



# Readiness for Practice: Do Teaching Strategies Matter?

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## Abstract

A senior-level hybrid nursing course was enhanced with evidence-based active learning strategies in an effort to boost student engagement and promote readiness for professional practice. Data were collected to evaluate the impact of these pedagogical changes on student engagement and learning outcomes. Data analysis revealed interesting insights about the role of student engagement in developing readiness for practice, which can help nurse educators achieve the shared goal of preparing student nurses for their first professional roles.

## Background

Research findings indicate that new graduate nurses lack key competencies required for effective nursing practice.<sup>1</sup> Senior-level nursing students and beginning RNs have been found to lack cognitive and psychomotor skills, including critical thinking, prioritization, managing complex situations, and time management.<sup>2,3</sup> Active learning strategies are gaining popularity in nursing education for their effectiveness in developing critical thinking skills<sup>4</sup>, which may enhance readiness for practice. However, connections between active learning strategies, student engagement, and readiness for practice have not been explored.

## Objectives

1. Enhance student engagement through active learning strategies.
2. Explore relationships between student perceptions of teaching strategies and engagement.
3. Explore relationships between student engagement and readiness for practice.
4. Identify factors that influence readiness for practice.

## Methods

**Design:** Descriptive, cross-sectional, correlational survey

**Sample:** Convenience sample of senior-level student nurses (n=42) enrolled in a critical care course.

**Variables:** Participant demographics, perceptions of teaching and learning strategies, exam performance, self-rated engagement, perceived readiness for practice.

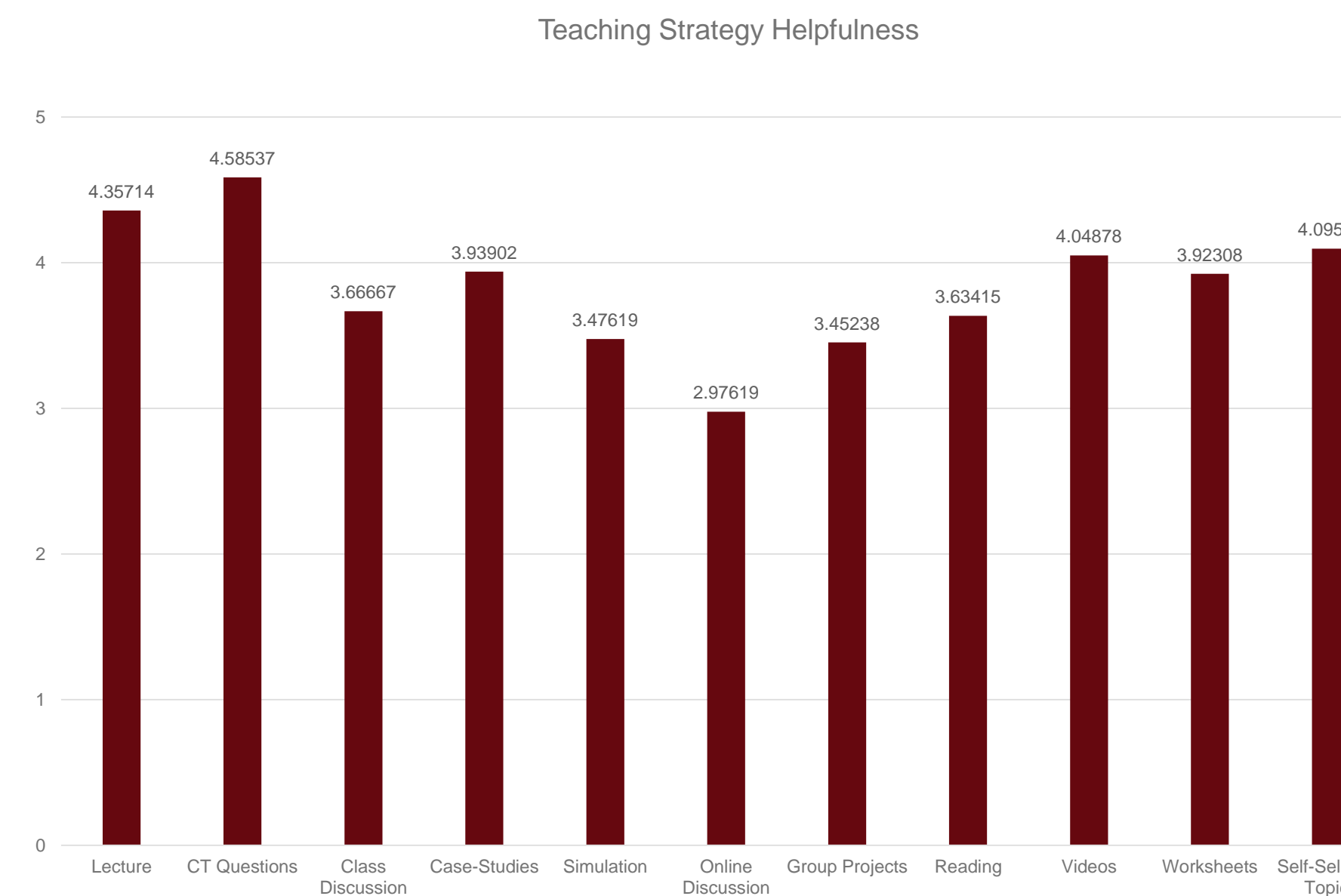
**Instruments:**

- Casey-Fink Readiness for Practice Survey<sup>5</sup>
- Student Engagement Questionnaire<sup>6</sup>
- Investigator-developed Likert-scale survey for perceptions of teaching and learning strategies used in the course.

Sample Demographics	
Age	24.6 years (range 21-37)
Gender	88% female (n=37) 12% male (n=5)
Ethnicity	78% Caucasian (n=33) 10% Hispanic (n=4) 5% Asian (n=2) 5% African American (n=2) 2% African (n=1)
Employment	90% employed (n=38); Average hrs/week = 21.3 (range 0-50 hrs/week)

## Teaching Strategies & Learning Activities

- Generally positive perceptions of T/L strategies
- No significant relationship with demographic variables
- No significant relationships between T/L and engagement
- No difference in exam scores between cohorts



## Findings

**Engagement** ( $\alpha = .922$ )

- No significant relationship with demographic variables
- No significant difference in engagement level over time
- Significant positive relationship between engagement and readiness for practice ( $r = .395, p = .01$ ).
- Significant predictor of readiness for practice ( $F(1, 40) = 7.391, p = .01$ )

**Readiness for Practice** ( $\alpha = .802$ )

- No significant relationship with demographic variables
- Significant relationship with comfort level in caring for:
  - 2 adult med/surg patients ( $r = .372, p = .015$ )
    - Item #10, opportunities for practice, was a significant predictor
  - 3 adult med/surg patients ( $r = .392, p = .01$ )
    - Item #13, communication, and #10, opportunities for practice, were significant predictors
  - 4 adult med/surg patients ( $r = .39, p = .011$ )
    - Items #7 and #17, problem solving, were significant predictors

Skills that students feel <b>most uncomfortable</b> performing independently	
IV Insertion	45% (n=19)
Responding to emergency, change in patient condition, or CODE	35.7% (n=15)
Medication administration	26.3% (n=11)

## Conclusions

1. Despite students' positive perceptions of active learning approaches, the teaching and learning strategies integrated into this course did not significantly influence student engagement or exam performance.
2. However, engagement was found to be a significant predictor of students' readiness for practice. Future research may uncover specific engagement behaviors that can be nurtured among nursing students.
3. Readiness for practice was significantly related to students' self-confidence in caring for multi-patient assignments. Interestingly, scale items associated with problem-solving helped predict students' confidence in caring for 4 patients, while confidence in caring for 2 or 3 patients was partially predicted by opportunities to practice skills. These findings highlight the importance of fostering senior students' problem-solving skills and providing repeated opportunities to practice essential skills.
4. Finally, practice opportunities should focus on the skills that senior students feel most uncomfortable performing independently: IV insertion, emergency response/CODE, and medication administration.

## Key References

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