

From Research to Practice

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Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World Offers Students Hope for a Successful Nursing Career

Opportunities abound for those interested in a career in nursing. In the United States the demand for nurses has never been greater. An aging population will only serve to increase that demand over the coming decades. At the same time, with more nurses approaching retirement or leaving the profession, the supply will decline, unless enough new recruits can be trained.

The nursing shortage is a dilemma that several hospitals and health centers in Ohio are facing. As a result, they turned to Kent State University–Salem Campus' Workforce Development and Continuing Studies Department and to the Trumbull and Columbiana County Career Centers to help them work toward better retention rates in Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) programs, particularly among economically and educationally disadvantaged adults.

The secondary goal was set for the LPN students' teachers and future employers (e.g. hospitals and nursing homes) to learn about economic class issues. Through this training, they provided their LPN students and new hires from poverty with the support they needed during their transition to careers in nursing.

In 2004 aha! Process, Inc. worked with Kent State University to train 90 LPN students in Columbiana and Trumbull Counties in the *Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World* program. In addition to traditional nursing courses, the students participated in over 15 *Getting Ahead* classes.

At the end of the training, each student completed an inventory. The inventory was a self-reported, criterion-referenced survey instrument that contained performance-based outcome measures. Student participants reported these results:

Hidden Rules of Economic Class

- 90% of respondents found the overall concept of the hidden rules of economic class enlightening.
- 92% thought the information on hidden rules would be helpful in solving problems on the job.
- 91% reported that the information on formal register and language was very valuable for resolving issues on the job.

What Are "Hidden Rules" of Economic Class?

Hidden rules are social cues that govern how we think and interact in society.

Personal Resources

- 90% of respondents reported increasing knowledge about personal resources.
- 91% of respondents reported that they would use this new concept of personal resources to grow resources in their work and family lives.

Personal Resources Defined in Getting Ahead

Financial	Support Systems
Emotional	Relationships
Mental	Hidden Rules
Spiritual	Language
Physical	Integrity
Motivation	

Getting Ahead Applications

The goal of the *Getting Ahead* applications is to help LPN students create their own paths for making stable, secure lives for themselves and their families.

Session leaders helped guide participants through the *Getting Ahead* applications. At the end of the session, the majority of participants committed to using the *Getting Ahead* applications when working toward specific goals. Sixty of the 90 participants chose to improve their overall quality of life. Fifty-eight participants specifically reported that they would increase their personal resources.



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Another 21 participants stated that the skills they learned would help them retain their current jobs.

Some of the benefits of the program are noted in these examples participants provided of how the *Getting Ahead* applications helped them:

I gained more money and responsibilities at my job because my supervisor felt she could trust in me and truly rely on me.

African-American woman, more than 26 years old, supports dependents. (71)

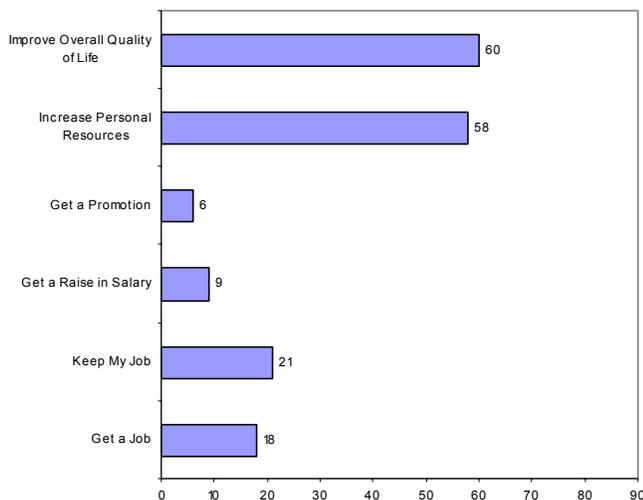
I learned language skills for interviews.

Caucasian woman, less than 25 years old, no dependents. (79)

This training helped me to understand myself so I can improve on certain areas of relationships both personal and professional.

Caucasian woman, more than 26 years old, supports dependents. (74)

Number of Students Reporting How *Getting Ahead* Applications Helped



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Final Remarks

The *Getting Ahead* program provided students enrolled in the LPN program an opportunity to assess their own resources and beliefs. Knowing themselves and what they need in order to be successful will benefit not only the LPN students, but also their future employers, employees, and patients.

In reflecting upon the *Getting Ahead* program, Linda Reader, RN, BSN, M.Ed., and Practical Nurse Coordinator at the Trumbull Career and Technical Center, made the following observations:

The students liked the course and shared some very private information about themselves with the small groups they were in. They developed camaraderie with their group-mates and used this as a resource throughout the program. We didn't see a drop in the attrition as we had hoped for, but what we did see was a much more caring and respectful class than in the past. We felt that having this class made them very aware of the differences in the cultures of the socioeconomic classes and aware of each other's strengths and weaknesses, problems and successes.

aha! Process consultants also provided a one-day *Bridges Out of Poverty* training to LPN and other adult education instructors at the Columbiana and Trumbull County Career Centers. This allowed the teachers to understand the *Bridges* concepts and work more effectively with the students who were receiving the *Getting Ahead* training.

Finally, the consultants provided an overview of the LPN project and *Bridges Out of Poverty* to hospital staff in a three-county area, again to support the work being done at the career centers with the LPN students and instructors.

Summarized from: Montz, Ruth. (2005). *Bridges to Opportunity Program: Student Inventory*. Human Services and Family Studies Program. Kent, OH: Kent State University.

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