Title:
Using Games to Teach Leadership Concepts to Undergraduate Nursing Students

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Abstract Describes:
Ongoing Work/Project

Applicable category:
Academic, Students

Keywords:
Gaming, Innovative Teaching Methods and Team-Building

References:


**Abstract Summary:**

Active learning strategies like games are an effective method to teach leadership skills like communication, collaboration, delegation, and giving feedback. Examples of three different games used to reinforce these skills in an undergraduate nursing leadership course are described in this poster.

**Content Outline:**

I. Background

A. Leadership skills are important to include in undergraduate nursing leadership courses.

B. Evidence suggests that students need more experiences in developing skills in communication, conflict management, delegation, and advocacy.

C. Active learning strategies are effective in teaching leadership skills.

D. Games:
1. Advantages: Increase student engagement, improve knowledge retention, help connect theory to practice.

2. Disadvantages: May increase noise level in the classroom; may require additional space outside of the traditional classroom setting.

II. Examples of Three Games Used to Reinforce Leadership Skills:

A. The Tallest Tower: Reinforces communication and collaboration

B. Can You Build This? Reinforces collaboration, communication, and delegation

C. Statements of Generosity: Reinforces role of communication and positive feedback

III. Conclusion: Games can be used as a part of a class in leadership and management to help connect theory to practice and to develop skills in communication, collaboration, delegation, and giving feedback.

**Topic Selection:**
Leadership Poster Session 1 (Saturday/Sunday, 16 & 17 November) (25744)

**Abstract Text:**

BACKGROUND:
Teaching leadership skills to undergraduate nursing students is important so they can function as professional nurses in a complex healthcare system (Symonds-Brown & Milner, 2015). Prior studies of nursing leadership course content have demonstrated that students need more experiences in learning skills like communication, conflict management, delegation, and advocacy (Ross et al., 2018). Using active learning strategies may be one of the most effective methods to teach leadership skills (Morrow, 2015).

Games are one type of active learning strategy, and require the learner to participate in competitive or non-competitive activities with preset rules (Fitzgerald & Keyes, 2014). Games have been shown to increase student engagement, improve knowledge retention, and help connect theory to practice (Phillips, 2016; Qian & Clark, 2016). Games develop skills in leadership, communication, and flexibility in both nursing (Gurgel & Fernandes, 2015) and non-nursing settings (Sousa & Rocha, 2019). In fact, Yi (2015) recommends that team-building games and activities be an integral part of all nursing curricula.

METHODS:

Multiple games are used in an undergraduate nursing leadership course to teach concepts central to leadership and management. These games require few supplies, can be set up in many classroom settings, and could be used by educators globally in nursing classrooms. Faculty members should consider that games may generate additional noise and can require additional space than some classrooms offer (Fitzgerald & Keyes, 2014). Students with disabilities may need accommodations in order to participate.
For the purpose of this poster, three games will be described along with the leadership and management principles they reinforce.

1. “The Tallest Tower.” Groups of four to six students are given a bag containing varied amounts of tape, pencils, cups, and wooden sticks. These instructions are given: “This is an activity to work on communication and collaboration, and the goal is to build the tallest free standing tower you can with the supplies in the bags. There will be prizes for the winners.” Groups are then given five minutes to build their towers. The key is that the supply distribution in the bags is unequal; some groups have more tape than others, while some groups have more building materials than others. Collaboration and sharing is neither encouraged nor discouraged during the activity. The best way to achieve the goal is for groups to pool their supplies, but sharing rarely happens. For debriefing, this activity solidifies the importance of collaboration and communicating not just in the small groups but also in the bigger group as a whole. This game is analogous to situations in the health care system where group communication and collaboration are critical to success.

2. “Can You Build This?” Before class begins, the faculty member creates two identical versions of a structure made from plastic snap-together building blocks. One is then taken apart and the pieces are placed in a plastic bag. One student is given the completed structure to look at, and only this student sees the completed structure. A second student is given the bag of pieces that have been taken apart already. The goal of the game is for the student who is looking at the completed structure to give instructions to the other student about how to build the structure; however, neither student can see the other one’s structure. As the game unfolds, students realize that it is challenging to communicate accurately and precisely; in the end, the two structures often do not look much alike. This game reinforces leadership concepts such as collaboration, communication, and delegation.

3. “Statements of Generosity.” Each student is given a piece of paper and writes his or her name on the back of the paper. The students then tape the paper to their backs so that the side with their name is not visible. These instructions are given: “In a moment you will all get up and move about the room. When you encounter someone, think of one nice thing that comes to mind when you think of that person. Then write that quality on the piece of paper that is taped to his or her back. Do not tell them what you wrote. Everyone must write something nice on at least three people’s backs.” Then give the group five minutes to walk around the room and complete the task. Students then work together to take the pieces of paper off of each other’s backs and hang the papers on the wall so that the positive words face the room. The faculty member then reads some of the positive words out loud and students are given a chance to get up and find their piece of paper. Common reactions include statements like, “It is really nice to hear that about me,” or “I did not know that my classmates thought I was smart.” The faculty member then asks students how often we hear positive versus negative comments in the workplace, and how it would feel if we heard more positive statements. One of the primary roles of leaders is to build relationships, and this activity stresses the importance of using communication and positive feedback as a part of that process.

CONCLUSION:

These three games exemplify how faculty members can use active learning strategies to bring leadership concepts like communication, collaboration, delegation, and giving feedback to life.