Teaching the Millennial Nursing Student: Using a "Flipping the Classroom" Model

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Abstract Working on the front lines of patient care, nurses play a vital role in helping our nation meet the objectives of the Future of Nursing IOM report and the Affordable Care Act. Nursing schools have a new challenge to prepare students to function in vital roles as leading change agents in this different environment. Simultaneously, millennials, a new generation of learners with unique learning needs have inundated our nursing classrooms. How best to effectively teach millennial students is a pressing issue. Millennials think and learn differently than previous generations and nurse educators are being asked to change their teaching styles to meet their needs. The purpose of this article is to introduce the nuts and bolts of “Flipping the Classroom” as a new approach to teaching millennial students. This model offers a revolutionary way to teach millennial nursing students. Designed especially for the millennial-aged student, “flipping the classroom” can result in superior learning outcomes, higher knowledge retention, enhanced critical thinking skills and improved clinical judgment. “Flipping” in nursing requires educators to move away from lecturing as the primary way to deliver information and instead to use various engaging tools and activities to help students make sense of theory and to connect key concepts with realistic experiences. It asks learners to use online resources innovatively and to explore the material prior to class. “Flipping” sets the platform for knowledge application in the classroom. Teachers and students use class time to problem solve, create, critique, and synthesize in a dynamic and engaging environment. Ultimately, both nurse educators and students can be transformed with this unique “flipped” model.

Keywords Millennials, Nursing Education, Flipping the Classroom

1. Introduction: “Spring Semester Nursing 422 Scene #1”

It is 8 am, Tuesday morning, on a typical cold, snowy winter day, the first day of the second semester of the academic year, and the last semester for 32 soon to be “graduate nurses.” Students stroll into class, some that look like they just got up or never went to bed. Students typically sit in the same seat, near the same classmates, open up their laptops or cell phones and immediately settle into texting friends, reading emails, posting pictures and comments on Facebook, and preparing themselves to relax comfortably for the next 2 1/2 hour “show.” As the course teacher or perhaps the “entertainer” I frantically prepare for my “performance” start the computer, PowerPoint projector, pass out handouts, and try every possible trick in the book to ensure the successful delivery of five chapters of content, 100 plus power point slides, ensuring that I deliver every possible piece of knowledge they need to know. I start the class promptly at 8 am even though students continue to trickle into the room for the next 20 minutes. I welcome students to the course and enthusiastically ask them if they have any course related questions, concerns or thoughts. Immediately, a bunch of hands go up and I begin to answer what seems to be the “here we go again” questions asked before every course. “Do we have to buy the book?” “Will you give us a study guide before the tests?” “Can you change the day of the test if we have another test on that same day?” “Tests will be all multiple choice, correct, so we don’t have to write anything?” and of course the greatest question of all “Do we have to write a paper? And if yes, how many “words” does the paper need to be? Will you take off for grammar, spelling, and do we have to follow APA format?” After patiently answering everyone’s question, the curtain goes up and the show begins. At the end of the semester, the last class of the semester, your final performance and “grand finale” the students openly critique how well they were entertained, and received what they feel are the necessary content and skills needed to do the job.

2. Background: Identifying the Problem

Out with the Old and in with the New: Teaching a New Generation