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Dancing with nursing students: A new way of teaching and learning

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Statement of the Problem: Students who enter the nursing program come from diverse backgrounds and have had a variety of professional and practical experiences. These differences contribute to different learning styles and performance, both in classroom and in the clinical setting. Students' background and experience may also affect the way they handle patient care. For example, a student may excel academically but not be able to understand a patient's condition and perform patient care in the clinical area. On the other hand, students who perform well with patients are not always strong academically. These differences in background and experience may also have an impact on how instructors approach their teaching in the classroom and the clinical setting. Of course, overall performance also depends on students' motivation to succeed academically and clinically.

Methodology: The Socratic method of teaching has proven to be effective for some students. However, students sometimes have difficulty with this method because they cling to the idea that "I am paying you to teach me" rather than using this method to develop their critical thinking. "Dancing with the students" is a metaphor I use to describe a strategy of using variety of instruction methods to capture the interest of students from diverse backgrounds. For example, the use of polling technology in the classroom can increase student engagement and help them grapple with new concepts. Especially in didactic learning environments, the use of technology can help stimulate students' thinking process—encouraging them, for example, to focus on the process of reading exam questions and showing them how to put it all together. In the clinical setting, mid-clinical conferences have become an integral part of the clinical experience and are often valuable and creative teaching opportunities. Effective learning and discussion surrounding the topic of the day are vital for an ideal clinical conference.

Results: Students enjoyed polling, which helped them understand concepts learned in class. The mid-clinical conferences helped them understand the bigger picture and apply the concepts learned in class to a real-life setting.

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