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judgment, integrity, and innovation.**

AI • Education • Innovation



The Digital Stethoscope Newsletter *July 2026*

Summer AI Reset: Preparing for the Fall Semester

One Meaningful Change at a Time

Welcome to the July issue of *The Digital Stethoscope*.

Summer has always been a unique season in nursing education. The pace slows just enough for us to catch our breath, reflect on the year that has passed, attend a conference or two, and begin thinking about the semester ahead.

Over the past few months, I've had the privilege of speaking with nurse educators across the country, and one theme continues to emerge. Faculty are no longer asking whether AI belongs in nursing education. Instead, they're asking, "*Where do I begin?*" or "*What's the one thing I should do before my students return?*"

I understand that feeling.

Artificial intelligence is evolving at an incredible pace. Every week seems to bring a new tool, a new capability, or another headline about how AI is transforming education. It's easy to feel like we're constantly trying to keep up.

But after many conversations, workshops, and presentations this year, I've come to a different conclusion.

Meaningful progress doesn't come from trying to do everything. It comes from choosing one thoughtful improvement and implementing it well.

This summer, I encourage you to resist the pressure to redesign every course, rewrite every assignment, or become an expert in every AI platform. Instead, choose one meaningful change that will strengthen your teaching, better prepare your students, or make your own work just a little easier.

In this issue, we'll explore practical ways to reset before the fall semester—from assessing your AI readiness and refreshing assignments to strengthening policies and building confidence with the tools your students are already using. My hope is that you'll finish this newsletter not feeling overwhelmed by everything that's changing but inspired to take one meaningful step forward.

Because great ideas don't transform education.

Implementation does.

One thoughtful change this summer can transform an entire semester.

Here's to a summer of reflection, preparation, and possibility.

 Susan

Spotlight Feature:



“Five Small Changes That Can Transform Your Fall Semester”

Summer often begins with the best of intentions. We attend conferences, participate in webinars, save articles, bookmark new AI tools, and promise ourselves that this will be the summer we redesign our courses.

Then reality sets in.

Calendars fill, syllabi need updating, emails accumulate, and before long, students are logging back into the learning management system. The ambitious list of summer projects quietly becomes next year's list.

When it comes to artificial intelligence, it's easy to fall into the same pattern. There are more tools than ever, more opinions than ever, and more pressure than ever to "keep up." But meaningful AI integration isn't measured by how many tools you've explored or how many hours you've spent learning about AI.

It's measured by what changes when your students walk into your classroom.

The good news? Those changes don't have to be big.

In fact, the most meaningful improvements are often the smallest ones, clearer expectations, a redesigned assignment, an updated policy, or a new way of helping students think critically about AI.

This summer, instead of trying to do everything, focus on doing a few things well. Here are five small changes that can have a lasting impact on your teaching and your students' learning.

Reset #1: Refresh One Assignment

Resist the urge to redesign an entire course. Instead, choose one assignment and ask yourself a simple question:

Does this assignment assess what I truly want students to learn in an AI-enabled world?

Sometimes a small change, like asking students to critique AI-generated content, explain their clinical reasoning, or reflect on how AI influenced their thinking, can transform an assignment from measuring information recall to evaluating professional judgment.

The goal isn't to eliminate AI from the learning process. It's to design learning experiences that encourage students to think critically, justify their decisions, and demonstrate the clinical judgment that AI cannot replace.

Reset #2: Clarify Your Expectations for AI Use

One of the biggest sources of uncertainty for students isn't AI itself, it's wondering what their instructor expects.

Take time to review your syllabus and assignment instructions. Clearly communicate when AI use is encouraged, when it should be limited, and how students should disclose its use. Explain not only *what* your expectations are, but *why* they matter.

Clear expectations reduce confusion, promote academic integrity, and help students develop responsible habits they'll carry into professional practice.

Reset #3: Learn One New AI Tool

Every week seems to bring another AI platform promising to revolutionize teaching. Don't let that overwhelm you.

Instead, choose one tool that aligns with your teaching goals and spend time exploring how it might improve your workflow or enhance student learning. Whether it's helping you develop case studies, generate formative quiz questions, organize course materials, or brainstorm simulation ideas, becoming comfortable with one tool is far more valuable than briefly experimenting with ten.

Confidence grows through practice, not through keeping up with every new release.

Reset #4: Review One Policy or Guideline

Artificial intelligence has evolved significantly over the past year, and your policies should evolve with it.

Take time this summer to review one policy or guideline through the lens of today's AI landscape. It might be your course syllabus, an assignment policy, a program-wide AI statement, or expectations for clinical documentation and academic integrity.

Ask yourself:

- Is the guidance clear and easy for students to understand?

- Does it distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate AI use?
- Does it encourage transparency and accountability rather than simply prohibit AI?
- Does it reflect the skills nurses will need in practice, where AI is becoming part of everyday healthcare?

A well-written policy does more than establish rules. It sets expectations, reduces uncertainty, and helps students develop the professional judgment they'll need long after they leave your classroom.

Reset #5: Commit to One Meaningful Change

Perhaps the most important question isn't, *"How much can I accomplish this summer?"*

It's:

"What is the one change that will make the biggest difference for my students this fall?"

That change might be revising an assignment, introducing an AI literacy activity, updating your course policy, incorporating AI into a simulation, or simply feeling more confident discussing AI in the classroom.

Progress doesn't require perfection.
It requires intention.

As educators, we're often reminded that meaningful learning happens one step at a time. Preparing students for an AI-enabled future is no different. The goal isn't to return in the fall with a completely redesigned curriculum. The goal is to return with one meaningful improvement that strengthens learning, supports critical thinking, and better prepares students for the realities of modern nursing practice.

One thoughtful change made this summer can influence hundreds of students in the semesters ahead.

Summer Reset Tip

Don't measure your summer by how much you learned about AI. Measure it by one meaningful improvement you'll carry into your classroom this fall.

Trending Topics:



“Five AI Trends Every Nurse Educator Should Know Before the Fall Semester”

Artificial intelligence has continued to evolve rapidly during the first half of 2026. New capabilities, new policies, and new conversations have emerged across both higher education and healthcare. It can feel impossible to keep up, and the good news is, you don't have to.

Instead of trying to follow every new tool, every software update, or every headline, focus on the broader trends that are shaping nursing education. These are the developments most likely to influence your teaching, your students, and the way we prepare future nurses this fall.



Trend #1: AI Is Becoming Part of Everyday Education

Artificial intelligence is no longer something faculty and students experiment with occasionally. It is becoming part of everyday teaching, learning, and professional practice.

Students are using AI to organize notes, summarize readings, generate study questions, prepare for clinical experiences, and explain difficult concepts. Faculty are exploring ways to streamline lesson planning, create learning activities, develop case studies, write quiz questions, and provide more timely feedback.

The question is no longer whether AI will be used.

The question is whether students are learning to use it thoughtfully, ethically, and responsibly.



Trend #2: Critical Thinking Is the New Competitive Advantage

As AI becomes better at generating information, one skill becomes even more valuable: the ability to evaluate that information.

Students entering our classrooms this fall will have unprecedented access to AI-generated answers. What they need from us is not simply more information—they need the ability to recognize when AI is incomplete, inaccurate, biased, or missing important clinical context.

Helping students ask better questions, defend their clinical reasoning, and justify their decisions may be one of the most important things we teach.

In an AI-enabled world, critical thinking isn't becoming less important.

It's becoming the skill that sets great nurses apart.



Trend #3: AI Governance Is Moving into the Mainstream

Across higher education and healthcare, the conversation has shifted beyond whether AI should be used. Organizations are increasingly developing policies, guidelines, and governance structures to support its responsible use.

Questions about transparency, disclosure, academic integrity, privacy, human oversight, and accountability are becoming part of everyday discussions—not because AI is new, but because it is becoming embedded in education and clinical practice.

For nurse educators, this makes summer an ideal time to review course policies, syllabus statements, and program expectations to ensure they reflect today's AI landscape rather than last year's.



Trend #4: Human Skills Are Becoming the Differentiator

Ironically, as artificial intelligence becomes more capable, the uniquely human aspects of nursing become even more valuable.

Clinical judgment.

Communication.

Empathy.

Ethical decision-making.

Advocacy.

These are the skills that AI cannot replicate, yet they are the very skills that determine whether information is translated into safe, compassionate patient care.

Preparing students for an AI-enabled future isn't about competing with technology. It's about strengthening the human capabilities that define professional nursing.

Trend #5: Small Changes Are Winning

One of the most encouraging developments isn't about technology at all.
It's about educators.

Across nursing education, faculty are discovering that meaningful AI integration doesn't require redesigning an entire curriculum. Instead, they're making small, intentional improvements that fit naturally into existing courses.

They're revising one assignment.
Updating one syllabus statement.
Adding one AI-supported learning activity.

Creating one opportunity for students to evaluate AI-generated content instead of simply accepting it.

These incremental changes build confidence for educators, strengthen student learning, and create momentum for continued innovation.

Sometimes the smallest changes have the greatest impact.

So, What Does This Mean for Nurse Educators?

It means you don't need to chase every innovation or master every new AI tool before the semester begins.

Instead, focus on the trends that are most likely to shape your students' learning. Then choose one meaningful way to respond before they return to your classroom.

Thoughtful preparation . . . not perfection . . . is what will make the biggest difference this fall.

Summer Reset Tip

You don't have to keep up with every AI headline. Focus on the trends that will shape your students' learning, not the tools that may change by next month.

Practical Insights:

“The One Assignment Challenge”

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If you've ever looked at your course before a new semester and thought, *"I really should redesign this,"* you're not alone.

Most educators genuinely want to update their courses to reflect today's AI-enabled world. The challenge isn't motivation . . . it's time.

The good news is that meaningful change doesn't require rebuilding an entire course. Often, the most significant improvements begin with a single assignment.

This summer, I encourage you to choose **one assignment** and ask yourself a simple question:

Does this assignment prepare students for the way they will actually practice nursing?

If the answer is "not quite," consider how AI can become part of the learning process, not by doing the work for students, but by giving them something to evaluate.

Before: The Traditional Assignment

A student develops a patient teaching plan for a newly diagnosed patient with heart failure.

The assignment is well designed and assesses important knowledge. But today, many students could ask AI to generate a patient teaching plan in seconds.

Rather than trying to prevent that, consider using it as a learning opportunity.

After: The AI-Enhanced Assignment

Ask students to use an AI tool to generate a patient teaching plan.

Then ask them to:

- Identify information that is accurate and evidence-based.
- Find at least three areas that are incomplete, unclear, or potentially unsafe.

- Revise the teaching plan using current evidence and nursing standards.
- Explain **why** they made each revision.
- Reflect on what AI did well—and where their nursing knowledge made the difference.

The focus immediately shifts from producing a document to demonstrating clinical reasoning.

What Changes?

The assignment isn't easier. It's more authentic.

In practice, nurses won't be evaluated on whether they can generate information. They'll be expected to evaluate information, recognize what's missing, and apply professional judgment to individual patients.

That's exactly what this type of assignment measures.

Think Beyond the Final Product

As AI becomes more capable of generating polished responses, the value of our assignments shifts.

Instead of asking only:

"Can students produce an answer?"

We should also ask:

- Can they evaluate the quality of that answer?
- Can they recognize errors or omissions?
- Can they defend their clinical reasoning?
- Can they explain why one approach is safer than another?

Those are the skills that will prepare students for AI-enabled healthcare environments.

Start Small

Before the semester begins, identify one assignment you'd like to improve.

You don't need to redesign an entire course.

One thoughtfully redesigned assignment can change the way students think—not just about AI, but about nursing itself.

Try This Tomorrow

Open one assignment in your course before the fall semester begins.

Before making any changes, ask yourself these three questions:

1. **Could AI complete this assignment with little effort?**
2. **If so, what thinking do I actually want students to demonstrate?**
3. **How can I redesign the assignment so students must evaluate, justify, or apply, not simply generate?**

If you can answer those three questions, you've already taken the first step toward creating an assignment that prepares students for the realities of AI-enabled nursing practice.

Sometimes, the most meaningful course redesign begins with one thoughtful question.

Summer Reset Tip

Choose one assignment you'll revise before classes begin. Small changes, implemented thoughtfully, often have the greatest impact on student learning.

Educator's Toolbox:

“Your 5-Minute AI Readiness Check”



Before the pace of a new semester begins, take a few minutes to reflect on your own AI readiness.

This isn't a test, and there are no perfect scores. Instead, think of it as a quick "check-up" to help you identify where you're feeling confident, and where a little preparation could make a big difference before your students return.

Rate each statement using the scale below:

1 = Not Yet Ready to Go 2 = Just Beginning 3 = Somewhat Confident 4 = Confident 5 =

 AI Readiness Self-Assessment

AI Knowledge

☐ I understand the strengths and limitations of generative AI well enough to discuss them confidently with my students.

Course Expectations

☐ My syllabus or course materials clearly communicate my expectations for AI use.

Assignment Design

☐ At least one assignment in my course requires students to evaluate, critique, or improve AI-generated content rather than simply produce it.

Academic Integrity

☐ I feel confident discussing responsible AI use, transparency, disclosure, and academic integrity with students.

Faculty Workflow

☐ I have identified at least one way AI can improve my efficiency without compromising educational quality.

Clinical Judgment

☐ My teaching intentionally emphasizes the critical thinking, clinical judgment, and professional reasoning that AI cannot replace.

Confidence

☐ If a student asked me tomorrow, "*Can I use AI for this assignment?*" I would know how to respond.

What Do Your Scores Tell You?

★ Mostly 4s and 5s?

You're well positioned to begin the fall semester with confidence. Continue exploring new ideas while refining what already works. Consider mentoring colleagues who may be earlier in their AI journey.

★ Mostly 3s?

You're making great progress. Rather than trying to improve everything, choose one area to strengthen before the semester begins. Small, intentional improvements often have the greatest impact.

★ Mostly 1s and 2s?

Don't be discouraged. AI readiness is a journey, not a destination. Every educator starts somewhere. Focus on one meaningful improvement this summer, and you'll enter the new semester with greater confidence than you had at the end of the last one.

Build Your Personal Summer Reset Plan

Based on your self-assessment, complete these three statements:

This summer, I will learn more about...

Before the semester begins, I will update...

One action I will implement during the first month of class is...

Keep your responses somewhere you'll see them in August. They can serve as a reminder that meaningful change doesn't happen all at once—it happens one thoughtful step at a time.

17 Before Labor Day Checklist

Before students return, see how many of these you can check off:

- ☐ Reviewed one assignment for AI readiness.
- ☐ Updated my AI syllabus statement or course expectations.
- ☐ Explored one new AI tool that supports my teaching.
- ☐ Reviewed one AI-related policy or guideline.
- ☐ Had a conversation with a colleague about AI in nursing education.
- ☐ Identified one way AI can improve my own workflow.
- ☐ Set one professional AI goal for the upcoming academic year.

You don't need every box checked before the semester begins. Even completing one or two of these actions puts you further ahead than you were just a few months ago.

Summer Reset Tip

Don't aim for perfect AI readiness. Aim to be more prepared than you were at the end of last semester. Progress, not perfection, is what moves education forward.

The Digital Stethoscope Challenge

Complete just one item on this checklist before the end of July. Then build on that success throughout the fall semester.



Closing Note

Summer gives us something the academic year rarely does . . . space.

Space to think.

Space to reflect.

Space to improve.

The changes you make this summer don't have to be dramatic to make a difference. One revised assignment. One clearer policy. One new conversation. One thoughtful step forward.

Those small changes can shape an entire semester and influence the nurses your students will become.

Thank you for spending part of your summer with *The Digital Stethoscope*. I hope this issue has given you not just ideas, but the confidence to take the next step.

Have a wonderful rest of your summer, and I'll see you in August as we continue charting the course for AI in nursing.

 **Susan**