

**HOMESTEAD SCHOOLS NOMINATES ADELWISA (ADEL) VIDAL BLANCO, B.S.
M.S., R.N. – BC For Master Teacher Award**

Ms. Adel Blanco has been our director of nursing for over 5 years. At the time she started working for the school my simple directive to Adel was to put a little spark into the heads of these young, almost rudderless students that would ignite a fire for knowledge and love for the nursing profession. She was taking a mound of clay and fashioning figurines that would literally come to life and spring to action as nurses with the same love and enthusiasm to help others as they join the workforce in our health system.

While writing this Master Teacher nominating letter, I interviewed Adel Blanco and asked her to articulate her teaching philosophy and specific techniques that she uses to implement this philosophy in a classroom. According to Adel, her teaching philosophy rests on the foundation of: Critical thinking.

CRITICAL THINKING

Becoming a professional nurse requires that you learn to think like a nurse. Critical thinking is essential to skilled nursing and is therefore essential to nursing education. Intuitive nursing practice (which is still the norm in nursing), when performed automatically, without care, vigilance, and routine critique, can result in many significant negative implications.

Critical thinking skills are essential in nursing because they are the basis for learning to prioritize and make decisions. Because nurses provide care for patients 24/7, a nurse's critical thinking skills can literally mean the difference between life and death. These skills are necessary not only to provide bedside care, but to make policy decisions.

Critical thinkers strive to be clear, accurate, precise, logical, complete, and fair when they listen, speak and act. As nurses we want to eliminate irrelevant, inconsistent and illogical thoughts as we reason about patient care. Nurses use language to clearly communicate in-depth information that is significant to nursing care. Nurses are not focused on the trivial or the irrelevant.

Certain skills are important for effective critical thinking. The skills that are needed are:

1. **Interpretation** – The ability to understand and explain the meaning of information or an event.
2. **Analysis** – The investigation of a course of action based on objective and subjective data

RESULTS

The results have been nothing less than spectacular as witnessed by our NCLEX pass rates over the past year:

| <u>Quarter</u> | <u>NCLEX-PN % Pass Rate</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 10/01/2020 - 12/31/2020 | 100% |
| 01/01/2021 - 03/31/2021 | 100% |
| 04/01/2021 - 06/30/2021 | 100% |
| 07/01/2021 - 09/30/2021 | 100% |
| Total for last 12 months | <hr/> 100% |

ACCOLADES FROM ACOLYTES

Students are the final arbiters of a teacher's performance. I completed the circle by interviewing the students. Here's what they had to say:

Ms. Adel is the best! The information that she prepared us with is priceless. She is very skillful and she teaches with love. I would recommend Ms. Adel to anyone. She is so magnificent that she could teach a blind and deaf person and they would pass the NCLEX on the first try. She is outstanding. I learned so much from her. I know that I will pass.

She is the best! Awesome! Amazing! I'm so very glad that I had the opportunity to attend Ms. Adel Blanco's review! She has definitely enhanced my test taking strategies! I will definitely recommend her to future nursing students! Oh, did I mention super duper fabulous, kind hearted, and nice?

She is so awesome! Not boring at all. Makes lessons easy to understand. She also explains everything and teaches strategies to answer questions, making it easy for us. I really learned a lot from her and now I understand things more than when I was in school. GREAT INSTRUCTOR!

THE BARSCH LEARNING STYLE INVENTORY

So, I asked Adel, how do you get each and every student in the class to listen to you and benefit from your lectures? We all know that not everyone in the group swims at the same pace: some will finish ahead of others, some will be laggards, and a few will even drown.

Individuals learn best when the teacher is presenting the material that fits their particular style of learning. Some students find they learn best from a lecture when the professor presents key points in a visual manner either on the board, on an overhead, or with a handout. Others find they have a much easier time hearing someone talk about a subject rather than reading the same ideas on paper. These two examples present the two key learning styles: visual and auditory.

But learning styles are not limited to the senses of sight and hearing; there are as many different ways of learning as there are learners.

Adel starts out by identifying each student's preferred style of learning. The Barsch Learning Style Inventory is a short diagnostic test that assesses individual learning styles. She groups students who learn best through *seeing* things (visual), *hearing* them (auditory), or through the sense of *touch* or *body movement* (tactile/kinesthetic).

Once she has identified each student's learning style she goes on to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses. The visual or auditory style, whichever scores the highest, is considered the primary preferred learning style. The tactile/kinesthetic is considered secondary, even if the score is higher than the other two. This is because we do most of our learning through our eyes and ears, and use the senses of touch, feeling and motion to enhance our primary learning.

To make the exercise fun and participatory Adel asks the students to paste eyes, ears or hand as their dominant learning style may be on an index card and paste it on the desk for her to see. Now she's able to fashion her lecture to meet the learning styles of individual students.

I walked into one of her classes to observe the process at first hand. It was like watching James Levine conduct the Metropolitan Opera where every member of the orchestra is focused on the conductor as the maestro swings his arms to emphasize the score, nods his head toward the players and sways his body back and forth, all in a continuous, fluid motion. Adel does not need PowerPoint presentation or flashy computer app; it's all about communication and attention.