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Hello, *Teaching Takes* listeners. I'm Tom Tobin, a researcher and speaker on quality in technology-mediated education. This message is my take on AI in the classroom. I'd like to propose a model for how we ask students to use AI throughout their progress, and how we balance it against structures that develop expertise.

Imagine a chart: it's a wide rectangle, and there's a diagonal line from the bottom left to the top right. The bottom axis shows learner development. Label the left "beginner," with "proficiency" in the middle, and "practitioner-level" skills and knowledge on the right. Now, label the triangle that is tall at the left and narrows over time, "Designed Activities." And label the triangle that grows over time, "AI Tool Use."

In short, there's an inverse relationship between designed activities and AI tool use over the course of learner skill and knowledge development.

The "design" part of our chart has choices largely constructed by instructors. AI tool use includes practice affordances, like flash cards and study guides, as well as doing work *for* learners, to skip steps in the learning process.

Now the chart: beginners follow experts who facilitate their basic mastery. This is "learning things the long/difficult/manual way first." For proficient learners, we balance designed options against use of AI tools that help learners practice. Eventually, we turn decision-making gradually over to expert learners who use AI tools to leapfrog up to more nuanced study.

In other words, we create learning progressions where beginners find structure, proficient learners employ tool-based shortcuts, and practitioner-level learners find the fewest boundaries on their actions. This aligns with our institutional missions: we want our graduates to be well-prepared professionals.

Fun fact: this diagram is fractal: we can apply it to activities, learning modules, courses, programs, and entire credentials. Fun fact #2, our rectangle is part of a bigger diagram in my next book, *UDL at Scale*, coming out in 2026.

Thanks for hearing my take on AI in the classroom.

