

## Nursing Education Research Conference 2020

### An Evidence-Based Intervention to Address Students' Understanding of Assignments and Improve Faculty Teaching Evaluation Scores

Mary D. Bondmass, PhD, RN, CNE

*School of Nursing, University of Nevada Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV, USA*

**Background:** Previous research with college students has provided evidence for the efficacy of a simple intervention called a transparency. A transparency is an evidence-based tool, consistent with adult learning theory, which provides the *what*, *why*, and *how* of course assignments and demonstrates the connections of these components with the course objectives. While faculty may have their course objectives in mind when creating course assignments, this may not be evident to students and may result in a decrease in students' learning and dissatisfaction ratings on course evaluations. Moreover, faculty promotion criteria are often highly dependent on their students' course evaluation scores; however, when students do not perceive the clarity of course content, specifically assignments, they **often provide negative feedback on end-of-course evaluations**.

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the efficacy of using a transparency to improve students' understanding of course content and associated course assignments.

**Methods:** This study involved a retrospective evaluation of an evidence-based practice course taught at a public, urban university, involving four consecutive cohorts of undergraduate nursing students (N = 215). The same faculty taught the course, containing the same information and using the same hybrid delivery method each semester; the assignment transparencies were included in the course every other semester. For this study, the course, level, and program objectives, plus the QSEN competencies were also used and connected to each of a course's assignments within the transparency. For each assignment in the course, a transparency document was created indicating the *what* (purpose), *why* (connection to objectives and competencies), and *how* (specific tasks involved to complete the assignment); the criteria for grading each assignment was also provided. To test the reliability of using the transparency, it was either included or excluded in the course over four consecutive semesters.

**Results:** Developing the transparency for each assignment was not time prohibitive, and it only needed to be done once for each assignment given that the objectives of the program and course did not change. When the transparency was used, teaching scores improved significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) and students' comments were overwhelmingly positive about the clarity and their understanding of course assignments compared to when the transparency was not used.

**Conclusion:** In this study, the simple addition of a transparency for each course assignment enhanced students' understanding of their assignments; this was not the case when the transparency was excluded. Moreover, faculty's end-of-course evaluations were positively affected each semester the transparency was used.

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**Title:**

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### **Keywords:**

Faculty Evaluation Ratings, Teaching Intervention and Transparency in Course Assignments

### **Abstract Summary:**

This activity describes a simple, but evidence-based intervention to improve students' understanding and performance for course content and assignments. Given that faculty evaluations are often affected by students' understanding of course content, clarity for students may also improve faculty end-of-course evaluation scores.

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### First Primary Presenting Author

#### ***Primary Presenting Author***

Mary D. Bondmass, PhD, RN, CNE, RN, PhD  
University of Nevada Las Vegas  
School of Nursing  
Associate Professor  
Las Vegas NV  
USA

**Author Summary:** Dr. Mary Bondmass, is an Associate Professor and the Associate Dean for Faculty at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She is President of the Nevada Nurses Association and Vice-President of her Sigma Chapter. She has been in leadership positions in Academia for nearly 20 years and she continues to teach in both

undergraduate and graduate programs. She has presented nationally and internationally on a variety of topics and venues.