

Illinois State University

Description of America's Promise School Project

America's Promise School Project (APSP) is aligned with the goals of America's Promise Alliance, a national organization dedicated to improving the health and well-being of children (americaspromise.org). The primary impetus was to redesign undergraduate clinical experience, specifically the pediatric experience, to prepare students to work in an evolving health care environment. The newly designed and tested clinical model is an undergraduate pediatric/public health clinical model placing students in elementary and secondary schools as the primary learning sites for application of pediatric and public health theory. Students are placed in urban and rural settings, exposing them to children and families with chronic health conditions and the challenges families face navigating the health care system. Students work with school nurses, teachers and special education professionals assessing children in the nurse's office and developing, implementing and evaluating health promotion projects. Students complete a comprehensive assessment of a child with a chronic health condition and conduct a family assessment during a home visit. Providing care to children and families in the community exposes nursing students to the realities of living with a chronic health condition. The APSP planning team works with schools to design and implement evidence based interventions such as tooth brushing in schools and Project Happiness (a social-emotional learning program) to improve child health.

Award Criteria

Catalyst for Change: APSP demonstrated that pediatric clinical learning objectives could be met in non-traditional settings. As health care moves into the community, nurses must be prepared to assess, support and care for families in a variety of settings. The APSP prepares nursing students to work within this evolving environment, giving them insight into how schools, communities and families adapt to and work within the changing health care system. Conducting research with community partners provided valuable experience in collaboration and population based health research for our graduate nursing students.

Potential for replication and dissemination: This clinical model can be replicated in any nursing program. It is essential to provide in depth orientation for clinical faculty who are usually experts in either pediatrics or public health. The program has been presented at podium and poster sessions at the American Public Health Association's national meeting for two consecutive years, as well the Midwest Nurses Research Society's Annual Research Conference. Manuscripts describing clinical components of the newly designed clinical experience have been published in the Journal of School Nursing and Nurse Educator.

Collaboration: APSP is built on the concept of collaboration. Designing and implementing the APSP project required collaboration with multiple school districts, superintendents, school nurses, health department and nursing faculty. The APSP team, composed of school nurses, nursing faculty and a health department nurse supervisor, is integrally involved in ongoing planning and collaboration, exploring new strategies for meeting health needs and conducting research to evaluate the effectiveness of health promotion activities. Nursing students must work within a multi-disciplinary team of teachers, school staff, physical education teachers, school nurses and special education teachers to implement health promotion interventions. Nursing students work in teams to complete a community assessment and apply evidence based practices in the school setting.

AACN Mission and Vision: America's Promise School Project embodies AACN's vision and mission by implementing a model that prepares nurses for future roles in community based health care and provides leadership opportunities for implementing quality, cutting edge nursing education to meet the changing needs of health care.

Advancement of nursing education: Changes in the delivery of pediatric health care require nursing programs to develop learning experiences where the children are. The APSP model is a framework for implementing community based pediatric and public health clinical that provides deep learning

experiences and helps future nurses appreciate the challenges families face when caring for children and families.

Collaboration with school districts has provided graduate nursing students with opportunities to conduct needs assessments in the area of behavioral health and to evaluate the outcomes of strategies including education to increase social emotional resilience in children and oral health programs in area schools. Six graduate nursing students have used these projects to earn Master of Science degrees and one student has earned her Doctorate of Nursing Practice degree through involvement in the America's Promise School Project.

Project Summary

The America's Promise School Project is a semester long clinical model seamlessly integrating pediatric and public health learning experiences. Clinical experiences were designed to provide students with learning experiences in growth and development, children with chronic health conditions, pediatric communication, community assessment and health promotion. Pediatric objectives are met with rotations in the school nurse's office, day care center, an acute care setting and assessing and caring for children with chronic health conditions. Public health objectives are met through a community assessment, the development, implementation and evaluation of a health promotion project individualized to each school.

Outcomes Achieved

The America's Promise School Project team evaluated the model using student focus groups, monitoring standardized test scores and evaluation of pediatric simulation performance.

- Student focus groups, facilitated by non-clinical faculty, are an integral and ongoing strategy to illicit student feedback on program elements. Student responses are used to assess student learning and improve course materials.
- Students consistently identify the Family Outreach Project as an "eye-opening" experience. Students are surprised by the knowledge families possess about their child's health condition and the adaptations families have made. In turn, families are pleasantly surprised by the valuable resources and recommendations students make. One parent shared the following comment:
As a parent of a child with a life threatening allergy, I have done a great deal of research and exploration on the topic and how to keep my child safe. I honestly did not expect the maintenance plan presented by the student to provide new information or ideas for our family. However, I was very wrong. The nursing student did an excellent job researching and sharing resources, thoughts and ideas on the way that we can help teach our child about his allergy and ways to keep him safe. This program and teaching we received from our nursing student could mean life or death to our child.
- Nursing students have organized and implemented Health Fairs at several elementary schools. Students gain experience in communicating with school and community members, learn to apply health literacy principles and interact with parents and children in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- Scores from a required standardized assessment test were monitored to assess the impact of the clinical model on student knowledge. Student performance did not change with program implementation, providing evidence that changes in clinical model would not impact NCLEX scores.
- Nursing students participate in pediatric simulation scenarios. Simulation performance was compared between students in the acute care clinical vs. APSP. No statistically significant differences were found in pediatric simulation performance.
- School nurse partners have indicated that projects conducted by nursing students and collaboration with America's Promise team have increased the visibility and value of nursing in the schools.

America's Promise School Project clinical experience is a proven model for the future of nursing education. Undergraduate nursing students gain experience working with multi-disciplinary teams providing care to a diverse pediatric population and children. The clinical experiences provide a foundation for understanding the challenges and realities faced by families as they care for and adapt to a variety of health challenges.