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Digital Teaching Symposium 2026

Beyond the Pilot: What We Learned After a Year of AI Conversations

PRESENTED BY:

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About This Session

In 2025, we shared how AI-powered learning bots supported critical thinking, reflection, and authentic practice in a graduate neonatal nurse practitioner program. One year later, the initiative has expanded and matured.

- Revisit the original project and what happened after the pilot: student engagement, faculty adoption, and instructional design considerations
- Leave with practical strategies, updated design frameworks, and actionable recommendations for Blackboard and other digital learning environments



Session Objectives

- Explain the Bot-Builder Framework for designing AI-powered learning bots
- Evaluate student and faculty feedback from the 2025-26 pilot
- Apply practical strategies and recommendations in Blackboard AI Conversation.



Agenda

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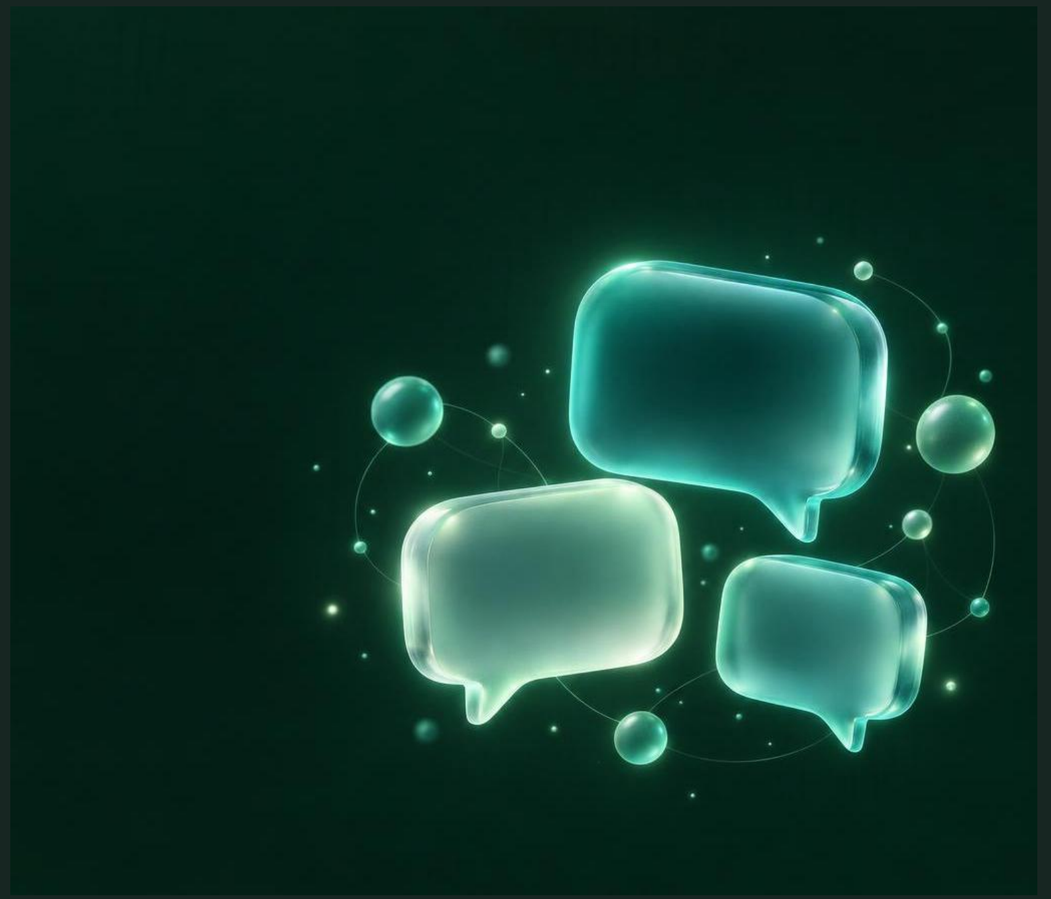
01 Revisiting the 2025 pilot

02 The Bot-Builder Framework

03 Student and faculty feedback

04 Lessons learned

05 Strategies, Q&A



Where We Started

The Bot-Builder Framework

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Step 1
Conversation Type

Role-Play: applied practice

Socratic Questioning: guided critical thinking

Match the type to your learning outcome

Step 2
Student Instructions

The problem or scenario students respond to

The student role and the AI role

The goal of the interaction

Step 3
AI Persona & Reflection

Define the AI's role, expertise, and tone

Guide thinking without giving answers

Close with reflection questions tied to the gradebook

2025-26 Pilot Survey Results

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Survey area	Mean (1–5)	% positive (4–5)	What it shows
Ease of interaction with AI	4.85	100%	All students found the AI easy to use
Confidence & understanding	4.23–4.46	~85–90%	Most said AI helped deepen understanding
Engagement & relevance	4.15–4.38	~85–92%	Strong engagement and course relevance
Overall satisfaction	4.08	~77%	Majority rated the AI experience positively

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“It did not feel awkward, and the chatbot actually felt like I was reading an actual conversation!”

— Student A, 2025

AI Supported Clinical Reasoning

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What students described

- Moved students beyond listing diagnoses to comparing, prioritizing, and revising a differential diagnosis
- Prompted links across maternal history, gestational age, physical findings, imaging, and treatment response
- Reinforced that a differential diagnosis is dynamic and changes with new clinical information and nursing assessments

In their words

- *“The conversation was insightful in creating purposeful examination of contrasting elements between my chosen diagnoses.”*

— Student 1, 2026

- *“It helped to really narrow and focus the (development of the) differential (diagnosis).”*

— Student 2, 2026

Building Confidence Through Guided Practice

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What students described

- Students used the AI Conversation as a guide for organizing their thinking, especially when new to development of differential diagnoses
- Assisted students to identify a patient problem list from a differential diagnosis list
- AI Conversation prompted students to ask clarifying questions during the development of the diagnoses and diagnostic testing within the case study

In their words

- *“As someone who is still very new to making DD (differential diagnosis) lists, it was really nice to have a guide.”*

— Student 3, 2026

- *“It reinforced the importance of using specific maternal history, physical examination findings, and diagnostic imaging to prioritize diagnoses.”*

— Student 4, 2026

Connecting AI to Clinical Practice

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What students described

- Students tied the activity to situations they may face as nurses and nurse practitioners
- Students practiced anticipating risks, deciding what to monitor, and when to test or intervene
- Explaining their reasoning and rationales made the activity feel applicable to real life clinical decisions

In their words

- *“I think it forces you to actually work through and explain your thought process.”*

— Student 6, 2026

- *“It’s a really valuable way to think when you are approached with concerns from the bedside nurse, and for when you are doing admissions (as NP/APRN).”*

— Student 6, 2026

AI Supports Learning, Not Clinical Judgment

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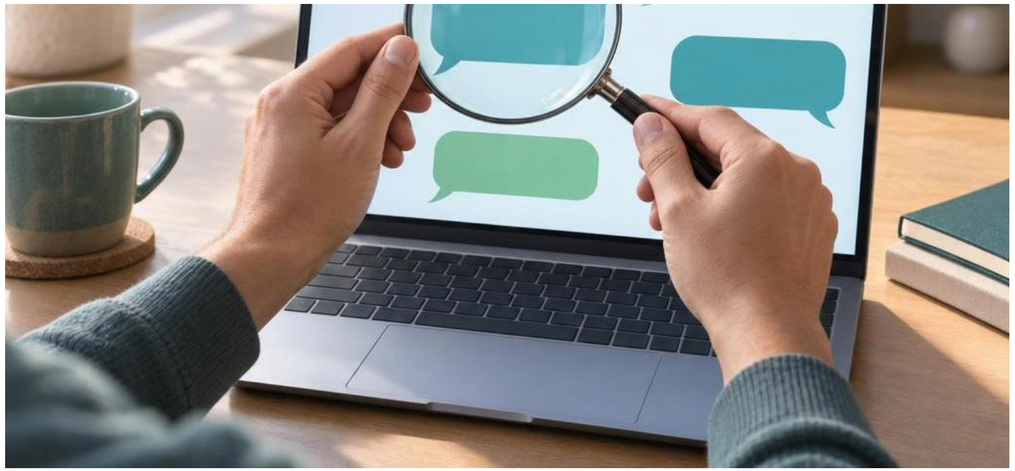
What students described

- Students still had to critically evaluate the AI's guidance and spot possible inaccuracies as it does not replacement human judgement
- The gap created a chance to reinforce verification, clinical judgment, and instructor feedback
- Takeaway: AI is most valuable as a thinking partner but does not replace the human judgement

In their words

- *"A difficulty with this conversation was the inability of the bot to correct errors I made in understanding."*

— Student 1, 2026



Successes and Challenges

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What worked

- Realistic, easy-to-use practice for students (4.85 / 5 ease of interaction)
- Flexible access for online, asynchronous learners
    - Students return and save work
    - Inclusive across time zones, 24/7
    - Reflection questions linked to the gradebook
- Students called it realistic and requested additional AI immersions to enhance learning
- Bridges theory and clinical practice in a safe setting

What we are still working through

- Bot output varies and always needs human review
- Responsible AI practices
    - Check accuracy, bias, and hallucination risks
    - Review auto-generated conversations before launch
    - Tell students it is a bot, not a real patient, nurse, etc.
- Findings come from a small sample in one discipline
- Expansion to additional programs and disciplines will test scalability

Lessons Learned

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Prompt design

- Be specific about the AI's role, tone, and style
  - Prompts range from about 20 to 700 words
  - Auto-generate is a draft: test, edit, refine

Learner expectations

- Frame an authentic scenario in the student instructions
  - Identify the student role, the AI role, and the goal of the assignment
  - Students who try it want more

Assessment considerations

- Reflection questions reveal what students learned
  - Customize prompts to match measurable learning objectives
  - Embedded rubrics are coming soon

Ethical use in healthcare education

- Protect student privacy and data
  - Address bias, fairness, and hallucination risks
  - Be transparent that the bot is not a real patient, nurse, etc.

What Can You Do?

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If you are new: try these ideas

- Start small: one low-stakes practice conversation
- Build a bot with a clear roles and learning objectives
- Add reflection questions tied to the gradebook
- Pre-test every conversation before launching the assignment to students
- Remind students that the activity is within the realms of AI

If you came last year: revisit and revamp

- What have you tried since the pilot?
- What would you revamp or retire?
- Did it go well for you the faculty?
- What worked for your students?
- What challenges were identified?



Key Takeaways

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01 Start with the learning objectives

02 Choose Role-Play or Socratic

03 Use the Bot-Builder Framework

04 Design Activity to Enhance Learning

05 Review AI output; be transparent



Questions We Still Have

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Where we are heading

- How do we promote faculty buy-in for the use of AI in higher education?
- Creation of rubrics to evaluate AI directly in the LMS?
- Identifying for faculty the benefit of consistent use of AI within a course?
- Do we add comment/prompt limitations to the AI Conversation?

Questions for you

- What other questions do you still have?
- What would make this easier to adopt in your courses?
- Which Blackboard features would you want next?
- What concerns remain about accuracy and privacy for students and/or faculty?
- Let’s discuss during the Q&A

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Questions & Comments

#DTS26

Thank you for your time & Let's Connect

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