Gap Analysis Worksheet: Before You Build the Class

Use the next time someone asks for education. "Nurses need more education" is a solution, not a gap.

Two sides of every gap

Current state: what your data shows is happening now (an audit, an outcome rate, an observation, learner input). Specific enough to measure.	**Desired state:** what evidence, policy, a regulation, or a national standard says should happen. Also specific enough to measure. **The gap** is the distance between them.

What's underneath the gap?

Underlying cause	Clues in the data	What helps
Knowledge	Wrong answers on a knowledge check; "what is the policy?" questions; a practice that is new to the unit.	Brief focused education, a job aid, or a reference at the point of care.
Skill	Can describe the steps but hesitates or makes errors when performing them; new equipment or a rare procedure.	Return demonstration, simulation, or coaching at the bedside.
Practice	Passes quizzes and demonstrations, but audits or observation show it is done some of the time, not every time.	Ask what gets in the way, then use reminders, workflow cues, audit and feedback, or unit champions.
Not education	Staff know it and can do it, but broken equipment, missing supplies, staffing, or workflow gets in the way.	Take it to the manager or the team who owns the system. Education alone will not close it.

Write the gap statement

Write it as one sentence: **Current state** (with a number or observation) **compared with desired state** (with its source). Example: *Fall risk reassessment after a new sedating medication is documented for 48% of eligible patients; unit policy expects 100%.* Then name what is underneath before you plan anything.

My gap worksheet

Request from: _____ **Topic:** _____ **Date:** _____

Current state (data and source)	
Desired state (evidence, policy, or standard)	
What is underneath (circle)	Knowledge / Skill / Practice / Not education
Gap statement	
Next step, owner, and due date	

Questions to ask whoever requested the education

- What are you seeing that made you ask for this? What data shows it?
- What should be happening instead, and where does that expectation come from?
- Can staff tell you what to do? Can they show you? Do they do it every time?
- Is anything getting in the way, such as equipment, supplies, staffing, or workflow?

Why it matters: ANCC's NCPD educational design criteria expect a documented professional practice gap, supported by evidence, behind every accredited activity, along with a decision about whether it addresses knowledge, skill, or practice (ANCC, 2025). Module 04 covers the data collection methods that help you find and prove a gap.

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