Kendra D. Koch | Teaching Statement

Every teacher was once a learner. My core beliefs and strategies about teaching have been shaped, not only by my time teaching in classrooms, but by my experience as a student. My first expectation as a student is that instruction should be equally encouraging and challenging. As a teacher I seek to bring that same balance of guidance and challenge to my classroom by promoting independence through assignments that encourage higher-ordered thinking, synthesis, and analysis, while presenting the rote knowledge and guided discussion that allow students to ease naturally into more demanding ways of dialoguing and metabolizing information.

My second expectation as a student is that the classroom should feel safe. To this end, as a teacher, I encourage diversity and respect in my classroom. I insist not only that students treat each other with respect, but that they respect themselves as thinkers and learners who have unique perspectives and potentially valuable ideas. I especially honor diversity by making it apparent in the classroom that actions and speech that promote bigotry, racism, sexism, and other bias based on difference, personal characteristics, or vulnerability are unjust and are not an acceptable part of academic discourse. Most recently I have also required reading and discussion that highlighted and explored healthcare disparities in subpopulations differentiated by characteristics of sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. I have also required that students incorporate and address these disparities and barriers encountered by individuals with these characteristics into their case-based portfolios developed throughout the semester.

Whatever their differences people should be treated with respect. Respect is not only an attitude. It is a conscious act born of the humble recognition that privilege does not mean "correct," and that power does not entitle a person to a greater (or lesser) voice. In practicality, this means that I encourage all members of the class to speak, because I know that their particular voice should be heard. It means that that I believe that it is reasonable that those who are privileged and who likely feel more comfortable speaking are not called on every time they have an idea. Because, in a limited space of time, it is important to pull out ideas from those who may feel that they have less of a voice, from those who may be underserved or first-generation college students.

My understanding and belief in the social construction of knowledge increases the importance of diversity within classroom settings. As each learner contributes important pieces of information to classroom dialogue, a particular type of knowledge and shared understanding is constructed. Without voices that are sometimes overshadowed by more privileged voices, the knowledge that is constructed will be a skewed product, only projecting and amplifying already-dominative voices and narrative. In practicality this means that I use techniques and strategies in my class that elevate under-represented or vulnerable voices. Strategies including "think-pair-share," impromptu networking, 25/10 and TRIZ come from Liberating Structure activities, a type of strategy used in business environments that increases the likelihood every voice is heard and all ideas are valued (http://www.liberatingstructures.com).

Teaching is more than the transfer of knowledge. Teaching is also researching, synthesizing, curating, and formatting knowledge to create curriculum. I have had grant sponsorship that has enabled me to develop three different types of curricula aimed at educating students and
professionals about the process of transitioning Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (YSHCN) to adult care. *Transition of youth with special healthcare needs (YSHCN) in practice and policy: A graduate-level curriculum* focuses heavily on evidence, implementation, and problem-solving, because rote knowledge alone is not sufficient to create learners who have mastered a topic. My targeted, initial assessment showed that on the topic of YSHCN transition some learners had information, but almost none knew how to implement transition strategies in their communities. It seems that this is somewhat common in academic settings: a student has the knowledge of mastery, but not the skill, because the student has been taught to regurgitate knowledge instead of being taught how to apply it. This initial, semester-long curriculum was researched, developed, taught, and evaluated over the course of two years. The process included obtaining funding, writing a research protocol, conducting a targeted assessment of learners and focus groups of stakeholders, conducting a systematic review of research and practice literature, writing and assembling the curriculum, and teaching and evaluating the curriculum in two semester-long classes. Evaluation and outcomes for both classes showed this curriculum to be effective in increasing student knowledge and confidence in every one of nineteen topical domains. Using the same grant mechanism, I have received additional funding to develop two-day workshops for healthcare professionals. I have developed, taught, and completed evaluation for the first two (of twelve) workshops and initial outcomes are positive. Additionally, in the Fall of 2018, this grant will allow me to develop online modules about YSHCN transition to be used to complete already-required research activities for medical students and medical residents.

My teaching and created curricula have been thoroughly and redundantly evaluated. I have received traditional evaluations through end-of-semester, university surveys, confidentially completed by students, as well as feedback from session and pre-post surveys created to evaluate curriculum (including semester-long and workshops). Student and professional feedback have been essential to both my own formation as a professional teacher and the revision of curricula. As a teacher, I find that a reflective stance about my own performance and the effectiveness and content of my curriculum creates the most productive environment for my own professional growth.

As a teaching assistant to Dr. Barbara Jones, a University of Texas Distinguished Teaching Professor, I had the excellent opportunity to watch her use classroom issues of power and diversity to teach about workplace hierarchy in healthcare settings. I have been formed and nurtured by teachers throughout my life. Teachers have inspired and challenged me. In turn, I challenge my students by using teaching strategies that require them to problem solve in diverse groups engaging in dialogue respectfully, while promoting a respectful classroom environment. By using these strategies, I hope to give my students opportunities to master and apply the knowledge given to them, in their practice and in their communities. Equally important, I hope to continue to create curriculum that presents evidence-based interventions, compelling content, and current research and policy and to deliver that curriculum in ways that promotes diversity and honors the feedback given to me by previous students.