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Tips for Planning Nursing Education Innovative Approaches

Health care delivery in the U.S. is becoming increasingly complex, requiring the use of sophisticated technologies and the need for systems thinking in order for nurses to practice safely. Further, more than ever before nurses are caring for sicker, older, and more diverse patients with myriad chronic conditions. In order to keep up with this these changes, innovative approaches in nursing education are being encouraged. However, before educators begin to plan innovative approaches to nursing education, they might consider the following:

Hargreaves (2008) suggests that it is important to think about consequences (intended and unintended) before beginning to plan an innovative instructional strategy. Answering questions such as those listed below will provide guidelines as decisions are made:

- What are the likely outcomes of a given learning and teaching strategy?
- Will it work for all students/staff/the institution?
- What is the intention?
- What is the worst possible outcome?
- What is the best possible outcome?
- On balance, how great is the likelihood that positive consequences will outweigh negative ones?

When the consequences are identified, then think about:

- Would greater support make a difference?
- Which assessment tasks ensure students can complete the course/education without being compromised by uncertain outcomes?

If the decision is made to go ahead with the innovative strategy, review your jurisdiction's nurse practice act and administrative rules. If your innovation constitutes a significant departure from the way a nursing education program currently functions under the rule structure, contact your Board of Nursing about implementing an innovative approach. Early consultation with your Board is highly recommended.

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