

***Learning That Lasts* Breakout Session**

HPHPEA Division Inservice, September 23, 2026

Panel Members: Sheila Collins - Physical Therapist Assistant, Jill Dougall - Respiratory Care, Rick Drasye - Nursing, Nichoel Fry - Nursing, Jennifer Gay - Fitness & Lifestyle, Christina Howard - Physical Therapist Assistant, Tamberly Powell - Nutrition, Beth Thorpe - Physical Therapist Assistant, Jade Wilcoxson - Physical Therapist Assistant.

The *Learning That Lasts* breakout session introduced evidence-based learning strategies from the book *Learning That Lasts: A Guide for Health Professions Students Who Want to Maximize Their Learning* and highlighted how Lane Community College health professions faculty are applying these strategies in their teaching. The session emphasized a central idea: **students need to be explicitly taught how to learn—not simply what to learn.**

A cross-disciplinary Faculty Inquiry Group (FIG) in Spring 2026 brought together health professions faculty to study and discuss the book and translate its concepts into classroom, laboratory, clinical, and student-support practices. Participants reported that the interdisciplinary nature of the group was particularly valuable because faculty across programs face similar challenges related to student learning, retention, clinical reasoning, and study habits.

Key Takeaways

- **Make learning strategies explicit.** Faculty should teach students how to take notes, practice retrieval, space their studying, identify gaps in their knowledge, and approach difficult material rather than assuming students already know how to study effectively.
- **Use retrieval practice instead of passive review.** Students learn more effectively when they actively recall information through questioning, quizzes, flashcards, discussion, and other activities rather than simply rereading notes or course materials.
- **Use spaced practice and interleaving.** Important concepts should reappear over time rather than being taught once and tested once. Mixing related concepts and revisiting them in different contexts can strengthen retention and support application.
- **Embrace productive difficulty.** Learning should sometimes require students to struggle, retrieve information, make connections, and solve problems. Faculty can normalize mistakes and communicate that needing additional practice is part of learning rather than evidence of failure.
- **Connect facts to clinical reasoning.** Health professions students need to understand not only *what* happens but *why* it happens and how concepts connect. Faculty described

using clinical scenarios, concept mapping, elaboration, questioning, and problem-solving to move students beyond memorization toward clinical judgment.

- **Develop a common language around learning.** Terms such as *retrieval*, *spaced practice*, *interleaving*, *elaboration*, *clinical reasoning*, and *clinical decision-making* can become part of routine conversations with students. Consistent terminology across courses and clinical settings can reinforce the same learning expectations.
- **Gradually transfer responsibility to students.** Faculty described initially providing substantial structure—such as modeled Cornell Notes, prompts, examples, and guided practice—and then progressively removing that support so students develop independent learning habits.

Examples of Implementation

Faculty shared several concrete applications:

- A nursing instructor introduced **Cornell-style note-taking** during the first week of a course, explicitly modeling the process and planning to reduce guidance as students become more proficient.
- PTA faculty incorporated questions about **study habits, note-taking, spaced practice, and strategies for getting unstuck** into student needs surveys before students even begin the program and in Week 1 of the fall term.
- Nursing faculty incorporated **short review quizzes and exit tickets**, using results to determine what concepts should be revisited in subsequent classes. This creates intentional spaced practice across the curriculum.
- Faculty are using **concept mapping** to assess whether students understand relationships among concepts rather than merely memorizing isolated facts.
- Clinical faculty are being introduced to learning strategies so they can prompt students to **recall what they know first and then identify knowledge gaps**, rather than immediately supplying answers.
- Programs are beginning to incorporate consistent approaches to note-taking and study skills into open labs, tutoring, and other student-support environments.

Implications for Student Success

The session identified an important opportunity for health professions education: **align teaching, clinical instruction, tutoring, and student support around a shared approach to learning.**

Students often enter health professions programs with study strategies that worked in prerequisite courses but may be insufficient for the higher level of application, reasoning, and clinical judgment required in professional programs. Explicit instruction in effective learning strategies can help students transition from memorization toward durable knowledge and applied reasoning.

Consistency across courses is also important. When students encounter the same language and expectations from multiple instructors, clinical educators, tutors, and support services, learning strategies become reinforced rather than isolated to a single course.

Potential Next Steps

The presenters proposed continuing the conversation beyond the breakout session through a workshop or community-of-practice format where faculty can share examples, successes, challenges, and classroom materials.

Potential institutional opportunities include:

1. **Develop a shared health professions learning-strategy vocabulary** for use across programs.
2. **Integrate learning-to-learn instruction early** in students' programs, particularly during orientation or first-term courses.
3. **Share effective tools and templates**, such as Cornell Notes, student study-habit surveys, retrieval activities, concept maps, and exit tickets.
4. **Extend the approach to clinical instructors and tutors** so students encounter consistent learning strategies across classroom and clinical environments.
5. **Explore cross-program tutoring focused on learning strategies**, rather than tutoring limited to discipline-specific content.
6. **Create ongoing faculty collaboration opportunities** to evaluate and refine these practices.

Acknowledgements

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Summary

The session's overarching message was that **effective learning is a skill that can be taught and practiced**. Rather than assuming students know how to study, health professions faculty can explicitly teach evidence-informed strategies, reinforce them consistently across settings, and gradually help students become independent learners and clinical thinkers. The Faculty Inquiry Group provides a promising model for interdisciplinary collaboration and for translating learning science into practical changes in teaching and student support.

Resources

Learning the Lasts Book Terminology -

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VN_I0lpNO0aDxSmYN3BEbHhrXGbHh6ILGoHuDu07tzA/edit?tab=t.0

Embracing the Science of Learning (YouTube Channel) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9XQK1Fnv1M&list=PLBwmwZvSo77fj18SFHsPn47glQzGh571->

Cornell Note Taking (from PTA program) -

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BdZ0Hx8JP4UxouXn8Ys1Cewgrz4txGyjq6Bj-GZf4F0/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.i8r8izobgosb>

Student Survey (from PTA program) -

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScPh5L5lm55hj9qWmx8rXtlUpGeKRqIKR8NMmlUnEAcvEOx2Q/viewform>

Nursing Student Handbook – Cornell note taking information

Part 1:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YpW8nbDscjmCF5VYjV1MINHeyOf77POG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=110742767572710355008&rtpof=true&sd=true>

Part 2:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10atbsZZJYSIg0ARGhx4cn1xJI-RhHC4L/edit?usp=sharing&oid=110742767572710355008&rtpof=true&sd=true>