

Collaborative Learning in Clinical Education

Having more than 1 clinical student in your facility at the same time can present some challenges, but it is also a wonderful opportunity to use collaborative learning activities! Collaborative learning is particularly valuable in clinical education because PTA students as **adult learners** respond well to peer teaching/learning. Consider using some of these ideas with your SPTA/SPTA, SPTA/SOTA, or SPT/SPTA student pairs:

Think-Pair-Share

The clinical instructor poses a question or presents a case study/initial examination to the pair. Students come up with a response and then share it with each other. Students clarify their positions and discuss points of agreement and disagreement.

Search-Pair-Share

Students research a topic identified either by the clinical instructor or by the students related to a clinical case. They compare research findings and provide a summary (informal/verbal or more formally/written/in-service) to clinical instructor or staff.

Jigsaw (Reciprocal Teaching)

The learning activity involves students teaching one another. Students jointly read a text/eval or work on a task. Clinical instructor assigns each student to **be the “expert”** on a component of the reading or task. Students take turns teaching their assigned content area to each other. In their teaching role students lead the discussion, summarize material, ask questions, and clarify material.

Think-Aloud Pair Problem Solving (TAPPS)

The learning activity involves solving problems. Students work in pairs and alternate roles. For each problem one is the solver while the other is the listener. The solver thinks aloud—narrating his/her reasoning process—while solving the problem. The listener prompts the solver to **keep talking** and asks for clarification but does not intervene to help.



Connecting the Dots

The students are prompted to each identify **rationale** for given exercises/interventions, connecting all of the dots between the initial examination/re-examination findings, diagnosis, stage of injury, goals and plan of care to the use of the given intervention and then compare rationales.

Nightmare Scenarios

One student is prompted to identify a realistic “worse-case scenario” for a particular clinical situation. Student 2 then works to describe the issues to be considered/addressed in handling the scenario and appropriate actions to take.

Experience Sharing

The clinical instructor poses a question or problem. Students are prompted to share **previous experiences** (clinical or other life experiences) with related challenges and compare/contrast those stories.

Key Word Flash Cards

Student 1 is assigned to identify 20 key words/phrases encountered during the day (in PT evals, progress notes, communications with patients, etc.) and create

“flash cards” defining the meaning and implication(s) of those key phrases. Examples: “empty endfeel”, “numbness in my foot”, “positive Spurling’s test”. Student 1 then quizzes student 2 using those flashcards.

Follow a Process

Clinical instructor identifies a particular task/technique. Students work together to describe (1) the end-result of the technique (2) the necessary steps required/components of the task and (3) the steps that may not be necessary but may be helpful.

Change It 5 Ways

Students are prompted by clinical instructor to brainstorm **5 alternate ways** of working toward the same goal different than the intervention currently being used and different from each other’s ideas. They should then discuss the feasibility, pros/cons and implications of using those alternative interventions.

Article written by Kim Cox, based in part on information from “Cooperative Learning Group Activities for College Courses” by A. McPhearson