In preparation for future peri-anesthesia staffing needs, a Magnet hospital developed a creative plan to address projective staffing needs of the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU), Surgical Staging Unit (SSU), and Holding Room. Staffing patterns were noted throughout the three units as a concern that needed to be addressed. This was due to an increase in surgical patient volumes, as well as multiple planned and unplanned staff member leave of absences. The objective of this program was to create a “buffer” between the three units utilizing one central “pool” of nurses.

The peri-anesthesia float pool consists of twelve registered nurses oriented to the three peri-anesthesia units. In addition to orientation to each unit, the nurses were educated through the network wide critical care course. There were various shifts available to these nurses in order to provide optimal coverage for all three units. With the float pool in place, scheduled leave of absence and paid time off became less of a concern. Also unexpected absences of staff members were more easily accommodated. The nurses were also available as additional staff during high patient volumes and to assist with higher acuity patients.

The staff on all three units gained a deeper understanding of the peri-anesthesia continuum. Morale within the peri-anesthesia units was positively affected by the integration of the peri-anesthesia float pool. In the future, peri-anesthesia nursing could utilize float nurses to staff more appropriately during high patient volume and acuity periods.