

## The Use of Active Learning to Increase Student Success on NCLEX

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**Category:** Evidence-Based Practice Abstract

**Purpose:** The purpose of this project is to improve student's NCLEX scores by incorporating a variety of engaging active learning strategies throughout a nursing curriculum. The evidence shows that students learn best through active learning which enables them to apply concepts to a variety of patient-care scenarios over time and situations. The need for change was indicated by aggregate NCLEX scores over the past two years below the national mean, at 79%.

**Introduction:** The PICOT question is: In nursing students, does the implementation of engaging active learning strategies in the classroom, as opposed to not implementing active learning strategies, improve NCLEX scores at the completion of a nursing program? Active learning strategies have been shown to improve deep learning applicable to a variety of patients and situations. It is critical that graduate nurses are able to do this, both for success on NCLEX and patient safety.

**Implementation:** Using the change theory Diffusion of Innovations, a variety of active learning strategies were incorporated into all nursing courses in an ADN program over a period of two academic years beginning with incoming nursing students. Faculty members prepared for this change over the course of the previous academic year, attending conferences and developing active learning lesson plans. Faculty members were committed to this change and supported each other in the development and use of these strategies. The use of lecture and PowerPoint was decreased to a maximum of one 15-minute lecture per class period. The remainder of the class period was devoted to students working in groups on a variety of different learning activities, each lasting 15-20 minutes in length. Faculty members debriefed the class at the end of each learning activity and highlighted the salient points from each activity.

**Evaluation:** Evaluation of this change to active learning strategies consisted of monitoring NCLEX pass rates for students who graduated from the active-learning curriculum. All students who graduated at the end of the two year period from the start of the incorporation of these strategies was included. The average NCLEX pass rate was determined after all students completed NCLEX. The incorporation of active learning strategies throughout the curriculum seemed to contribute to NCLEX success for this cohort of students. The NCLEX pass rate was 86%, up from an average of 79% for the previous two years. Although other factors could have contributed to this positive change, such as the motivation/abilities of the students themselves, the data indicate that the use of active learning throughout the curriculum could contribute to success on NCLEX.

**Conclusions/Recommendations:** It is recommended that engaging, active learning strategies should be incorporated into nursing curricula in every course and should be the learning strategy used during the majority of class time. The result could not only be student success on NCLEX, but also increased patient safety.