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 was that instruction should be equally nurturing and challenging. In my classroom I seek to promote independence through assignments that encourage higher-ordered thinking, synthesis, and analysis, while giving 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 was 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 respect each other, but that they respect themselves as thinkers and learners who have unique perspective and potentially valuable ideas.

Diversity is something I seek to establish and promote in all that I do, not just teaching. I strive to make this apparent in my classroom. I believe that ideas of bigotry, racism, sexism, and other bias based on difference and vulnerability truly exist, and that they are unjust, I actively seek to model for students that they are not an acceptable part of dialogue; that they are not an acceptable basis for community; and that they are not compassionate. Most recently I have done this by requiring reading and dialogue that highlighted healthcare disparities in subpopulations differentiated by sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, and also requiring that students incorporate these characteristic 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 it is reasonable for those who are privileged, and who likely feel more comfortable speaking, not to be 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 because of a less academic background, may use different vocabulary, have a different accent, or may take longer to form their ideas. In practicality this means that I use "think-pair-share" strategies, and ones like them in my class. I also use Liberating Structure activities, a type of strategy used in business environments that ensures every voice is heard and all ideas are valued (http://www.liberatingstructures.com).

The Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (YSHCN) Transition to Adulthood curriculum that I have researched, developed, taught, and evaluated 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.
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.