

Teaching In-Demand Skills:

HOW HEALTHCARE EDUCATORS ENGAGE TODAY'S STUDENTS

By Emily Kuhn

Healthcare educators are changing the way they teach patient care skills, and for good reason. Not only is U.S. demand for healthcare expected to grow twice as fast as the national economy in the next eight years, but older Americans are retiring in droves — 800,000 in the last quarter of 2016 alone (Carnevale, 2012 & Kawa, 2017). As demand for nursing and geriatric care skills increases, so will the importance of using teaching tools and resources that truly engage the new generations of healthcare students — students with shorter attention spans, better technology skills and a stronger desire for authentic, real-world learning experiences than their predecessors (Hawkins, 2015).

“Curriculum may not have changed, but students are definitely changing,” said Kasey Carlson, RN, MSN, M.Ed. A nursing faculty member and educational technologist at a Wisconsin college, Carlson was a registered nurse for six years and has taught in the healthcare field for more than 10. “We used to do a lot of textbook and lectures, with very little hands-on experience. When I went to school, we didn’t have a whole lot of technology; a standard mannequin was a

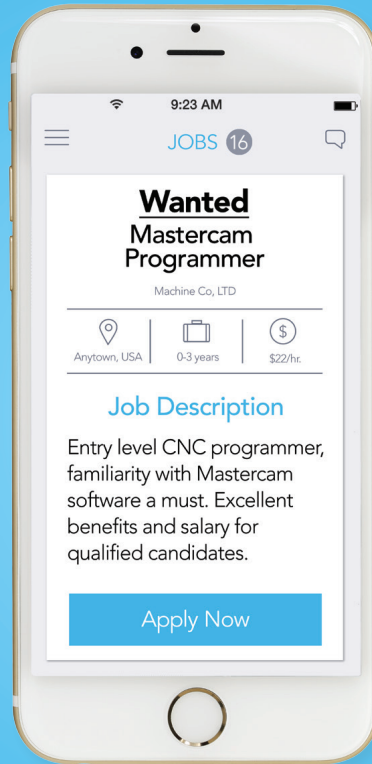
brand-new concept to us. But now we are looking at a generation that has been brought up with multimedia and video games. They are more real-life focused. They remember more if they have an experience.”

Teaching Today's Digital Natives

You may have heard the term “digital native” used to describe today’s students, most of whom were born after 1995 and are therefore members of “Generation Z.” They are considered digital natives because they grew up with technology, and have never known a world without media. This means that the standard classroom model where an educator stands in front of the class and lectures just doesn’t work. Generation Z students want to be successful — in fact, the desire to change the world is a hallmark of this generation — but they will disengage with the discussion if they don’t feel connected or if they don’t see the relevance (Wotapka, 2017).

Generation Z students are accustomed to immediate feedback. Current technology enables them to learn anything, anytime, anywhere. The world is at their fingertips. Thus, these students are not satisfied simply hearing about a topic. They want to see it, touch it and feel it.

REAL JOBS?



TEACH WITH REAL SOFTWARE

Mastercam has more seats in industry, aka the real world, than any other CAD/CAM software. Teach skills your students can use in the job market. Mastercam has fully developed curriculum and is backed by the industry's leading support network.

There's only one real choice: **Mastercam**

Mastercam 2017
www.mastercam.com/edu



That's why Miranda Kessler, RN-BSN, is using interactive tools like age simulation suits in her health occupations program at Nicholas County Career and Technical Education Center in West Virginia. Not only do her feedback-hungry students thrive when given the chance to engage in active learning opportunities, but such activities can help them develop employability skills like critical thinking, problem solving and attention to detail — skills that some hiring managers have found lacking in today's students (Dishman, 2016).

In the two decades she has been helping 11th- and 12th-graders prepare to obtain their state nursing assistant certifications, Kessler has seen firsthand the way her students' learning styles have changed, and she strives to incorporate interactive teaching tools like simulators as often as she can.

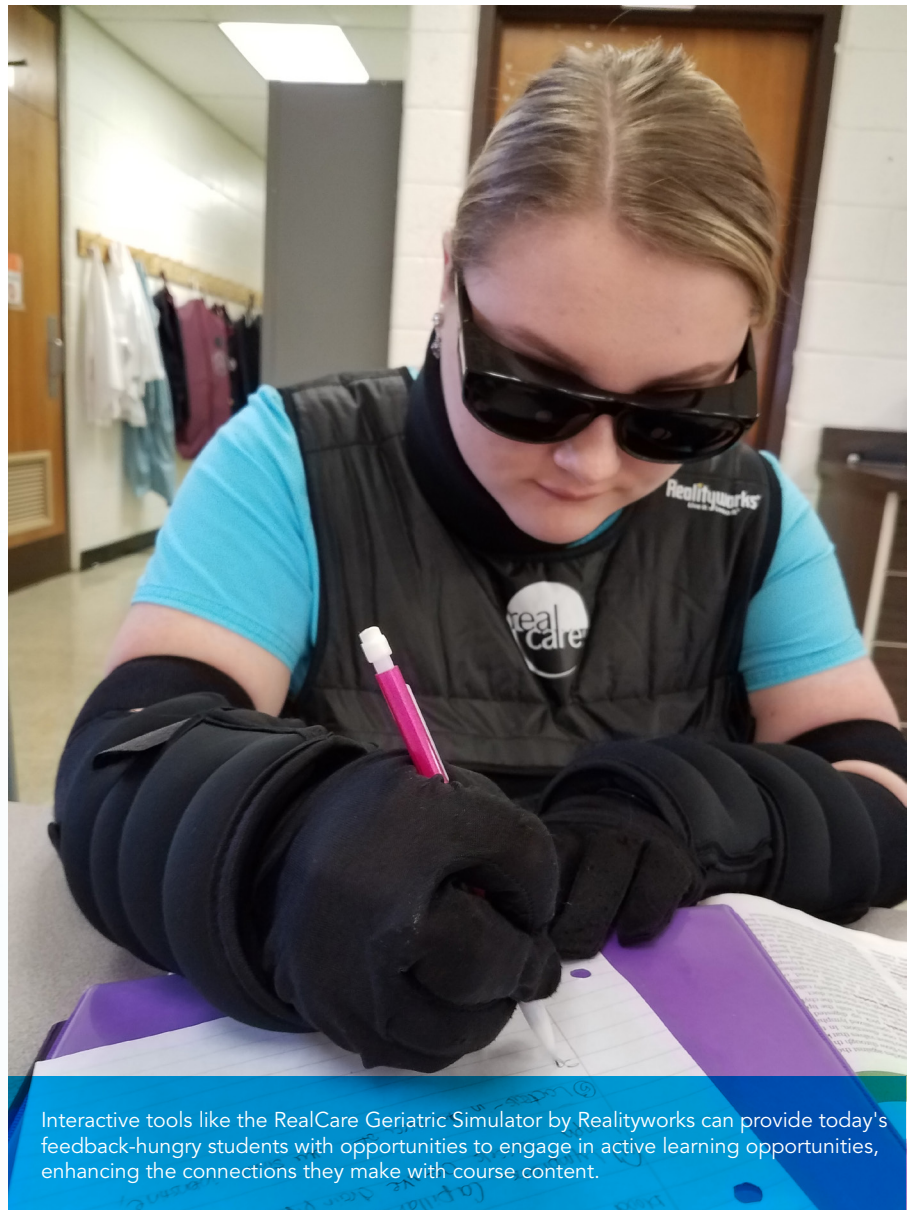
"Years ago, everything was done with paper and pencil. You read the book, did the worksheet, took a written test and moved on until you got through the material and it was time for clinicals," said Kessler. "Now, technology is front and center. Anything that captures students' attention and can get them excited and make them want to learn is welcome in my classroom. And 'cool tools' like simulators always keep my kids' attention."

Cool Tools for Engaging Generation Z

When Kessler saw literature for the RealCare Geriatric Simulator at an education conference, she went straight to her administrator to share the discovery.

"When I told my principal about the simulator and he saw how excited I was to implement it into my program, he bought in immediately," recalled Kessler. "He was actually the first person to try it when it arrived! He was amazed by how it changed his normal, routine activities and made everything feel much more physically demanding."

The Geriatric Simulator sensitivity suit allows students to experience a variety of age-related physical challenges. It includes a weighted vest, ankle weights, wrist weights, elbow restraints, knee restraints, gloves, a cervical collar and visual impairment glasses. When students try to accomplish tasks like walking around,



Interactive tools like the RealCare Geriatric Simulator by Realityworks can provide today's feedback-hungry students with opportunities to engage in active learning opportunities, enhancing the connections they make with course content.

opening pill bottles and buttoning shirts, they begin to understand the way physical challenges like decreased mobility, stooped posture, cataracts and glaucoma can affect daily life.

"I wanted to be able to teach my students to be more understanding and empathetic with the aging process once we made it into our clinical rotation at the local nursing home," Kessler said of why she incorporated the simulator into her program. "I wanted them to understand why the residents moved so slowly and I wanted them to learn to be patient and kind while working with them."

According to Carlson, tools like wearable simulators can help healthcare educators address employability skills like empathy and sensitivity toward the elderly.

"Empathy is one of the most difficult things to teach a student. It's something students have to experience and grow themselves, versus being told to do it," Carlson said. "The hands-on component allows students to think critically through a procedure, but also focus on the patient, and on professionalism."

Since acquiring the Geriatric Simulator for use at Nicholas County Career and Technical Education Center, Kessler has



“Not only do her feedback-hungry students thrive when given the chance to engage in active learning opportunities, but such activities can help them develop employability skills like critical thinking, problem solving and attention to detail.”

witnessed this increased engagement, and students benefit greatly from the connections they're now able to make.

“You can tell 17- and 18-year-old students all day what it feels like to age, but they have no real concept of that until they can experience it on their own, with their own eyes and hands and joints,” she stated. “Once they have worn the suit... They get it! Their level of understanding and compassion and nurturing is elevated 100-fold by the time we make it to clinicals and get to provide care to real people.”

Kessler is now working to secure funding for the purchase of a sensory kit (containing hearing impairment, arthritis and hand tremor simulators) for her program, in an effort to further enhance the learning experience through the implementation of cool tech tools.

“It is so important to get these students to understand the pains and aches that our elderly generation feel every day, so that they can provide better care for our aging population,” said Kessler. “So many in this generation are used to having something in their hands: a cell phone, a gaming controller, a fidget spinner... If you can put an awesome hands-on learning tool in the place of one of those other gadgets, they are going to pay attention.”

Equipping Generation Z Students with In-Demand Skills

Demand for registered nurses and certified nursing assistants is projected to grow faster than all other occupations over the next seven years — 16 percent for RNs and 18 percent for CNAs, compared to seven percent for all other jobs. What's more, there will be an influx of baby boomers aging into the healthcare system who will require more services as they live longer and are more active than past generations. This will result in an even higher need for professionals with geriatric care skills like empathy and understanding (“Registered Nurses,” 2015 & “Nursing Assistants, 2015). And that's why educators like Carlson and Kessler are quick to encourage their peers to embrace technology and other resources that can help students learn in-demand skills.

“Technology is ever-changing. While it can be frustrating and difficult at times to keep up with it as an educator, technology isn't going away,” said Kessler. “How far behind would our students be if we didn't incorporate technology into our classrooms? We would be doing a disservice to them in the biggest way.”

In healthcare education, simulators fall into two categories: low-fidelity and high-fidelity. There are pros and cons of each type: Low-fidelity models are less expensive to buy and maintain, and are often portable and easy to operate, but can have limited realism. High-fidelity models are expensive and can require more technological skill to operate, but can provide true-to-life practice scenarios. Associate Professor of Nursing at New York's Farmingdale State College Dr. Lori Goodstone found that both high- and low-fidelity simulations can help students increase critical thinking skills (2013).

To educators looking for a place to start incorporating interactive learning aids and other engaging classroom resources, Carlson recommends starting slow.

“There's no need to jump in and integrate a whole bunch of technology. Just select a few to compliment the more difficult areas of your curriculum,” said Carlson. “I think that sometimes we want to adapt to all technologies. As soon as something great comes out, we want to add it. But try not to do it all at once. It will overwhelm you as an instructor and it will also overwhelm the students.”

If you look at the top 10 skills needed for working in a nursing home, which accounted for 20 percent of the 43,200 U.S. jobs that healthcare alone created in December 2016, you'll find that most skills involve direct patient care (Livingston, 2017). To learn these in-demand skills, today's students need a learning environment that allows them to engage in active learning opportunities. If you are doing that, as Carlson and Kessler have found, creating such an environment means setting your students up for success in the future.

“With this generation, there's a push for project-based curriculum, internships and methods that allow students to get hands-on experience,” said Carlson. “With tools

like these simulators, we can give them hands-on experience before they go out into real life.”

That real-life preparation is what motivates Kessler as well:

“My goal as an educator is to prepare students to be the absolute best employees, caregivers and people possible. Engagement is the number one step to keeping them interested and focused on what is being taught... If we were to simply leave technology and all its advances out, our students would never be able to succeed in life or tomorrow's workforce.” ■

Emily Kuhn is the communications specialist for Realityworks, Inc. Email her at emily.kuhn@realityworks.com.

REFERENCES

Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N., Gulish, A., & Beach, B.H. (2012). Growing demand for healthcare workers. In *Healthcare* (Chapter 1). Retrieved from <https://>

cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Healthcare.FullReport.090712.pdf.

Dishman, L. (2016). These are the biggest skills that new graduates lack. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/3059940/the-future-of-work/these-are-the-biggest-skills-that-new-graduates-lack>.

Goodstone, L., Goodstone, M.S., Cino, K., Glaser C.A., Kupferman, K., & Dember-Neal, T. (2013). Effect of simulation on the development of critical thinking in associate degree nursing students. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 34(3), 159–62. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23914457>.

Kawa, L. (2017). Older Americans are retiring in droves. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-06/older-americans-are-retiring-in-droves>.

Hawkins, D. (2015). Here comes generation Z. What makes them tick? *NEA*

Today. Retrieved from <http://neatoday.org/2015/07/13/here-comes-generation-z-what-makes-them-tick/>.

Livingston, S. (2017). Healthcare drives yearly job growth. *Modern Healthcare*. Retrieved from <http://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20170106/NEWS/170109951>.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). Registered Nurses. *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/registered-nurses.htm>.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). Nursing Assistants and Orderlies. *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/nursing-assistants.htm>.

Wotapka, D. (2017). How to teach gen Z students. Retrieved from <https://www.aicpa.org/interestareas/accountingeducation/newsandpublications/pages/how-to-teach-generation-z-students.aspx>.

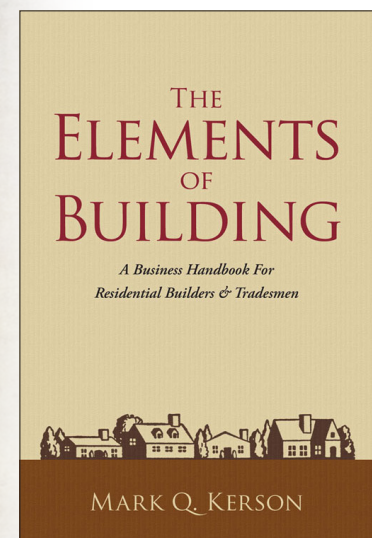
A Must-Have HANDBOOK FOR NEW AND SEASONED BUILDERS

This invaluable handbook offers insightful guidance on:

- Hiring and working with employees and subcontractors
- Choosing and working with clients
- Estimating and bidding
- Managing money and marketing

ShopACTE offers discounts on products and resources to ACTE members. To learn more about membership, visit acteonline.org/join.

NOW AVAILABLE AT
ShopACTE 



ACTE Member Price: \$30
Non-member Price: \$34



acteonline.org/shop

Connecting Education and Careers