# Student Learning in the Clinical Setting

## Purpose
The purpose of this program segment is to use current educational research findings to discuss and create optimal student learning environments in clinical settings.

## Time
75 Minutes

## Outline
- Three Roles of the Baccalaureate Generalist Nurse
- Predictors of Learning Outcomes
- Barriers to Learning
- When and How People Learn
- Application of Knowledge to Practice
- Critical Thinking
- Strengths and Weaknesses of Faculty Teaching Performance (Wolf, et. al, 2004)

## Reflection Activities
- How will this information help you in your role?
- Stephen Brookfield’s Four Critical Thinking Processes

## Materials Needed
- PowerPoint Slides 4-1 through 4-40
- Portable microphone
Opening
PPT 4-1
Introduce yourself, your role at your institution, and your session. Share with your audience the positive aspects of working with students in clinical settings and the creative opportunity such a setting offers.

Tell them about the Benner book: “Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation.” There are several quotes/suggestions from the book within this session.

Benner led the research study supported by the Carnegie Foundation to study all the components that contribute to the education of nurses. It is a significant and far reaching study of our profession.

If you intend to teach, I recommend that you read it and use it. It is comprehensive and there is a specific section on clinical teaching that is very informative.

Objectives
PPT 4-2
Through this session, participants will be able to describe learning experiences that effectively engage students in developing clinical expertise.

The Three Roles of the Baccalaureate Nurse
(AACN, 2008)
PPT 4-3
Accreditation documents for registered nurse programs focus on the roles of the nurse being prepared for a specific role. This is the language from the group that most often accredits baccalaureate nursing programs. Compare accreditation of schools with joint commission approval of medical facilities.
The Most Predictive Indicators of Learning Outcomes

Astin is a well-known author on learning (as opposed to teaching). He was one of the first authors to incisively focus on the need to examine students’ learning. His findings are important in understanding how learning occurs. Interaction among all those invested in the student’s learning enhances the learning experience.

Barriers to Learning

Clinical settings were not created for student learning like classrooms and skills labs. Clinical settings are complex work environments for a variety of people. As a work environment, a number of barriers exist that interfere with students being able to learn.

Ask about their experiences with some of these items.
Anxiety and Learning
PPT 4-8
Student anxiety is a significant barrier to learning. It can affect everyone in the clinical group — even the instructor depending on the level of experience of each participant.

Think/pair/share:
Ask them to talk with their neighbor about an experience they have had with an anxious student, either in a clinical group, one they may have precepted or a new graduate. Discuss how they decreased the anxiety so the person could move forward.

Lead a discussion and allow them to share.

Anxiety and Learning
PPT 4-9
Discuss students’ anxiety related to who they are trying to please at the time.
Anxiety can result in the student’s inability to address all the patient’s needs “holistically.” The focus is usually on the physical needs.

One primary method to decrease anxiety is to clarify expectations. Go over the objectives for the entire rotation and for each day. The expectations should increase each week. The expectations are dependent upon the course, the students’ grade level, the previous rotations, the clinical setting, etc. The lead instructor, the syllabus and the evaluation criteria should provide guidance. Stay in close touch with the lead instructor to decrease your own anxiety to make sure that your own expectations are clear as well.

Inform the staff nurses of the expectations. They may have had a senior student the day before and now they have your new junior student. Staff nurses need to know what students can do with and without the instructor’s supervision.

Being approachable is critical so the student will come to you with questions without fear of criticism. It doesn’t mean you have to answer the question, unless of course it’s urgent. You can pose a question back to the student to help them answer their own questions. You can lean them to the correct answer.

While creating the environment, it is also important that students understand that your role is teacher and not friend. That can be difficult in today’s world where everyone is your friend (Facebook) especially if your ages are similar.

Briefly discuss instructor/student roles and boundaries.
When and How People Learn
PPT 4-11
We all learn differently. We have different learning styles. But people also have to be ready to learn. Sometimes we have to unlearn and relearn.

PPT 4-12
Photo from television ER type show. Discuss students’ perceptions of nursing. What they are and how they get them.

Learning
PPT 4-13
Discuss the importance of learning for understanding. Learning in the classroom and from the text book and then applying the knowledge in the clinical setting. They learn what normal lab findings are in the classroom. How do they apply it in the clinical setting? Help them to translate their knowledge into action.

Discuss the importance of understanding the system in which they practice. How does PT or the dietician interact and help the patient? Why is it important that the nurse understands the patients’ needs holistically?

Remind students of their role as the caregiver as well as the manager and coordinator of care. For example, they need to know when PT is coming so they can medicate the patient appropriately.
How to Learn
PPT 4-14
Discuss the fact that we all take in information differently and that there is a lot of information coming to and at students daily. Help them to understand the importance of acquiring and teaching themselves and their patients how to access credible/meaningful information/knowledge on the web (can be meaningless and misleading).

Adult Learners
PPT 4-15
Students must understand that they are responsible for “getting educated.” It is an active process; they must ask questions; they must seek learning opportunities.

Prior knowledge/life experiences can help or hinder learning. Their one life experience may not be an accurate representation of what they can expect with their patient. There are similarities among patient situations and/or disease processes, but each patient must be treated and assessed as an individual.

How People Learn
PPT 4-16
1. Already discussed preconceptions of nursing in slide 12.
2. How students organize knowledge affects what they can do with it (Hendricks). The Nursing Process is the framework that we are mandated to use by our national nursing organization. It is the standard by which we are evaluated. As experienced nurses you apply the Nursing Process instantaneously, without thinking through or labeling each step. New students need guidance in using and identifying how and when they are using it so they don’t miss a step when assessing their patients’ needs.
3. Students need to have an understanding of how they learn best…doing/observing? Sometimes they need to be pushed and sometimes held back.
4. Lead a discussion on their experiences regarding numbers 2 & 3.
How People Learn
PPT 4-17
Briefly discuss how each process can be used effectively in the clinical setting.

How do you learn best?
PPT 4-18
Think/pair/share:
Ask “how do you teach? Do you teach the way you learn? For example, I’m a visual learner so I tend to use pictures/diagrams to teach. That doesn’t mean the student is a visual learner. Do you teach the way you were taught?”

Allow them to discuss questions with partner. Lead discussion allowing them to share.

Learning Styles
PPT 4-19
Follow up on previous discussion about the importance of learning how students learn...by observing them and by listening to them.

Application of Knowledge to Practice
PPT 4-20
How do we teach students to think like nurses?
Key Questions
PPT 4-21
Think/pair/share:
What do you find yourself doing most of the time when supervising students?

How do we teach them about ethics, accountability, teamwork, navigating the system in order to provide the best care? How do we help them to challenge the system and to use the best evidence to provide the best care? Is there a better way to educate them in the clinical setting? We’ve been doing it this way for many years. Is it working? Can you think of a new way? You are now viewing nursing care from the perspective of a caregiver and an educator. As clinical experts, you know what they need to know…do they know enough when they graduate? As an educator how do you get them there?

Critical Thinking
PPT 4-22
Discuss critical thinking and critical thinking indicators. Review the CTIs and show participants how to use them to help them evaluate students’ application of CT.

Critical Thinking
PPT 4-23
Discuss some of these cognitive skills in relation to caring for patients.
Clinical Reasoning
PPT 4-24
Clinical reasoning comes from CT. “CR is the ability to reason about a situation as it unfolds…” (Benner, p. 46). What will I do next? What information do I need to decide? What is my decision making process?

Again, asking the questions is necessary to help them organize their knowledge and information to make decisions.

Reasoning Skills to Improve Patient Outcomes
PPT 4-25
This is “detective work” (Benner, p. 57). These questions help to organize their knowledge. Answering these questions will help them as the patient situation is changing [“reasoning in transition”] so they can make the best decision for the patient.

Questions from Learners
PPT 4-26
It is critical that faculty and students ask questions.

Refer to the Brookfield (CT questions) handout for questions to ask students. “What-if” and “if-then” questions.

Start with easy questions and work up to more difficult ones. Explain to the students that it is your job to find out what they are thinking (you can’t read their minds.) You need to make that clear when you first meet them and explain your expectations. You are not trying to “catch” them saying something wrong, you want to help them to think through a situation and give safe care. The focus is first, safety of the patient, and second, student learning.

Help the student to move from performing a task successfully to focusing on the effect it has on the patient. Students learn these skills with one patient but must eventually move to team nursing.
Team Learning
PPT 4-27
Caring for one patient is not a realistic situation but, especially for new students, it does increase their ability to become comfortable in the clinical setting, relate to a patient and develop therapeutic communication skills.

Discuss the strategies on the slide.

Team Learning
PPT 4-28

Learning Activities — Pick a Card
PPT 4-29
Pick a card. This is an activity that must be discussed at the beginning of the rotation so students know what to expect. Create questions that would be applicable to any setting. Write a question on a card, for example:

1) Choose one treatment that the patient is receiving and present evidence from the literature that supports that treatment. 2) What is the most important thing I learned today? 3) What feeling did I experience today that influenced the way I cared for my patient? 4) How did I enhance my confidence today? 5) Describe an example of “accountability” that you witnessed today.

You could choose questions that are specific to the unit, a disease process, what was learned in class this week, or that facilitates reflection, etc. You might choose questions from the Brookfield handout. Students can draw a card any time during the day or during a post conference.
Stacking Clinical Activity
PPT 4-30
Discuss this as an activity that you might have a student do whose patient went home, or for a student who is not “busy.” Instead of using patients on the unit, you could have a handout with a list of patients you created for them to use as an assignment.

Practices for Clinical Educators
PPT 4-31

Strengths and Weaknesses of Faculty Teaching Performance
PPT 4-32
This descriptive research with undergrad and grad nursing students is particularly important in showing that personal characteristics are not the most important factors in positive teaching evaluations. These items are listed in order of importance within the research: as such, *being a knowledgeable and strategic teacher* is the first positive item. This can be a very useful discussion starting point.
Best Practices for Clinical Faculty (NLN, 2010)
PPT 4-33
Fundamentally, faculty can best help students in clinical settings by 1) providing feedback, and 2) facilitating reflection. Ask the participants why this would be? Would they agree with these findings?

How do you coach students in a way that is not anxiety producing?

Discuss reflective activities. Pose questions that facilitate reflection. Help students understand the importance of reflection as nurses.

Specific Clinical Learning Techniques
PPT 4-34
Again, refer them to the Brookfield handout. Ask them how comfortable they are asking questions. How do they ensure that the student is comfortable enough to answer vs. being anxious or feeling persecuted?

Encourage Students to:
PPT 4-35
Help students to slow down and be intentional about their learning. Typically we are rushing around focusing on tasks. Help them to focus on what they want to learn and what they need to learn on a given day.

This is what you want to hear from a student… “I have had the honor of being present with and learning from clients in intimate, vulnerable, scary situations. I get to regularly advocate for the underserved, especially in the hospital setting. I have access to environments I would have otherwise never been exposed to, and I have learned and grown and broadened my world perspective. I better understand how our system works, and hope someday this knowledge will help me make changes in our system.” (Benner, p. 42).
Reflection is Critical

PPT 4-36
Discuss content on slides.

Reflection Activities

PPT 4-37
After reviewing the last item on the slide, discuss this quote from Benner.

“If evidence or feedback from a situation does not mesh with their understanding of the situation or interpretation of the information, the student must consider new interpretations, and the clinical teacher uses questions to guide students to search for new interpretations and information.” (Benner, p. 42)

Help students identify what is important and what is most urgent.

Personal Reflection

PPT 4-38
Give them time to discuss how they use reflection in practice.

Emphasize the importance of their own reflection to stimulate growth in their new role.
Role Model Photo

PPT 4-39
Emphasize the importance of role modeling. Students are watching and evaluating you the same way you are them.

How will this information help you in your role?

PPT 4-40
If there’s time, ask how they will use this information. What did they find most helpful?