Nursing education is facing numerous obstacles and challenges. Educators report it is difficult to provide quality learning experiences to nursing students presently enrolled in programs (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2014). In addition, there is a demand from the healthcare system to admit and graduate more nurses because of the national shortage of nurses (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2014). Therefore, it is essential nursing education evaluate its current practices to identify what is working and what needs to be transformed to optimize students’ learning experiences. Purkey’s invitational theory provides a theoretical basis to assure all aspects of the academic learning environment are prepared for students. Providing an intentionally inviting learning environment throughout a nursing program can lead to greater success for students and potentially have a positive impact on nurse educators.

REFERENCES:

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ABSTRACT:
The profession of nursing is considered a practice discipline. Graduates of nursing programs must be able to handle challenging situations that will emerge in the care of complex human beings (Finke, 2012). New nurse graduates are expected to possess discipline-specific knowledge and skills in order to be considered competent, entry-level nurses (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, and Day, 2010). However, nurse educators across the nation report numerous challenges making it difficult to prepare students for professional practice (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2014). Schools of nursing must evaluate current educational programs in order to provide the best opportunity for students to succeed. Invitational theory states that an intentionally inviting environment is key to student success and development (Purkey & Novak, 1996). According to invitational theory, the learning environment includes the people, places, processes, programs, and policies of an academic institution (Purkey & Novak, 1996). All aspects of the environment can impact student learning (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Perpetual tradition and self-concept theory play an important role in the teaching/learning process (Purkey & Novak, 1996). Perpetual tradition – a student’s perception can only be completely understood by the individual (Purkey & Stanley, 1991). Self-concept theory – this theory explains the actions and predictability of students and educators as well as suggests behaviors are influenced by past experiences (Purkey & Stanley, 1991). The theory declares educators should take into account perpetual tradition and self-concept theory when developing the academic environment in order to optimize the learning experiences of students. An intentionally inviting environment promotes student development and growth.

CHALLENGES FOR NURSING EDUCATION:
• Diversity in nursing classrooms (Burruss & Popkess, 2012)
• Budget cuts in education and a national nurse faculty shortage (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2014; Benner et al., 2010, West et al., 2009)
• Lack of available clinical sites in community and acute care settings (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2014)
• Students are required to learn a great deal of knowledge in a short length of time (Benner et al., 2010)
• Nursing programs must maximize all learning experiences in order to prepare graduates for entry-level practice (Finke, 2012)
• Nursing students learn in multiple settings making it difficult for schools to prepare all aspects of the learning environment.
• Demand from the current healthcare system to increase the number of nurse graduates due to a national shortage of nurses (Benner et al., 2010)
• Nurse educators are expected to accomplish more tasks with fewer resources.
• A report from the Institute of Medicine (2011) called on the nursing profession to take the lead in healthcare reform and improve nursing education at all levels.

WHAT IS INVITATIONAL THEORY?
Foundational Principles:
• People are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly.
• Educating should be a collaborative, cooperative activity.
• The process is the product in the making.
• People possess untapped potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor, and
• This potential can best be realized by the places, policies, programs, and processes specifically designed to invite development and by people who are intentionally inviting with themselves and others personally and professionally. (Purkey & Novak, 1996)
Behaviors and Characteristics:• Intentionally Disinviting
• Unintentionally Disinviting
• Unintentionally Inviting
• Intentionally Inviting

**Each of the 5 Ps can be placed into one of these categories**

INVITATIONAL THEORY APPLIED TO NURSING EDUCATION:
• Nurse educators must examine and prepare all aspects of the academic learning environment, including the people, places, policies, processes, and programs of an institution
• Invitational theory provides educators guidelines to assess and plan accordingly for all learning experiences of nursing students
• Nursing programs cannot control all aspects of the learning environment; however, invitational theory can be used to continually evaluate and improve current practices
• Providing the most intentionally inviting learning environment can optimize students’ experiences within a program and give them the best opportunity for success
• An intentionally inviting learning environment requires more time and effort to prepare, but it can potentially a have positive impact on students’ and educators’ experiences during the teaching/learning process
• Invitational theory has been successfully applied to the nursing discipline (Cook, 2005, Finger & Pape, 2002, Pape, 2007, Ripley, 1986, Worthy, 2014)

CONCLUSIONS:
Extending the Invitation to Learn in Nursing Education
Sarah O. Watts, MSN, RN
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The classroom and everything in it, including the people, places, policies, programs, and processes, are like one big bowl of jello: Touch it anywhere and the whole thing jiggles. The jello analogy helps the teacher to remember that everything—temperature, time of day, color of walls, and the teacher’s clothing—adds to or subtracts from invitational teaching. No effort to make the classroom more inviting is wasted. The teacher who practices invitational teaching works on each of the five Ps persistently” (Purkey & Stanley, 1996, p. 77).

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