

BACKGROUND

Literature suggests nursing students often enter pediatric clinical settings with limited exposure, heightened anxiety, and minimal preparedness for the acuity and complexity of pediatric care. Many academic programs lack adequate pediatric clinical hours, leaving graduates underprepared for practice.

INTRODUCTION

To address this gap, a pediatric hospital created two education development tracks for pre-licensure nursing students to foster early immersion.

Track 1: Nurse Externship

This program is a 10-week summer program for students who have completed at least one clinical rotation.

Track 2: Student Transition to Early Practice (STEP)

Senior-level students complete capstone clinical hours on the unit where they transition into Nurse Residency after graduating.

INTERVENTION

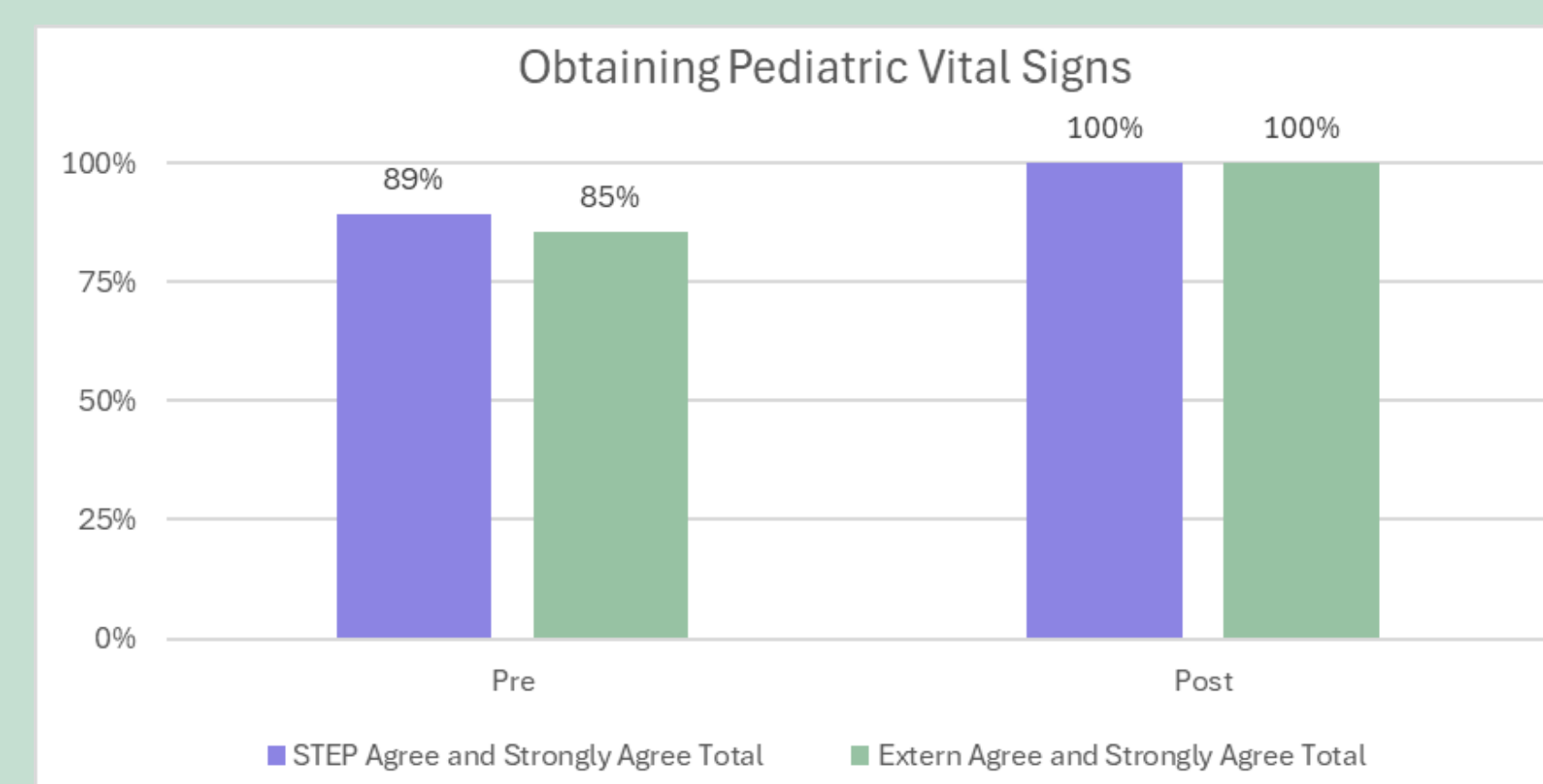
Both programs emphasize readiness through early engagement and unit immersion, building competence and easing the transition to practice by using interactive learning methodologies, such as:

- **Planned instruction:** immersive pediatric-focused content led by subject matter experts
- **Simulation:** pediatric scenarios to model real world situations in a safe and controlled learning environment
- **Direct clinical experience:** direct patient care that supports development of clinical skills and critical thinking
- **Pediatric core competencies:** development of foundational nursing skills verified by a licensed RN preceptor

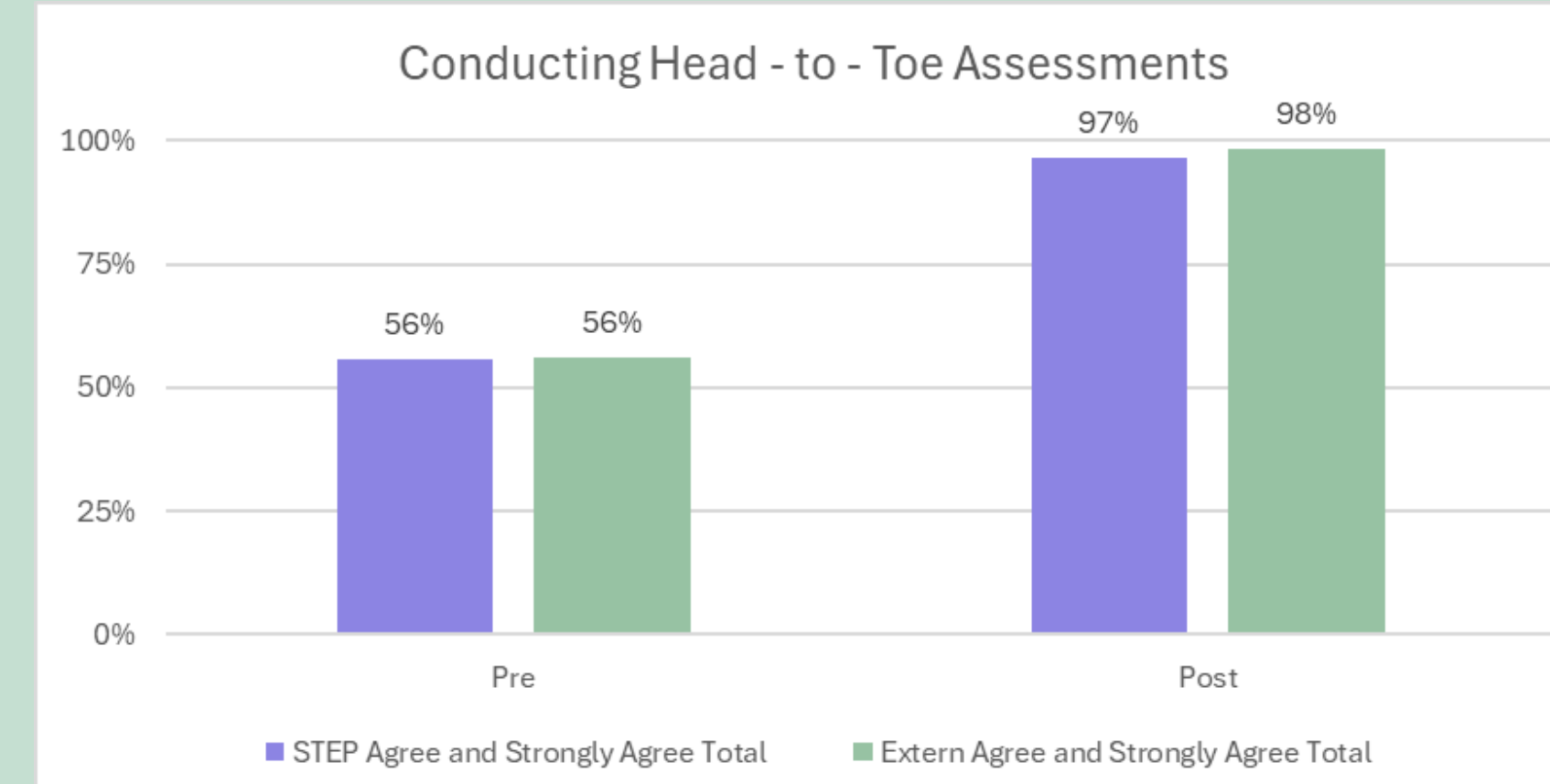
OUTCOMES

- From 2023–2025, 149 students participated across both tracks, representing **30% of Nurse Residency participants**.
- Preceptor assessments showed **86% of participants were ready for independent practice** in the skills, positioning them for competency validation during Nurse Residency.

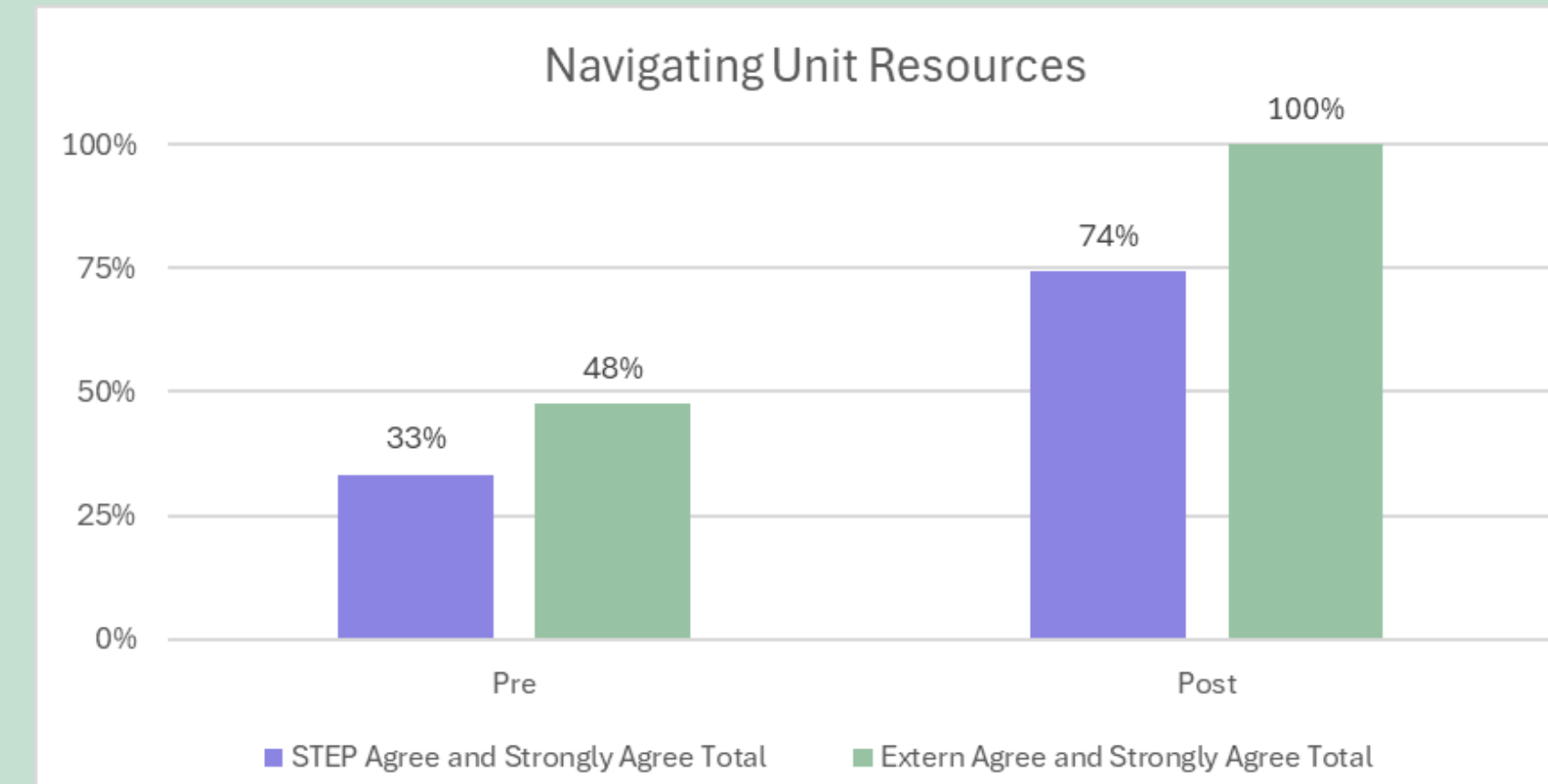
Pediatric Clinical Comfort & Worry Assessment Student Confidence Levels



15% increase in obtaining vital signs



74% increase in conducting head-to-toe assessments



116% increase in navigating unit resources

Program graduates had a **7% higher retention rate** in Nurse Residency compared to nonparticipants.

Retention pays off:

Cost to train a nurse = \$88,000
Retention rate of program participants compared to non-participants = 7% ↑

Total mitigated costs = **\$3.6 million**



IMPLICATIONS

These findings show the implications of early immersion models in aligning academic preparation with pediatric practice. By integrating students into clinical environments before graduation, pediatric hospitals can strengthen competencies, accelerate practice readiness, and build sustainable nursing pipelines.

REFERENCES & CONTACT INFO



References



Candice Hogan Contact Info



Sana Iqbal Contact Info

