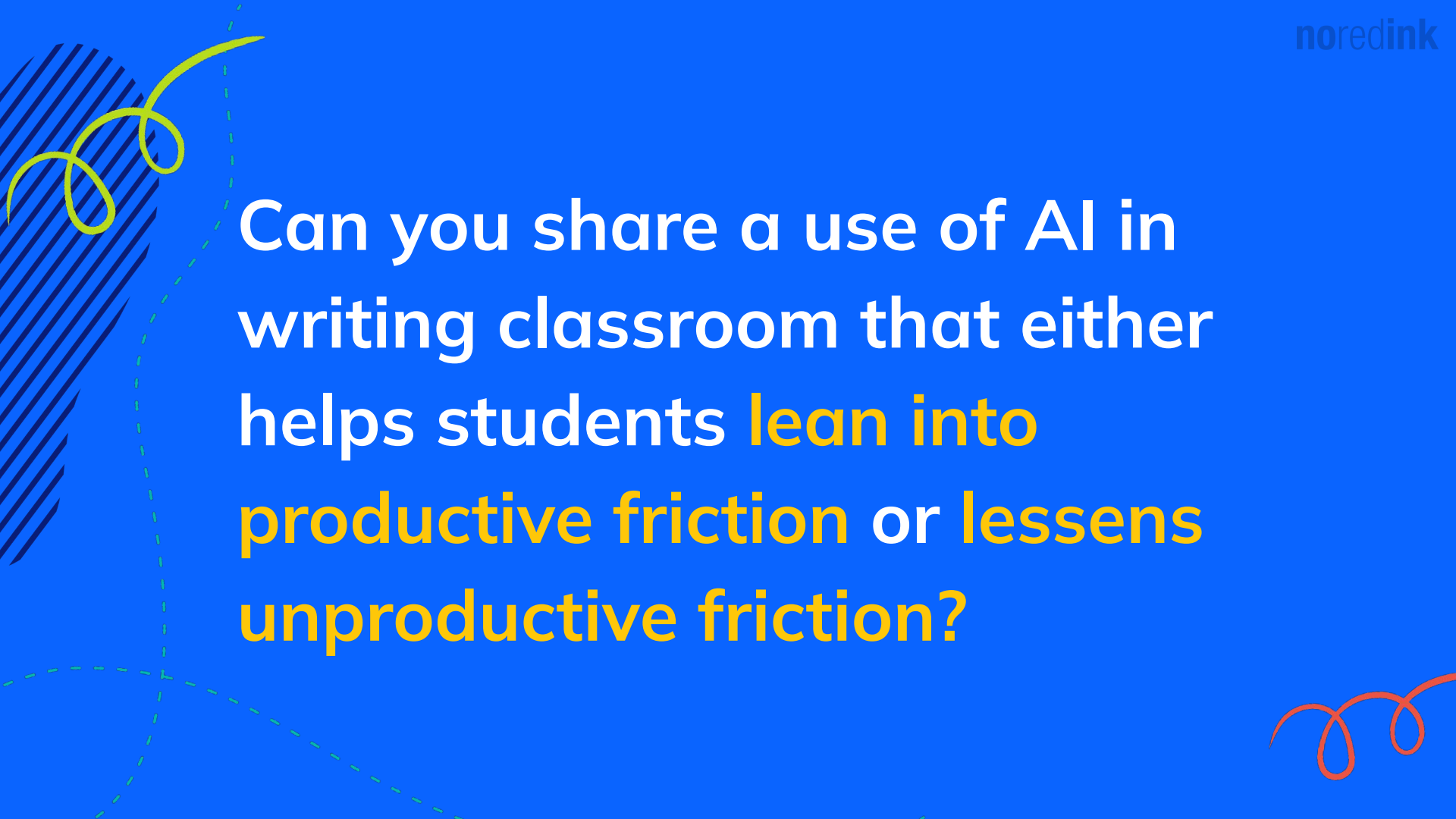
**Can you give us an
example of
productive friction?**





Could you share how
friction has fueled or
obstructed learning ? How
were you able to turn it
around?





Can you share a use of AI in writing classroom that either helps students **lean into productive friction** or lessens unproductive friction?

Assignment Results > Jessica Giraffe

Change student
Jessica Giraffe

Submission

Prompt

Copy essay

Print

Insights

Likes Boost Confidence

Getting likes on social media is a hot topic these days. In my opinion, social media sites should keep showing the number of likes a post gets. First, they boost the user's confidence. For example, when I see that a lot of people liked my pictures or video, I get a warm and fuzzy feeling inside. Likes also help show what's popular and encourage people to post more. Maybe a person sees that cute cat pictures are getting a lot of love, so they decide to share a pic of their own cat.

Comments

Good job stating a claim that answers the prompt. However, your claim should be the first sentence of your paragraph.

★ Evidence supports the claim (at least two pieces)

0

1

2

Comments

Nice work! You supported your claim with evidence.

★ Explanation connects the evidence to the claim

0

1

2

Comments

Great job! It's clear how your evidence supports your claim.

Post grade and comments

Send back for revisions ?

Return to student

★ Topic sentence states a claim that answers the prompt

0

1

2

Comments

Good job stating a claim that answers the prompt. However, your claim should be the first sentence of your paragraph.

★ Evidence supports the claim (at least two pieces)

0

1

2

Comments

Nice work! You supported your claim with evidence.

★ Explanation connects the evidence to the claim

0

1

2

Comments

Great job! It's clear how your evidence supports your claim.

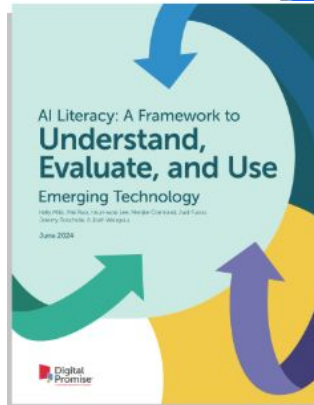
CCSS 1.B

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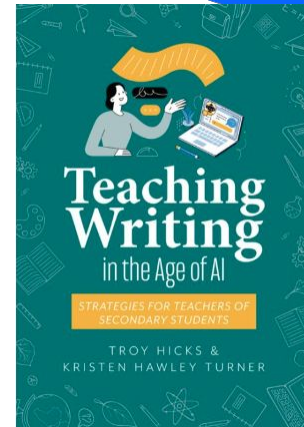
Helpful Resources



Busselle, Becah. “Friction by Design: A Framework for Centering Learning in the Age of AI.” *Digital Fluency*, WestEd, 2025, digitalfluency.wested.org/resources/.



“AI Literacy.” *Digital Promise*, 6 May 2025, digitalpromise.org/initiative/artificial-intelligence-in-education/ai-literacy/.



Hicks, T. & Turner, K. H. (2025). *Teaching writing in the age of AI: Strategies for secondary teachers*. Solution Tree.