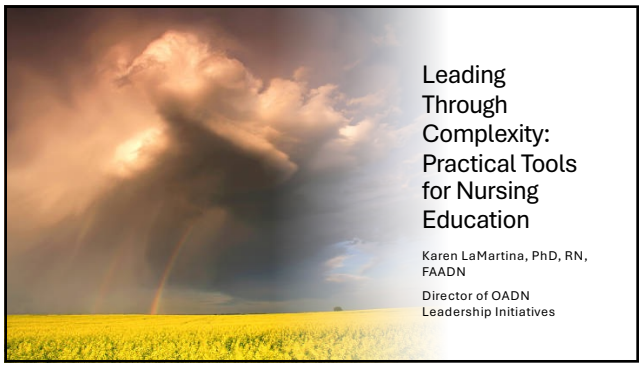
Leading Through Complexity: Practical Tools for Nursing Education
Karen LaMartina, PhD, RN, FAADN
Director of OADN Leadership Initiatives

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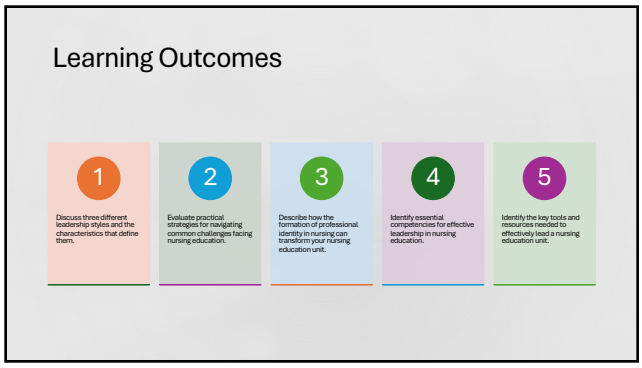
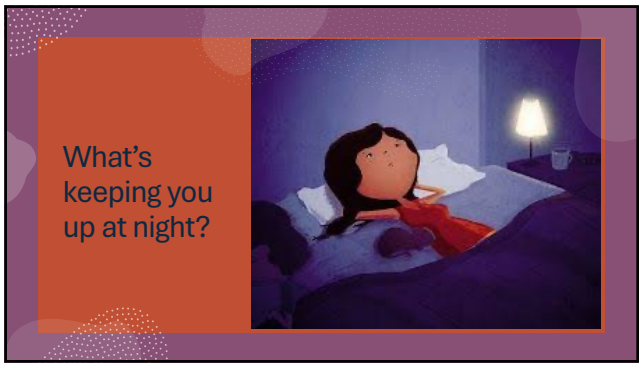

Learning Outcomes
1
Discuss three different leadership styles and the characteristics that define them.
2
Evaluate practical strategies for navigating common challenges facing nursing education.
3
Describe how the formation of professional identity in nursing can transform your nursing education unit.
4
Identify essential competencies for effective leadership in nursing education.
5
Identify the key tools and resources needed to effectively lead a nursing education unit.

2


What's keeping you up at night?

3

Leadership Styles

- Authentic
- Servant
- Transformational

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Authentic Leadership

Traits:

- Self-Reflective
- Fair & Ethical
- Balanced Processing
- Relational Transparency

Willis, 2025

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Servant Leadership

A form of moral leadership characterized by being "virtuous".

- Emphasizes employee growth and flourishing
- Promotes the interests of others
- Linked to reducing incivility
- People learn from their leader and replicate the behavior

Neubert, Hunter & Tolentino, 2022

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Transformational Leadership

You are inspired as a leader which then inspires those we lead…

Characteristics:

- Charisma
- Inspirational
- Intellectual thinker
- Individualized attention

Davis, 2021

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Navigating Common Challenges in Nursing Education

Faculty Issues
- Recruiting/Retaining
- Onboarding New Faculty
- Mentoring/Supporting New Faculty

Student Issues
- Complex Needs
- Student Retention
- How to support Students

Stakeholder Issues
- Clinical Partners
- College Administration
- Community Leaders

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FACULTY ISSUES

- RECRUITMENT
- RETENTION
- ONBOARDING
- ONGOING MENTORING/SUPPORT

9

STUDENT ISSUES

- COMPLEX NEEDS (NON-TRADITIONAL)
- STUDENT RETENTION
- STUDENT SUPPORT

10

STAKEHOLDER ISSUES

CLINICAL PARTNERS

COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION

COMMUNITY LEADERS

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PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

"A sense of oneself, and in relationship with others, that is influenced by characteristics, norms, and values of the nursing discipline, resulting in an individual thinking, acting, and feeling like a nurse."

Pullen & Schroeder, 2025

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Professional Identity in Nursing

Values and Ethics	• *A set of core values and principles that guide conduct.*
Knowledge	• *Analysis and application of information derived from nursing and other disciplines, experiences, critical reflection and scientific discovery.*
Nurse as Leader	• *Inspiring self and others to transform a shared vision into reality.*
Professional Comportment	• *A nurse's professional behavior demonstrated through words, actions and presence.*

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AONL Leadership Competencies

https://www.aonl.org/resources/nurse-leader-competencies

Hughes, Meadows & Begley, 2022

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AONL Competencies defined

- Knowledge of the Healthcare Environment
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Communication/Relationship Management
- Business Skills & Principles
- Leader Within

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Core Competencies for Leaders in Nursing Education

- Articulate & Promote a Vision for Nursing Education
- Function as a Steward for the Organization
- Embrace Professional Values
- Develop & Nurture Relationships

Patterson & Krouse, 2015

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Skillset needed—What's in your toolkit?

- What skills do you already possess?
- Challenges with students transfer to direct reports
- Communication, Mediation, Discipline
- Soft vs. Hard Skills
- Leaders inspire, not motivate
- Comportment!!!

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Take-Away Quotes

Jack Welch: "Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others."

Eleanor Roosevelt: "To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart."

"From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."
Luke 12:48b (LSB)

John Quincy Adams: *"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."*

"Leadership is measured in the hearts of those who follow"
Quote From *Heart of Champions*, 2021

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Let's circle back to that sleepless night…

What do you need to be doing daily to sleep at night?

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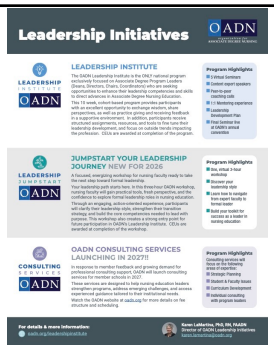

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