

## Leadership Connection 2018 (15-18 September)

### Closing the Loop on a Quality Improvement Project: A Peer-Tutoring Program for Nursing Students

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Nursing programs across the country have a strong interest in both the retention and success of their students. Since many nursing deans state that they are concerned about budget cuts (Yucha, Smyer & Strano-Perry, 2014), available funds must be spent wisely. Therefore, initiatives that purport to help students achieve should be subjected to continuous quality improvement processes in order to justify their expense. According to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (2018), using the Model for Improvement that includes Deming's Plan-Do Study-Act (PDSA) cycle can accelerate such improvement.

At our pre-licensure baccalaureate nursing program, faculty members planned and implemented a peer tutoring initiative several years ago with the twin goals of retention and success of our students. Faculty members then conducted a study to evaluate the success of the peer tutoring initiative. Wilson (2017) outlined several recommendations for improvement specific to our program involving peer tutor training, communication processes, and alternative scheduling and structure options.

The current peer tutoring coordinator is now acting on many of these recommendations to close the loop on a quality improvement cycle. Though recommendations for improvement covered several aspects of the program, the current focus is on formalized training for our peer tutors. According to Wilson (2017), peer tutors need initial and ongoing training to be effective. In addition, Wilson (2017) recommended that training should enhance the tutors' ability to: restructure information in memorable ways, guide progressively independent problem solving, use their role as a student and peer to their advantage and avoid passive learning strategies. So, the coordinator revised both the format and the content of training for our tutors.

The coordinator implemented the revised format for training in August 2017, with a second session in January 2018. The format includes training at the beginning of each semester for new and returning tutors. Beginning in the 2018 spring semester, the coordinator will provide monthly reminders and tips for incorporating active learning strategies when working with students. The format also includes modeling active teaching and learning strategies throughout the training process. Active learning strategies "produce stronger learning and retention...than passive learning strategies" (Brown, Roediger & McDaniel, 2014). The coordinator, education experts and the tutors themselves present various topics during the training. Some active learning strategies used in our training include role play, the snowball activity, and a leader-learner-videographer activity.

The coordinator revised content to include training in classroom technology and NCLEX testing strategies. In addition, our local chapter of Sigma Theta Tau agreed to purchase nine NCLEX review books for use by the tutors in the program to reinforce their ability to guide problem solving. The coordinator included information on peer tutoring ethics (National Tutoring Association, 2016) and strategies for using their status as a peer to connect with students. In addition, a guest speaker and science educator emphasized teaching strategies for learner engagement such as lift-off and think-pair-share (Tanner, 2013). She also demonstrated Foldables (Zike, 2002) with the tutors and each crafted one of their own during the session. Restructuring information in a memorable way is an important skill for teachers and learners who want to make long term connections to content. Foldables, charts and mnemonics are tools that tutors can pass on to their students.

In December 2017, tutors gave written feedback on the helpfulness of the revised training. They will be asked to give additional feedback in May of 2018. The tutors' feedback provides ideas for improvement. Also, the coordinator can monitor tutoring sessions (which are recorded via Tegrity) to see if training

influenced the tutors' teaching strategies. The cycle of quality improvement will continue as future plans include further changes to the peer tutoring program based on study recommendations. In addition, the initial study (Wilson, 2017) serves as a baseline for comparison to measure the impact of changes to the program.

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**Title:**

Closing the Loop on a Quality Improvement Project: A Peer-Tutoring Program for Nursing Students

**Keywords:**

Nursing students, Peer tutoring and Quality improvement

**References:**

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**Abstract Summary:**

Faculty planned, implemented and studied a peer tutoring initiative with goals of retention and success of nursing students. Now, the peer tutoring coordinator is closing the loop on a quality improvement cycle. The current focus for improvement is on peer tutor training.

**Content Outline:**

## I. Introduction

- A. Retention & success of nursing students is important
- B. Tight budgets require that initiatives to help students should give value
- C. Peer tutoring initiative was planned, implemented & studied
- D. We are now acting on study recommendations
- E. This will close the loop on a quality improvement cycle

## II. Body

- A. Study recommendations include changes to
  - 1. Peer tutor training (current focus)
  - 2. Communication processes
  - 3. Alternative scheduling and structure options
- B. Revised format for peer tutor training
  - 1. Provide training at beginning of each semester for new and returning tutors
  - 2. Add monthly reminders and tips for tutors
  - 3. Model active teaching & learning strategies throughout training process
    - a) Role play activity
    - b) Snowball activity
    - c) Leader-learner-videographer activity
- C. Revised content for peer tutor training
  - 1. Retain information on peer tutoring ethics
  - 2. Retain strategies for using status as peer to connect with students

3. Add training in classroom technology
4. Add training in NCLEX testing strategies
5. Add training for progressively independent problem solving
6. Emphasize teaching strategies for learner engagement
  - a) Lift off
  - b) Think, pair, share
7. Emphasize importance of restructuring information in memorable ways
  - a) Charts
  - b) Foldables
  - c) Mnemonics

### III. Conclusion

- A. Tutors surveyed on effectiveness of training, will be repeated
- B. Peer tutoring coordinator to monitor sessions strategically
- C. Future plans include further changes based on study recommendations
- D. This will continue the cycle of quality improvement

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**Professional Experience:** 1985-2011 staff nurse at Parkland Health and Hospital System in Dallas, TX 2012-2016 Nursing Lab Administrator at Texas Woman's University (TWU) 2016-2017 Visiting Assistant Clinical Professor at TWU 2017-current Assistant Clinical Professor at TWU 2017-current Peer Tutoring Coordinator at TWU Published two "Homegrown Solutions" on the NLN Simulation Innovation Resource Center site The Journal of Nursing Education published "Nursing Students Choose Their Own Role in a Flipped Classroom Approach" in July 2018

**Author Summary:** Rebecca Boruff was inspired to become a nurse when her cousin and his wife delivered quintuplets at Parkland Hospital. She later worked for 25 years as a Labor & Delivery nurse. Because of her love for hands-on teaching, she returned to Texas Woman's University (TWU). She

discovered an affinity for simulation and contributed to the NLN's "Homegrown Solutions" online resource. She teaches in the undergraduate nursing program at TWU and oversees the Peer Tutoring Program.