Nurse educators have been looking for an elusive set of pre-licensure nursing program admission criteria resulting in zero attrition and 100% first time National Council Licensure Examination – Registered Nurse (NCLEX-RN) pass rate since nursing education left the hospitals and moved into the collegiate setting (Romero, 2013). Should face-to-face interviews or essays be required? What is the minimum grade point average (GPA) to guarantee not just program completion, but passing NCLEX-RN the very first time? Should programs require a minimum score on a standardized nursing admission test and what should the score be? Will these preadmission requirements lead to a zero attrition rate due to course or clinical failure? Research has determined a system wide approach to program development, evaluation, and revision is linked to high rates of continued progression and NCLEX-RN first time pass rate success (Carr, 2011; Cole & Adams, 2014; Koestler, 2015; Serumbus, 2016). The system wide approach is based on continuous program assessment and evaluation providing data to guide improvements and change based on the evidence.

At a small southeastern university traditional prelicensure Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program the most recent evidence indicates the science GPA of the admission criteria as most predictive of program success and has shown the importance of learners “Mastering the Content” of the nursing curriculum in order to be successful in both program completion and the first time when taking NCLEX-RN. Mastering the Content is not just passing courses, achieving the 75% exam average for course exams, or obtaining a specific benchmark on a standardized end of course exam (Wiles, 2014). Mastering the Content starts with building a strong curriculum founded on the knowledge and skills of general nursing practice, exemplary teaching, and student utilization of metacognitive learning strategies. Mastering the Content continues with student application of the comprehensive foundation and metacognitive strategies to perform an accurate nursing analysis and judgment in order to choose the safest, best, or priority nursing action. Implementation of an introduction to nursing school success course, identification of and working with at-risk students, course exam review, and ending with an NCLEX prep course are also important for learner success in Mastering the Content.

The results obtained during the continuous process of program assessment and evaluation, implementation of the Mastering of Content curriculum and active learning enhancements, and regression analysis of student admission requirements support an evidence-based multifaceted system approach to program reform. Analysis of the data supported (a) modification of admission criteria, (b) implementation of a nursing program orientation course, (c) using technology enhanced active learning strategies to promote retention of learning, (d) providing students with opportunities to learn how to develop metacognitive learning tools to assist in Mastering the Content, and (e) an NCLEX preparation course. The end result demonstrated a greater than 10% increase in NCLEX-RN first attempt pass rates and decrease in attrition rate for course failure.

Title:
Mastering the Content: A Systematic Evidence-Based Approach to Nursing Program Success

Keywords:
NCLEX-RN first time pass rate, metacognition and system-wide program revision

References:


Mastering the Content is a proactive system wide approach to a less than desired NCLEX-RN first time pass rate based on a meta-analysis of the research on best practices improving pre-licensure RN program success. The approach includes continuous program data, active and metacognitive learning strategies, and individualized student study plans.

Content Outline:

1) What is Nursing Program Success
   a) Consistent 100% NCLEX-RN First Time Pass Rate
   b) Accreditation and Regulatory Requirements
2) NCLEX Pass Rate is Less Than Desired
3) Best Practices
   a) Review of the Literature
   b) Meta-Analysis Results

4) Steps to the System-Wide Approach

5) Gathering the Data
   a) Comprehensive Program Evaluation
   b) Admission Criteria
   c) Progression Requirements
   d) Review of the curriculum
      i) Content
      ii) Teaching methods
      iii) Learning activities
      iv) Assessments of learning

6) Using the Data
   a) Tailor admission requirements for your program
   b) Standardized testing results analysis
   c) Form a curriculum committee
   d) At-risk student identification

7) Integrating Best Practices
   a) Adjust the curriculum
   b) Adopt active learning nursing education products
   c) Faculty buy-in and Super User
   d) Student motivation and positivity
   e) Metacognition
   f) Continuous evaluation
8) Specific Best Practices
   a) Nursing Program Success Course
   b) Support and Remediation for At-risk Students
   c) NCLEX Prep Course in Final Semester

9) Positive Results
   a) Attrition
   b) Examination results
   c) NCLEX-RN

10) Conclusion

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**Professional Experience**: 1979 to 1984 Registered Nurse Obstetrics 1984 to present Certified Nurse-Midwife, currently active in private practice 2004 to present Associate Professor of Nursing, Brenau University at the graduate and undergraduate level content areas- Obstetrics & Women's Health, Pharmacology, NCLEX prep, Nursing Education Assessment & Evaluation Committee Coordinator Curriculum Committee Member Developed curriculum for the four core courses of Masters Level Nursing Education tract Presented Item Writing to faculty [twice] Have presented at two conferences [GANE 2015, Brenau 2016] Developed Instructor Resources for Maternity Text [Delmar Learning] Developed Dosage Calculation Problems for Henke's Med-Math [LWW] Reviewer for several NCLEX-RN Prep texts and Maternity/WH texts

**Author Summary**: Laura Wallace is currently an Associate Professor at the Mary Inez Grindle School of Nursing at Brenau University. She teaches in both the graduate and undergraduate nursing programs. As Assessment and Evaluation coordinator, Dr Wallace has played a key role in performing the meta-analysis and gathering the data before and after the implementation of a system-wide approach to changing a nursing program and improving the NCLEX-RN first time pass rate.