

## Creating Healthy Work Environments 2019

### Preparing Nursing Students to Work With Individuals With Intellectual Disabilities

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With the shift in healthcare to primary care, health promotion and population health, it is important for nursing students to engage in a variety of learning venues. The need for collaborative practices in the community is an ever increasing necessity. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students at The College of New Jersey. This opportunity allows students to apply their additional knowledge and enhanced skills to address a community need, as well as develop their own civic skills and clinical skills through an experiential learning opportunity. Projects are guided by the learning objectives of the course as well as the needs of the community. Students in their sophomore year spend 25 hours participating in community engagement in a variety of setting building on their core content in nursing health assessment, nutrition and lifespan classes. This type of community based learning allows the students to care for populations in the community setting that they would typically see in the outpatient settings with chronic conditions, develop patient communication skills with various age groups, practice health promotion and disease prevention and increase their awareness for the relevant health issues of rural and underserved communities. Student's exposure to individuals with intellectual disabilities is limited in the traditional clinical settings. Research shows that individuals with disabilities report dissatisfaction with personal experiences with healthcare professionals. They stated they felt patronized and disempowered (Matziou et al., 2019). Parents of children with disabilities have described their care as inexperienced, poorly organized and fragmented. In order to educate nursing students on interacting with individuals with differing abilities they need experience. The college of New Jersey nursing department in conjunction with the Career and Community Studies (CCS) and Dawn of Hope programs developed a program called "Health Break" to give the students an opportunity to work with individuals with intellectual disabilities. Career and Community Studies (CCS) is a college-based program designed for students with intellectual disabilities ages 18-25. Dawn of Hope Project is a program designed to provide practical instruction to girls in critical areas such as character development, building self-esteem, embracing their identity, life skills, health and wellness. Together the programs facilitator and the students provided the CCS students with self-esteem, stress reduction and coping techniques. Nursing students participated with Dawn of Hope Project whose program is designed to provide practical instruction to girls in critical areas such as character development, building self-esteem, embracing their identity, life skills, health and wellness. The students provided educational information sessions on various topics related to health and wellness as well as self-esteem. Students as well as faculty benefit from this type of educational/clinical setting. Students acquire the ability to apply what they have learned in "the real world", improved social responsibility and citizenship skills, connections with professionals and community members allow for learning and career opportunities and improve assessment and clinical skills. Faculty benefit from new opportunities for research and publication via new relationships between faculty and community partners and it allows networking opportunities with engaged faculty in other disciplines or institutions as well as other healthcare professionals.

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**Title:**

Preparing Nursing Students to Work With Individuals With Intellectual Disabilities

**Keywords:**

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**References:**

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### **Abstract Summary:**

Student's exposure to individuals with intellectual disabilities is limited in the traditional clinical settings. The college of New Jersey nursing department in conjunction with the Career and Community Studies and Dawn of Hope programs developed a program to give the students an opportunity to work with individuals with intellectual disabilities.

### **Content Outline:**

Student's exposure to individuals with intellectual disabilities is limited in the traditional clinical settings. Research shows that individuals with disabilities report dissatisfaction with personal experiences with healthcare professionals. They stated they felt patronized and dis-empowered (Matziou et al., 2019). Parents of children with disabilities have described their care as inexperienced, poorly organized and fragmented. In order to educate nursing students on interacting with individuals with differing abilities they need experience. The college of New Jersey nursing department in conjunction with the Career and Community Studies (CCS) and Dawn of Hope programs developed a program called "Health Break" to give the students an opportunity to work with individuals with intellectual disabilities. Community Engagement is a signature experience for the students at The College of New Jersey. This opportunity allows students to apply their additional knowledge and enhanced skills to address a community need, as well as develop their own civic skills and clinical skills through an experiential learning opportunity. Students in their sophomore year spend 25 hours participating in community engagement. CCS is a college-based program designed for students with intellectual disabilities ages 18-25. Dawn of Hope Project is a program designed to provide practical instruction to girls in critical areas such as character development, building self-esteem, embracing their identity, life skills, health and wellness. Together the programs facilitator and the students provided the CCS students with self-esteem, stress reduction and coping techniques. The response from both the nursing and the CCS students was overwhelmingly positive. One student stated "I learned the importance of language when regarding those with disabilities." Another stated, "The best teaching and care can only occur when one views one's client as another person, since the health care provider can better relate, empathize, and therefore care for an individual they view holistically".

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**Professional Experience:** THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, School of Nursing, Ewing, NJ Assistant Professor September 2014 – Present School Nurse Program Coordinator Rutgers University September 2015 – Present School Nurse Program Coordinator Kean University 2013-2014 Graduate Program Coordinator Kean University 2013-2014 RUTGERS THE STATE UNIVERSITY, College of Nursing, Newark, NJ Clinical Faculty 2001-2011 School Nurse Program Coordinator/Advisor Rutgers University 2007-2011 Adjunct faculty Rutgers University 2011-2014 NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR NURSING AMBASSADOR, Kean University 2012-2014 SIGMA THETA TAU INTERNATIONAL Educational Task Force Member 2013-present NURSE OF THE FUTURE GAP ANALYSIS COMPETENCIES Task Force Member 2013-2015 Johnson & Johnson School Nurse Fellow, 2015 National League for Nursing, Certified Nurse Educator, 2012 Recipient of the Robert Wood Johnson Scholarship, the purpose of this scholarship was for the pursuit of a doctorate with a focus in nurse education preparation, 2009. Certified School Nurse, Board of Education State of New Jersey, 2003

**Author Summary:** I have been a registered nurse for over 25 years and I have over 16 years teaching experience at a university. I have extensive experience public speaking in various venues including national conferences. An assistant professor at The College of New Jersey, certified school nurse, a certified nurse educator and a J & J School Nurse Fellow.