Contextualized Curriculum

for Adult Learners in Math and Literacy

Developing Bedside Manner

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Nursing Assistant ELA - Developing Bedside Manner

Industry Sector: Healthcare
Content Area: Literacy
Core Topic: Oral communication

Expand All | Collapse All

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Adult Basic Education Standards

Speaking and Listening

CCR Anchor 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
CCR Anchor 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
CCR Anchor 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCR Anchor 6: Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Industry Overview

Healthcare in America

From neonatal nurses to radiology technologists, medical coders to medical office assistants, health educators to home care aides, the healthcare industry provides a vast and diverse array of services to individuals at every stage of life. Providing [nearly 17 million jobs](#) and accounting for an estimated [$18 million of the U.S. GDP in 2009](#), healthcare is the nation's largest industry. In Massachusetts, in particular, healthcare accounts for more than 15% of employment (compared with 12% nationally), accounting for approximately [one in six jobs](#). With an aging baby boomer population that is living longer, there is greater demand for more and higher quality preventative and long-term healthcare across the United States. [With eight of the 30 fastest growing occupations](#), healthcare is predicted to be one of the [fastest growing industries](#) both nationwide and in Massachusetts between now and 2020.

Careers in Healthcare

The healthcare industry includes a vast array of jobs related to planning, managing, and providing therapeutic services, diagnostic services, health informatics, support services, and biotechnology research and development. This industry includes five career pathways:

- therapeutic services, which includes professionals who work directly with patients to improve their health by providing direct care and treatment for patients (for example, a nurse or a physical therapist assistant);
- diagnostic services, which includes professionals who plan and conduct tests to detect and diagnose diseases and injuries, and use test results to plan treatment (for example, a radiologic technologist or a sonographer, who perform diagnostic imaging examinations, such as X-rays or ultrasounds);
- health informatics, which includes professionals who compile and manage health information and records (for example, a medical records and health information technician, who organizes and manages patient databases; higher-level positions, such as administrators of healthcare facilities or departments, are also included in this pathway);
- support services, which includes professionals who provide assistance to other medical professionals, allowing them to do their jobs in diagnosing and treating patients or supporting therapies (for example, food service workers and nutritionists ensure that patients' meals are healthy and meet dietary guidelines); and
- biotechnology research and development, which include careers that involve bioscience research; while many of these professions require doctoral or medical degrees, some entry-level opportunities in the field require only an associate degree (for example, food and agricultural science technicians).

Mathematics and Communication Skills Needed in Healthcare

The growing complexity of the healthcare industry, including changing technologies, requires workers to continuously upgrade their skills. In addition to technical skills specific to their job, mathematics and literacy skills are crucial for success in all occupations across the healthcare industry.

Communication: First and foremost, no matter the job, good healthcare practitioners are committed to giving patients the best care available and keeping abreast of health research and developments in the field. All workers need to be able to read medical journals and understand medical terminology and vocabulary, as well as read and write literate emails to co-workers/supervisors. Many healthcare jobs also require the ability to read and interpret charts and access and interpret electronic medical records in order to provide quality care.

Many health careers, especially—but not exclusively—those in therapeutic services—involve interacting with patients and their families, in some cases working with people who may be sick, disabled, or dying. Even support staff in a medical office or hospital require effective oral communication skills as well as compassionate interpersonal skills such as the ability to listen and talk to patients to assess needs. Effective communication with colleagues as well as patients is crucial. Healthcare is increasingly a group activity, in which a patient's recovery depends on how well all members of a healthcare team perform specific function, and how well they communicate and collaborate with one another.

Mathematics: From reading charts to interpreting data to measuring and administering correct medicine, basic mathematics skills are essential for providing quality care across most healthcare occupations. Nurses, for example, use mathematics for calculations in all areas of their duties. They use mathematics to calculate dosages, caloric requirements for individual patients, calibrate equipment, and interpret lab results. Charts and patient data are often presented as decimals or percentages, and a nurse must be able to convert between the two, thus requiring competency in understanding and using ratios, proportions and percentages.

Much of modern medicine is based on statistics, and all workers in the industry should have a basic understanding of how statistics are used to influence medical trends. Nurses, for example, need to be aware of the statistics behind prescribing medications and possible side effects or complications. They might use statistics to counsel patients on diagnoses or prognoses, or in gathering patient histories.

Career Opportunities in Healthcare with Education from Community Colleges

Massachusetts Community Colleges play a crucial role in preparing students for careers in health sciences across all sectors of the industry—therapeutic services, diagnostic services, informatics, and support services. All 15 community colleges offer pathways to nursing careers, the largest occupation in the healthcare industry. Additionally, Massachusetts Community Colleges offers associate degree and certificate programs that prepare students to enter occupations across all sectors of the industry, for example:

- *Therapeutic services:* registered nurse, practical nurse, nursing assistant, certified nurse's aide, massage therapist, fitness trainer and instructor, dental hygienist, dental assistant, pharmacy technician, physical therapist assistant, occupation therapy assistant, respiratory assistant, medical assistant
- *Diagnostic services:* radiologic technologist and technician, radiographer, surgical technologist, sonographer, phlebotomist, paramedic, polysomnographic technologist and technician, medical and clinical laboratory technician, magnetic resonance imaging technologist, nuclear medicine technologist, veterinary technologist
- *Informatics:* Medical record and health information technician, medical coder, medical interpreter, medical biller, medical transcriptionist, health educator

Recent Career Opportunities in Massachusetts

The following is a sample of healthcare job listings in Massachusetts that require an associate's degree or certificate:

- Registered Nurse (RN), AmeriCare At Home, Boston, MA [show]
- Medical Technologist, Emerson Hospital, Concord, MA [show]
- Ultrasound Technologist, Brockton, MA [show]
- Licensed Practical Nurse, Hologic, East Watertown, MA [show]

Employment Outlook for Healthcare

America's aging population is now nearing or entering retirement (opening new jobs), and will continue to require more services and the increased use of innovative medical technology for diagnosis and treatment. As a result, healthcare is one of the fastest growing industries both nationwide and in Massachusetts, where growth is even higher than nationally. For example, in 2010, Baystate Health of Springfield, which employs more than 10,000 across its Western Massachusetts system, said that it would likely need to hire about 15,000 people between 2010 and 2020 to replace retiring workers and meet increased demand.

One important factor in the healthcare industry is the financial pressure on hospitals to focus on efficiency and profitability, which results in discharging patients as soon as possible. These financial pressures, along with increased healthcare coverage under federal law, will likely result in a growth in out-patient services in the healthcare industry, such as rehabilitation clinics, long-term care facilities, and home care programs. As a result, occupations experiencing the largest growth include home care aides, physical and occupation therapist assistants, dental hygienists, and medical assistants.

Emerging careers in Health/Information Technology (HIT): Estimates based on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Department of Education, and independent studies indicate a shortfall of approximately 51,000 qualified Health IT (HIT) workers who will be required over the next five years

to meet the needs of hospitals and physicians as they move to adopting an electronic healthcare system, facilitated by the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009. The HITECH Act is a key component of healthcare reform. The Act encompasses interoperable electronic health records (EHRs) including computerized systems to order tests and medications, and support systems to aid clinical decision making and the development of a national health information network to permit the secure exchange of electronic health information among providers. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the incentive mechanisms in the HITECH Act will increase HIT adoption rates from 45 percent to about 70 percent for hospitals and from 65 percent to approximately 90 percent for physicians. To support job growth in this emerging career field and ensure the adoption of EHRs, new types of workers are needed to facilitate information exchange across healthcare providers and public health authorities, and assist in redesigning workflows within healthcare settings to maximize the quality and efficiency benefits of EHRs, while maintaining privacy and security of health information and records. To that end, the Department of Health and Human Services has embarked on an initiative to build the HIT workforce with community colleges as the primary training ground for these new workers: (1) Practice workflow and information management redesign specialists; (2) Clinician/practitioner consultants; (3) Implementation support specialists; (4) Implementation managers; (5) Technical/software support staff; and (6) Trainers. The average hourly earnings for community college program graduates are expected to be in the target range of between $12.46/hour to $20.25/hour.

Resources:

Healthcare Employment Outlook:

- Massachusetts Career Information System: Massachusetts-specific information on careers which can be used to look at different industries, occupations within those industries, and the skills and education needed to work in these jobs
- WorkKeys Occupational Profiles
- Bureau of Labor Statistics

Healthcare Career Information:

- Top 5 Reasons to Work in the Healthcare Field, About.com
- Break Into a Healthcare Career, About.com
- Healthcare Initiatives, US Department of Labor
- Six Healthcare Careers that are Booming, Yahoo! Education
- Career Clusters in Health Sciences, National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium
- Explore Health Careers, American Dental Education Association

Massachusetts Healthcare Job Listings:

- Massachusetts Healthcare Jobs, Jobs.net
- Healthcare Jobsite, Beyond.com

Workplace Scenario (8th Grade Level)

You are a nursing assistant at a nursing home in the Boston area. You are responsible for a number of care giving tasks for the patients there. These include dressing, bathing and feeding residents. You make beds, help patients with walking and toilet assistance, and turn bedridden patients. You also take vital signs and administer medication prepared by the nurse. You carefully document all interactions with patients.

A task you perform regularly is taking patients' vital signs (blood pressure and pulse). When you take blood pressure, you need to choose the right size cuff for the patient's body size. A cuff that is too large or too small can give an incorrect reading. The patient's posture is also important to get an accurate blood pressure reading. The patient should have proper back support. He or she should also be sitting up straight and have feet on the floor. If a patient has incorrect posture, you need to tell him how to adjust. It is important to communicate in a professional and friendly way.

You typically use a machine called a pulse oximeter. This machine measures a patient's pulse and oxygen saturation. The machine has a finger probe that must be correctly placed on the patient's finger. If a patient has acrylic nails or polish the reading may not be accurate. You may need to ask the patient to remove the acrylic nail or polish from one finger. This requires good oral communication skills and a polite and friendly tone. You may need to explain to the patient that the polish can cause an incorrect reading.

You are also responsible for administering patient medication. The nurse dispenses the medication into a paper cup. You double check to make sure the dosage is correct. You then bring it to the patient. You also need to ensure that the patient swallows the medication. Some patients do not enjoy taking pills. When this is the case, you need to provide verbal encouragement. Your tone and attitude have an impact on your patients' moods. It is important to interact with them in a way that supports their health and well being. This requires strong interpersonal and oral communication skills.

An additional task you perform is changing patient bedding. For some patients, this may feel like a disruption. They need reassurance from you about how long it will take. You start by introducing yourself and letting them know your role. It may help them feel more comfortable if you chat for a few minutes before changing the bed. You may also need to interact with family members who are visiting. You must always speak with patients and their families in a professional way.

Workplace Scenario (High School Level)

You are a nursing assistant employed at a nursing home in the Boston area. You are responsible for a number of care giving tasks for the patients at the nursing home. These include dressing, bathing and feeding residents, making beds, helping patients walk, toilet assistance, and turning bedridden patients. You also take vital signs, administer medication prepared by the nurse, and carefully document all interactions with the patient.

A task you perform regularly is taking patients' vital signs (blood pressure and pulse). When you take blood pressure, you need to choose the correct size cuff for the patient's body size. A cuff that is too large or too small can give an incorrect reading. The patient's posture is also important to get an accurate blood pressure reading. The patient should have proper back support, should be sitting up straight and have feet on the floor. If a patient has incorrect posture, you need to verbally guide him to adjust his posture in a professional and friendly manner.

You use a machine called a pulse oximeter to measure a patient's pulse and oxygen saturation. The machine has a finger probe that must be correctly placed on the patient's finger to get the reading. If a patient has acrylic nails or nail polish the reading may not be accurate. You may need to ask the patient to remove the acrylic nail or polish from one finger in order to get a good reading. This requires good oral communication skills as well as a courteous and friendly demeanor. You may need to explain to the patient that the polish interferes with the functioning of the machine.

You are also responsible for administering patient medication. The nurse dispenses the medication into a paper cup, which you then bring to the patient. You double check to make sure the dosage is correct. You also need to ensure that the patient swallows the medication. Some patients do not enjoy taking pills and you need to provide verbal encouragement. Your demeanor and attitude have an impact on your patients' moods and it is important to interact with them in a way that supports their health and well being. This requires strong interpersonal and oral communication skills.

An additional task you perform is changing patient bedding. For some patients, this may feel like a disruption, and they need reassurance from you about how long it will take and why it is important to change the sheets. You start by introducing yourself and letting them know your role. It may help them feel more comfortable if you chat for a few minutes first before changing the bed. You may also need to interact with family members who are visiting. It is important to have a friendly and professional approach to communication with patients and their families.

Core instructional context

[Brainstorm](#) with students why they think communication skills are important in the workplace. Capture these ideas by creating a graphic organizer such as a semantic map. Show the video "[Nursing Therapeutic Communication Skills](#)." Ask students to take notes during the video and to compare and contrast the ideas mentioned in the video with those listed on the semantic map.

Point out that speaking and listening are at the heart of much human interaction and good communication skills are an important aspect of employability in most professions. A person working with clients must listen carefully to identify the clients' wishes and needs, and they must also be able to translate that information to their colleagues and staff. Poor listening skills may lead to missing key pieces of information, and poor speaking skills will lead to others not fully understanding their tasks. Good listening and speaking skills are particularly important in a kaizen team as described in the scenario if the person is to fulfill his or her role as a contributing member of the team.

Since 80% of our communication is non-verbal, it is also important to pay attention to body language and tone of voice, both the patient's and that of the nursing assistant. Body language can provide important clues to meaning or state of mind. If a patient appears with arms crossed across the chest and is not verbally forthcoming, the patient may not want to be in there and is expressing anger or unhappiness. If the nursing assistant delivers messages in a gruff voice with arms crossed, this posture and tone also indicate anger, frustration or unhappiness. If the patient is slurring words or seems disoriented, there may be a medical problem preventing good communication.

Adults typically view speaking and listening as areas of strength because of the level of experience they bring to these activities. They may be used to speaking with ease and confidence and reporting information in a logical sequence. The more challenging aspects of speaking and listening are related to their previous experiences since many adults must unlearn poor habits in both areas. Speaking and listening are skills we learn in the first year of life, which means that each individual may have spent a lifetime learning poor habits that must be unlearned. For example, few adults listen attentively enough to be able to fully comprehend, analyze and synthesize what they have heard and to recall and apply it later in critical situations. In addition, most adults have learned poor speaking habits that need to be replaced with good ones, including the use of filler words or phrases or using nonstandard language in formal situations such as working with clients, colleagues or staff.

Since speaking and listening skills are so important in nursing, nursing assistants must develop these skills to do their jobs effectively. Fortunately, these are skills that can be improved with practice.

Poor listening skills contribute to poor comprehension and the ability to apply knowledge. In order to comprehend, analyze, and synthesize information, students must listen effectively.

A good listener uses the following techniques:

- maintains eye contact with the speaker;
- avoids distractions in the surroundings;
- avoids interrupting;
- sits or stands still;
- nods his or her head or uses other nonverbal cues to show understanding;
- maintains focus by avoiding internal distractions or thoughts;
- takes brief notes;
- listens for subtext but tests assumptions;
- tests his or her understanding by repeating instructions or key details; and
- asks clarifying or other appropriate questions when the speaker has finished.

Good speaking skills are critical to good communication and require the speaker to organize his or her thoughts before speaking. Good speakers ask themselves: Who is the audience? What vocabulary is appropriate for the audience? What is my goal? What are the important details that I need to share? What is the most logical sequence?

A good speaker

- organizes his or her thoughts before speaking;
- is clear and concise without including extraneous information;
- delivers main ideas and supporting details in a logical sequence;

- speaks clearly and practices good enunciation;
- uses correct pronunciation;
- uses correct standard English;
- uses appropriate volume – speaks neither too loudly nor too softly for the environment;
- speaks confidently and avoids filler sounds, words or phrases; and
- maintains appropriate level of eye contact with the listener.

Contextualized learning activities

1. Communicating with diverse partners
One of the key speaking and listening skills highlighted in this scenario is the ability to participate effectively in a range of conversations with partners of diverse ages, cultures and backgrounds. The activity below is one way to support students in developing this skill.

Place students in groups of 3-4. Have one student verbally share what s/he did the previous weekend, first as if speaking to a friend or significant other, then as if speaking to one's boss, and then as if speaking to a grandparent. Ask the listeners to observe what changed in the speaker's tone, body language and words for each audience, as well as how it felt to be the listener of the different versions of the story. Ask the speaker to reflect on his/her own decision making on how to share the same information with different audiences. Also, how formal was the English used in speaking with a loved one versus a professional colleague? Rotate through so students have the opportunity to be both the listener and the speaker.

While exploring how to communicate with diverse partners, it may also be helpful to inquire about students' familiarity with and views on the nursing assistant role itself. For example, you might ask students to journal on the following questions (or discuss in small groups):

- How are the elderly viewed in your family?
- From the perspective of your cultural background, what would be considered the ideal way to care for an elderly person?
- To what extent is an assisted living or nursing home setting familiar to you?
- After exploring these questions on their own or in a small group, students could share key insights with the larger group, and talk further about how cultural norms may impact how we communicate with different audiences.

2. Evaluating different types of communication
Effective communication includes the words we choose as well as body language, pacing and tone of voice. In the health care field in particular it is necessary to observe not only what patients say but also their non-verbal communication. Equally important is an awareness of how one's own nonverbal communication and/or tone of voice impacts patients at least as much as the actual words that are expressed.

Try one or more of the following activities with students to explore evaluating different types of communication:

a. Give students some examples of how nonverbal communication or tone of voice might be more informative than verbal communication in a health care setting. For example, if a patient says "I'm fine" but winces in pain, further questioning or investigation is necessary to uncover what may be bothering the person. Similarly, a nursing assistant who barks "Did you take your meds?" is less likely to get an honest answer than one who asks more gently.

   Ask students to identify a time in their own lives when a misunderstanding took place related to a mismatch between verbal and nonverbal communication with another person. What did they learn from this experience? Have them share their reflection in a journal entry or with a partner in class, or as a whole group.

b. Have students watch Amy Cuddy's Ted Talk: Your body language shapes who you are. Follow with a discussion about what it means that your body language not only impacts how others perceive you but also how you perceive yourself. How might this affect one's interactions in a job interview or the workplace?

c. Ask students to work in pairs. One student is the listener and the other is the speaker. Ask the speaker to tell a 2-3 minute story about his/her family. The job of the listener is to listen with attention (without interjecting or responding) *and* to mirror the body language of the speaker. At the end of the story, ask the listener to reflect back to the speaker the key points of the story. Finally, ask the speaker to share with the listener how it felt to be mirrored, both with words and body language. Have the students switch roles so both have an opportunity to experience being the listener and the speaker.

d. Have students role play some of the example communication tasks from the scenario, such as a nursing assistant letting a patient know that s/he will be changing the patient's bedding or requesting that a patient remove an acrylic nail for an accurate pulse oximeter reading. Before each role play, ask students what kind of common misunderstandings or communication challenges might arise in the scenario they'll be role playing, and brainstorm ways to address them. After each role play, have the students who observed the role play share what was effective about the verbal and nonverbal communication demonstrated and what could be strengthened.

Remind students that although they are working on these skills within the context of a nursing assistant role, they are important skills that can be generalized to many different contexts (such as interviewing for a job, in any field).

3. Denotation and connotation
Denotation refers to the dictionary meaning of a word, while connotation refers to the associations that are often connected to a particular word. Students may not always be aware of how unconscious connotations may affect their interactions with others. One activity to surface this is to have students brainstorm their associations with common words such as mother vs mother-in-law or elderly vs old. Record their answers on a flip chart, and then discuss how an understanding of these concepts might impact how they communicate in the workplace.

Contextualized test items

1. Give students a written script with an exchange between a nursing assistant and a patient that includes some kind of misunderstanding. Ask them to highlight where the verbal communication was effective and where it could be improved.

Similarly, students could watch a clip (perhaps from a popular hospital tv show) and critique the oral communication between staff and patients, commenting both on verbal and nonverbal communication.

2. Conduct mock job interviews and have students practice their oral communication skills. If an actual employer is available to be the interviewer, and could give feedback on students' oral communication, that would be an even more authentic assessment. Students should be evaluated on the clarity and appropriateness of speech, use of formal English, pacing of speech, and non-verbal communication.

Contextualized project

Have students research the field of elder care, which is quickly growing due to the number of retiring baby boomers, and which includes a wide range of services (and levels of quality). Some resources to get them started might include:

- Recent Frontline documentary called Life and Death in Assisted Living, and the excellent accompanying resources on their website
- The Pioneer Network, which advocates for culture change in elder care models
- Massachusetts Office of Elder Affairs
- Massachusetts Senior Care Association

Additional or extension activities, multimedia, readings and/or resources

Why is Communication in the Nursing Profession Important?
http://www.nursetogether.com/why-communication-in-the-nursing-profession-is-important

Nursing Assistant Education: Communication
http://www.nursingassistanteducation.com/site/courses/eng/nae-comm-eng.php

Non-Verbal Communication Skills: Paralanguage
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5j0DFkbnE0&list=SP0ACE1BF0A435FAEA

Body Language in the Nurse-Client Therapeutic Relationship
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOf9Yv6aXUI

Show the video "Poor Communication" and ask students to identify the errors made by the person role playing the nursing assistant. How would they improve this conversation?

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