

Creating Us: Partnership Agreements With Nursing Students in a BSN Clinical

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Background and Significance

Partnership agreements (PA) are co-created among partners and serve as a mechanism to reveal wishes, fears, and concerns about a relationship before jumping headlong into a collaboration. Through a 4-step process (Heinrich, 2011), partners turn their wishes, fears, and concerns into a covenant and contract which act as a living document to support the collaboration. After experiencing a partnership agreement (PA) with a nurse-colleague within a professional relationship (Heinrich, 2008), a nurse faculty was curious about how negotiating a PA with nursing students might work. A partnership agreement is a tool that enables a dialogue between the nursing student and teacher, breaks down the principles of domination inherent in nursing education, and instead creates a partnership-based relationship (Eisler and Potter, 2014).



Texas State School of Nursing BSN Clinical Group

Methods

Using the week by week, 4-step partnership agreement (PA) process with a group of ten nursing students in an adult medical-surgical clinical course results in an agreement that supports the student-teacher and student-student relationships over the duration of a 15-week semester. The partnership agreement process is introduced by the teacher on the first day of clinical. The 4-step PA process unfolds over the course of the first five weeks of a semester. The week by week activities are described in Table 1.

Table 1

Week by Week Activities to Create a Partnership Agreement with Students

Week	Activities
1	Introduce the concept of the partnership agreement. Invite the students to create a partnership with the question, "Would you consider co-creating a partnership agreement as a clinical group?" Homework: Share the article Heinrich (2008) with the students and ask them to read and write down their wishes, fears, and concerns about clinical before the next class meeting. The teacher agrees to do the same.
2	Students and teacher share their wishes, fears and concerns with each other. Teacher acts as the scribe. Homework: Teacher shares the written wishes, fears, and concerns with students.
3	Teacher displays/shares the wishes, fears, and concerns. Additions or deletions are made. The contract and covenant are discussed and co-created. Homework: The teacher shares the work-in-progress partnership agreement with the contract and covenant added.
4	Teacher displays the work-in-progress partnership agreement. Additions or deletions are made. The teacher acts as scribe. Homework: The teacher shares the partnership agreement in progress.
5	Teacher shares a hardcopy or digital copy and it is signed by all. It is reiterated the partnership agreement is a work-in-progress and may be renegotiated at any time. This statement is included as part of the partnership. Homework: The teacher shares a signed copy of partnership agreement with all.

Results

The 4-step process of creating partnership agreements has been used successfully with more than five clinical groups. An analysis of comments from students reveals a positive influence on the relationships among the nursing students and the nursing students with their teacher (Belcik and Levenson, 2017).

Our Partnership Agreement*
Names
Date

Wishes

Fears and Concerns

Our Contract (Who does what when)

Covenant (How we treat each other), We:

Name(s): _____ Date: _____

*This Partnership Agreement is a work-in-progress that either partner can ask to be renegotiated at any point.
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Figure 1. Partnership agreement template. This is the format used to share the partnership agreement in writing with all partners. Each of the 4-steps are included. Used with permission.

Conclusion

Faculty in schools of nursing should consider using the 4-step partnership agreement process with their next group of nursing students in clinical. Partnership agreements with nursing students should be considered in other clinical experiences within the BSN curriculum.

References

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