


**The New AACN Essentials:
Nursing Education and
Leadership**

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Disclosure

There are no conflicts of interests.
Presenters have nothing to disclose.

Purpose

1. Introduce the New AACN Essentials, the elements and guiding framework for nursing curricula and education.
2. Discuss the implications of the New Essentials for both nursing education, leadership, and healthcare organizations.

Objectives

- Discuss new language and terminology contained within the New Essentials.
- Describe the New Essentials document as a framework for nursing education.
- Differentiate between concept-based learning and competency-based learning.
- Outline key strategies for integration into current curricula.
- Explain the impact of the New Essentials for healthcare organizations and nursing leadership.

The New Essentials

- In March 2021, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) endorsed a new model for nursing education.
- The New Essentials set forth sweeping changes that
 - are both innovative and transformative
 - impact both baccalaureate and graduate level programs
- New model outlines a paradigm shift in nursing education from **concept-based** strategies for teaching and learning to **competency-based** strategies focused on student competencies.

The New Essentials

Define quality in nursing education and outline the necessary content and expected competencies as a framework for baccalaureate, masters, and DNP programs.

New Essentials

Previous Essentials Series	New Essentials Model
Essentials Series (1986)	The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Concepts of Care • 10 Domains of Care • 4 Spheres of Care • Expected Competencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 1 Entry Level Competencies (pre-licensure) • Level 2 Advanced Level Competencies (graduate) & specialty/ role requirements/ competencies
The Essential Clinical Resources for Nursing's Academic Mission (1999)	
The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice (2006)	
The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (2008)	
The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing (2011)	

The New Essentials

- These changes are expected to
 - Address the dissonance between theory and practice
 - Align skills and abilities of new graduates with practical expectations
 - Standardize nursing education across programs
 - Promote a successful transition to professional practice for the new graduate

A New Model

A new framework for teaching strategies and learning:

Concept-Based Education	Competency-Based Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses concepts to represent nursing knowledge to guide teaching and learning and describes knowledge acquisition and learning process rather than outcomes. • Conceptual teaching strategies build cognitive structures to support learning. • New knowledge is linked to or couched within prior knowledge to facilitate learning and expand understanding. • Conceptual models of learning rely on standardized testing to assess knowledge and learning. These types of assessments illustrate what students know but they cannot tell you whether the student can apply that knowledge in clinical settings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process whereby students are held accountable to the mastery of critical competencies. • Competencies are inherently anchored to the outputs of the educational experience as opposed to the inputs of the educational environment and system. • Student-centered learning experiences. • Curriculum, course work, and practice experiences are designed to promote learning and the development of transferable competencies across settings and the life-span. (AACN Essentials Toolkit 2021)

Foundational Elements for the New Essentials Model

- 4 Spheres of Care
- 8 Concepts of Nursing Practice
- 10 Domains for Competency
 - Pre-licensure Entry Level 1 Competencies
 - Graduate Advanced Level 2 Competencies

4 Spheres of Care

Nursing education is primarily focused in the acute care setting. It is becoming increasingly evident that the future of healthcare delivery will extend beyond the acute care setting and occur within four spheres of care:

- 1) Disease prevention/promotion of health and well-being
- 2) Chronic disease care,
- 3) Regenerative or restorative care
- 4) Hospice/palliative/supportive care

10 Domains of Competency

Domains are broad distinguishable areas of competence, when considered in their entirety, constitute a descriptive framework for the practice of nursing.

- Domain 1: Knowledge for Nursing Practice
- Domain 2: Person-Centered Care
- Domain 3: Population Health
- Domain 4: Scholarship for Nursing Discipline
- Domain 5: Quality and Safety
- Domain 6: Interprofessional Partnerships
- Domain 7: Systems-Based Practice
- Domain 8: Informatics and Healthcare Technologies
- Domain 9: Professionalism
- Domain 10: Personal, Professional, and Leadership Development

Concepts for Nursing Practice

In addition to domains, there are featured concepts associated with professional nursing practice that are integrated within the Essentials. A concept is an organizing idea or a mental abstraction that represents important areas of knowledge. A common understanding of each concept is achieved through characteristics and attributes.

- Clinical Judgment
- Communication
- Compassionate Care
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Ethics
- Evidence-Based Practice
- Health Policy
- Social Determinants of Health

Competencies & Sub-Competencies

- Level 1 (Entry-Level) Competencies & Sub-competencies
 - Pre-licensure
 - Foundational concepts for the discipline of nursing
- Level 2 (Advanced-Level Competencies) & Sub-Competencies
 - Post-graduate
 - Written with DNP in mind
 - Strategically build upon Level 1 Competencies
 - Foundation for all graduate programs
- Differentiation between MSN/DNP and specialty programs defined by degree focus, area of interest, and nationally recognized professional nursing organizations.

Strategic Implementation of the New Essentials

The first step is faculty development

- Educate yourself and your faculty related to the 2021 New Essentials
 - Review the Essentials Document
 - Review the Essentials Toolkit and teaching resources
 - AACN webinars
 - AACN Blogs
 - AACN continuing education seminars
- Build implementation team
 - Domain experts and champions
 - Practice partners, Nursing leadership
 - Program alumni

Strategic Implementation

The second step is to understand your program of study and curriculum.

- A collaborative approach to program evaluation with academic practice partners.
- Curriculum mapping (curriculum crosswalk)
 - Course leaders and/ or subject matter experts.
 - Establish inter-rater reliability for scoring.
 - Spreadsheet, preferably Excel.
 - Course objectives, assessments, activities, and content are aligned .
 - Compared to a national standard (New Essentials).
 - Roadmap to change.
- Review curriculum in its entirety from a program perspective across all courses and subjects.
 - Solicit input from practice partners

Redesign & Transformation of Curricula

Address deficiencies identified.

Begin with the end in mind in a think backwards approach.

- Align program level student learning outcomes (SLO) with the New Essentials.
- Align course level SLO with the new program level SLO's.
- Align module level SLO's with course level SLO's.

Think backwards.

This is what I want the student to do. How do I get them to do that based on the identified SLO's (competencies and sub-competencies).

Strategic Implementation

Step three is the process of implementation.

Work of implementing the plans for curriculum change across the program.

- Identify domain champions among faculty
- Leverage content experts to build small work groups
- Continue with the think backwards approach, identify assessment strategies and then work backwards to develop the activities to support competency assessment and SLO's
- Concepts should build from previous semesters
- Assignments should incorporate previously learned knowledge

Impact to Nursing Education

- Paradigm shift from concept-based educational model to a competency-based educational model.
- Common standards, in competency-based expectations.
- Level 1 Entry Level Competencies
- Level 2 Advanced Level Competencies
- Reciprocal relationship with academic practice partnerships to develop and align competencies with education and practice.
- The shift in educational focus from degree requirements to knowledge application will better align the educational journey for students progressing from prelicensure education to post-licensure graduate education.
- Specialty area competencies and degree requirements will determine trajectory and focus for the students' academic path.

Impact to Healthcare Organizations & Nursing Leadership

- Reflective of diverse practice settings.
- Share common language that is understandable across healthcare professions.
- Employers will have a clear and consistent expectation of knowledge and skill sets across educational programs for nursing graduates.
- Seamless transition to practice reducing the theory to practice gap.
- Opportunity to engage academic partners to inform pedagogy and leverage competencies to align with practice expectations.

Questions?

Thank you!