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Explore insights, trends, and research that impact teaching, learning, and leading. August 22, 2023  
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 Pearson More than 3.5 million nurses around the country are currently providing a variety of essential healthcare services. In doing so, they are spending more hours with patients than any other profession in the industry, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), which is why it’s essential for nurses to have a solid foundation of knowledge in the field and to develop a strong sense of confidence that can sustain them throughout their careers. Nursing is the linchpin of the American healthcare system, but experts predict that the system could break. The Baby Boomer generation is aging and requiring more care; nursing programs are experiencing faculty shortages that restrict the number of students they can admit each year; and nurses are being pulled in so many different directions that they are burning out and leaving the profession at historic rates, according to a report from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). How can nurse educators provide a foundational learning experience that helps nurses thrive? In addition to incorporating concept-based learning into the curriculum to prepare nursing students for challenging clinical environments, another important way to facilitate critical growth in the nursing profession is to support the role that student-teacher relationships play in promoting positive learning outcomes and strong retention rates. Regardless of the level of difficulty or the subject matter being covered, the truly effective teachers are the ones who can connect with their students in meaningful ways. The student-teacher relationship is especially influential in nursing education programs, where the information is complex and mistakes can cost lives. Nurse educator Tammy Vant Hul, Riverside City College, PhD, MSN, RN, ACNP, CNE, says that building a sense of trust between instructor and student is crucial. “I think helping students work through the idea that the only thing that they can\, put their money on is that their patients are going to change from the time they walk in there in the morning. The environment that they work in will change almost weekly.” The student-teacher connection in nursing education is described as “a place of possibility” by Mary Gillespie, a professor of critical care nursing at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. “The qualities inherent in the essence of connection — knowing, trust, respect, and mutuality — create a transformative space in which students are affirmed, gain insight into their potential, and grow toward fulfilling personal and professional capacities,” she writes in the Journal of Advanced Nursing. Other research has concluded that nurse educators who provide a supportive teaching context can dramatically alter a nursing student’s approach to learning, inspiring them to engage more deeply with the material and become active, enthusiastic learners. A positive learning environment has also been shown to bolster resilience in nursing students, a key factor in achieving academic success and professional longevity in the field.