My philosophy as an educator is deeply rooted in my experiences as a learner. During primary school, I constantly struggled to understand core concepts in my courses until my high school biology teacher taught me *how* to learn, not just *what* to learn. Understanding what techniques best helped me learn not only increased my comprehension, it also inspired me to take responsibility for my own learning. I believe that once students understand *how* to learn, they become more engaged in meeting the competencies of any course. My role as an educator is to use research-supported pedagogy to present core-concepts, provide students with a toolbox of learning tools, and give them opportunities to practice using as many of those tools as they need. **Broadly, my teaching philosophy emphasizes giving students opportunities to learn how to learn, fostering the growth of their self-efficacy, and empowering them to become responsible for their own learning**.

I implement this philosophy both through course-scale interventions, as well as my interactions with students. At the course-level, I’m dedicated to using evidence-based practices in teaching, including repetition of core concepts and active learning activities, as these techniques are shown to increase student understanding and create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment. **Critically evaluating my teaching practices can validate the overall effectiveness of these techniques and can identify if they create equitable outcomes for all students, especially those from underrepresented groups who are often left behind under traditional pedagogy.** I also strive to provide students with multiple opportunities to understand a concept, encouraging them to try different learning tools (e.g., watching a video, explaining the concept to another student, drawing a model). I believe that there is no best way to learn, and the tools that work for one student may not work for others. In my experience, a student that is “stuck” on a concept has not been exposed to it in a way that “clicks” in their brain. Once they find a tool that does make the concept “click”, it boosts students’ self-efficacy and validates that they can overcome learning obstacles if given enough time and practice.

I evaluate effectiveness in my teaching by my student’s ability to explain their reasoning back to me. For example, students often get confused when learning the movement of chromosomes through meiosis. Here, I utilize the “ I Do – We Do – You Do” model by first having a conversation with students about what the goal of meiosis is. Next, I walk them through the process, having them draw the chromosomes as I diagram their movement with my fingers. Finally, to evaluate student understanding, I have them walk back through the diagram they drew, while asking clarifying questions to ensure they understand the diagram they drew. **Areas where students lack understanding provide crucial feedback of places where I need to provide further explanation to facilitate understanding.** I use that feedback to make modifications to my teaching practices, including explaining a core concept in a different way, or pausing the activity for more instruction if several students are struggling. Creating a classroom where students know their feedback is valuable is crucial to empowering them to take charge of their own learning.

I know I will interact with most of these students for only a few weeks during a semester. However, those few weeks can be incredibly impactful if students take away tools that they can use as they move forward both academically and professionally. Utilizing research-informed teaching practices that promote equitable opportunities for students, I hope to promote student’s autonomy over their own learning and confidence in themselves, as my teachers did for me.