



HELP STUDENTS ENGAGE WITH LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS



It is important to help students connect with the LTSS sector as we work to strengthen the workforce pipeline from schools to careers in our field. There are several types of student engagement, and it is important to incorporate a varied approach to create a meaningful learning environment. The LTSS sector is built upon relationships and connection – and those are two elements that resonate with high school learners as well!

XQ Institute is a national organization that helps school systems become more rigorous, equitable, and innovative. In their article titled, “3 Common Elements of Meaningful Learning Environments,” the XQ Institute recommends three tactics to make learning meaningful:

Social Experience: Cultivate learning through social and collaborative exercises

Student Led: Let the students help guide their learning experience

Context: Connect the lesson to the real world

Consider building these social and collaborative exercises into your time with students as you help to educate about career opportunities within LTSS.

ENGAGEMENT IDEAS

SIMULATION SUIT

Rent an [aging simulation suit](#) to help students build empathy for working with older adults. Have students wear the suit and complete simple activities, such as writing a short letter, putting on a jacket and shoes, or make a sandwich. You could even consider a short ‘obstacle course’ of simple activities of daily living and time it to see who can complete it fastest!



EMPATHY EXERCISE

The intent of the exercise below is to provide an opportunity for students to empathize with the experience of an older adult, and to see the important role caregivers play in helping older adults live fulfilling, meaningful lives.

PART ONE: Students complete the diagram below.

PEOPLE: List three people who are important to you	THINGS: List three things that are important to you
FUN: List three things you like to do for fun	FOOD: List your three favorite foods

PART TWO: Use the script and follow-up questions below.

Imagine that you are 85 years old and have just had a health crisis while living in your home. A family member moves in to take care of you. Take a look at your list of people, things, fun, and foods you love and cross off everything that you cannot have or do as a result of your current situation.

After one month, it is becoming difficult for you to remain at home and for your family to care for your needs. You need more help so you move into *[list your organization name here – nursing home, assisted living, homecare organization, hospice, etc]*. Now look at your list and cross off everything that you cannot have or do as a result of your current situation.

After another month, you have a stroke that has made your care needs more intense. Your speech has been affected to the point where you cannot communicate your needs. You understand what your caregivers are telling you, but you cannot respond. You are dependent on care staff to feed you and provide all of your daily needs. Your depression and anxiety increases due to your physical health decline. Once again, take a look at your list and cross off everything that you cannot have or do as a result of your current situation.

ASK:

Is there anything left on your list?



What kind of help do you need to accomplish the things you love to do?

How do you think a caregiver (or nurse, or culinary staff, or housekeeper, or other positions in your organization) could help an older adult feel valued and fulfilled?

Think about what just happened. You were a healthy, happy person enjoying your family, friends, food, and hobbies. A series of health events changed your life and you had very little control over the situation in this exercise.



As you crossed items off your list as your health deteriorated, how did you feel?



Did you find yourself scared of what might happen next?

What items were left on your list at the end?

Were there items that you crossed off that made you mad because you had to give it up?

Were you able to hang on to something at the end that was really important to you?

What might caregivers or staff do to help the losses older adults experience feel more bearable?

What might you do to bring joy and comfort to an older adult in this situation?

PANEL DISCUSSION

Bring a guest with you, or better yet, host a panel discussion! Consider including a caregiver, nurse, activities or recreation staff, resident/client, or a family member. Ask questions such as:

Staff Panelists

What inspired you to become a caregiver/nurse/etc?



What do you like best about your job?

What is the biggest challenge about your job?

When do you have the most fun working as a caregiver/nurse/etc?

Can you share a funny story from your time as a caregiver/nurse/etc?

What has your education/career path looked like?

Are there scholarship or other opportunities students should look into?

Resident or Family Panelists



What initiated your move into [organization name]?

How would you describe your best caregiver?

What is special about [organization name]?

PEN PALS

Have students write letters to older adults in your setting to start pen pal relationships.

Letters could include:



Hobbies or special interests the student enjoys

Favorite movies or books

An upcoming or recent vacation

A positive story

Plans for the weekend or summer

As the older adult to share a story, hobby, or memory from when they were in school

A photo from a recent activity or a hobby



WRITE YOUR CARE PLAN

Consider showing this two-minute video, "[How to Adapt Person-Centered Health Services to Ageing Populations](#)," from the World Health Organization as a brief introduction to resident-centered care and the importance of care planning. Talk about how person-centered care plays out in your own organization.

Bring the care plan or service plan template that your organization uses and ask students to write their own. Prompt questions include:



- If you needed care and services, how would you want to be treated?
- What time would you want to wake up and go to bed?
- How would you feel if someone tried to tell you that you had to get up at a different time?
- How often would you want to bathe?
- What hobbies would be important for you to continue?
- What brings you joy and what would you like to do to bring meaning to your daily life?
- How would you feel if certain services (like bathing, house-cleaning, laundry) couldn't be scheduled at the right time, or couldn't be scheduled at all?
- How might caregivers solve those issues?