

HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Integrating Freshman Nursing Students into Nursing: The Effectiveness of Peer Mentors

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Peer mentoring is an ongoing method of educating students by using peers to facilitate learning. At Purdue University's School of Nursing this past year, peer mentors were added to the introductory freshman nursing class to serve as a resource for both the professor and the freshman nursing students involved in this course. This research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the peer mentor program at successfully enhancing integration of new freshmen into the School of Nursing. It was conducted through administration of anonymous evaluations to both students in the course and to those who functioned as peer mentors. Each evaluation had two sections: one containing statements that the evaluator scored based on agreeability, and the other containing open-ended questions that allowed the ability to freely comment about the positives and negatives of this process. Descriptive statistics were

used to analyze the data. A qualitative review was done of all responses received via the open-ended questions. Evaluation of the program revealed mostly positive feedback, especially in the areas of interaction and communication. Negative feedback, which was minimal, included opinions that there was a lack of structure and that some students preferred having just one teacher instead of peer mentors assisting in the learning. The identified opportunities for improvement will facilitate modifications for future offerings. Peer mentoring has produced positive outcomes in other studies as well and can be implemented in education to enhance resources, bridge communication between teacher and student, and promote collaborative learning.

Research advisor Vicki Simpson writes, "By participating as a peer mentor, then reviewing the outcomes for both peer mentors and mentees, Matt was able to document the overall positive impact of this program. Peer mentors were able to further develop leadership skills, while mentees developed a greater connection to the School of Nursing."