DIY EdTech

Developing Your Own Software Solutions with AI

Educational professionals spend hours every week on repetitive manual processes: generating certificates, tracking PD hours, routing purchase orders, compiling reports. The tools available are either too generic, too expensive, or stuck behind IT approval that takes months. AI tools like Claude can translate plain-language descriptions of your workflow into working Google Apps Script code. You are not becoming a programmer. You are learning to collaborate with a coding partner that handles the technical side while you bring the domain expertise. These scripts run within Google Workspace, connecting your existing spreadsheets, forms, emails, and calendars. This will help anyone who regularly updates the same spreadsheets, routes approvals by category, sends reminders to dozens of people, or compiles data from multiple sources.

The Approach

- **Map your process with unusual specificity.** Write down every step. Walk through it with a colleague and have them poke holes. The decisions you make on autopilot are the logic your automation needs. With AI, this is often a greater challenge than coding.
- **Automate one small piece first.** Not the whole workflow. Just one useful piece. That first automated email changes something. Use Google Apps Script for simplified launches and generative AI tools like Claude to make scripting easier.
- **Add complexity incrementally and try it in the field.** Build and test in stages. If you build everything at once, you will not know which piece broke. Ship the 80% solution. Handle common cases automatically, flag edge cases for manual review. Improve later. Use AI to troubleshoot issues.
- **Document as you go.** Future you will not remember how any of this works six months from now. Generative AI does a great job of deciphering and annotating code as you go.

Essential Questions for Reflection

1. What repetitive task eats up your week that you could explain to a colleague in under five minutes?
2. If you got back 2-3 hours every week, what would you actually spend that time on?
3. What is the smallest piece of that process you could automate first and still see a difference?

You will hit snags and that is part of the process, but the payoff is reclaiming hours you can spend on the work that actually needs you.