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Poster Presentations as a Teaching Strategy in Web-Based Courses
BEVERLY SIEGRIST, DAWN GARRETT-WRIGHT, AND CATHY H. ABEL

Distance education, for a single course or for the entire program, is being used increasingly in nursing education. As in the traditional classroom, educators in online, web-based nursing programs incorporate a variety of teaching strategies to promote student engagement and active learning.

Poster presentations are an example of one such teaching strategy. Creating posters requires students to not only gain information about a specific topic, but also to analyze the information and disseminate it to others. Posters offer opportunities for students to be creative in the delivery of information and to receive feedback from their peers and faculty (Billings & Halstead, 2009).

For a hybrid undergraduate nursing leadership and management course, with classes offered on alternate weeks in the traditional classroom setting and via the Internet, students are required to complete a group poster presentation and post it online. They are given a list of possible topics pertaining to course material, including leadership theories, quality improvement, change theories, recruitment and retention, managing in an intergenerational environment, and modes of care delivery. (See Figure 1 for an example.) Up to six students who select the same topic may work together, as a group, to develop the poster and present it online.

For many students, this is their first exposure to developing a professional poster. Before proceeding with the assignment, they are given verbal and written guidelines and a grading rubric; they also have the opportunity to view examples of finished posters. The online presentation is conducted using the discussion board feature of the Blackboard course management tool; a forum on the discussion board is established for displaying the posters. The students have used Blackboard in previous courses in the nursing program.

For the assignment, students are required to view all posters and ask questions of their peers. The discussions take place over a one-week period.

The role of the instructor is that of facilitator and evaluator. As facilitator, the instructor checks on postings in a timely manner and responds when necessary to correct or clarify information. From time to time, the instructor submits questions or comments to enhance the discussion.

The grading rubric outlines criteria pertaining to content, appearance, and adherence to APA style. The rubric is given to students with the course syllabus to ensure that they understand expectations for the
assignment. Once posters are submitted, the instructor uses the rubric for evaluation and to provide feedback to students. (See Figure 2.)

Expense is one factor frequently cited as a disadvantage when posters are used as a teaching strategy. Not all students have the means to purchase the supplies needed to develop a professional poster (Billings & Halstead, 2009). With the presentation of posters online, this concern is eliminated. Posters are used in various health care settings as a means of providing education to nursing staff and at professional conferences to disseminate research findings. Thus, this assignment is intended to be beneficial to students in their professional careers (Larive & Bulska, 2006; Miller, 2007). Another benefit of the assignment is the development of teamwork. Students must work together to gather information, design the poster, and respond to questions, all valuable skills for preparing nursing students to working with members of interdisciplinary teams in health care settings.

This assignment promotes critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and the use of technology to disseminate information — skills that are vital for socialization into the role of the professional nurse. The authors plan to continue to use online poster presentations as a teaching strategy and as both a formative and summative evaluation method in other courses. It is hoped that this method of presenting posters may lead to opportunities for students to disseminate information to other audiences, including nursing leaders in the community who will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide additional feedback.

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