

My biggest strength is my ability to connect with and support individuals through patience, empathy, and adaptability. This strength has been a cornerstone of both my academic journey and my professional career, particularly as I work towards becoming a leader in the field of special education.

At ACDS in Pelham, where I serve as a special education professional in an 8:1:2 classroom, I see firsthand how patience and empathy transform learning experiences for students with unique needs. Each day, I create an environment where students feel seen, valued, and understood. Utilizing tools like visual schedules, music, and communication pegs, I adapt my teaching approach to meet students where they are, ensuring they can thrive academically and socially. For instance, by incorporating music into daily routines, I help students engage more effectively, allowing them to express themselves in ways they might not otherwise be able to. This patience-driven adaptability is critical when working in special education, as every child's journey is unique.

My academic pursuits as a master's student on track for initial certification by May 2025 have further honed my ability to support diverse learners. Balancing a full-time job with evening classes has reinforced my time management and resilience, enabling me to juggle responsibilities effectively. During my coursework, I've explored strategies to foster meaningful learning experiences, including integrating music into read-aloud sessions to enhance vocabulary development. This aligns closely with my inquiry question: "What happens when I integrate music activities during read-alouds?" Through this work, I've observed how creative approaches can make learning more inclusive and engaging for all students.

As I advance in my career, I plan to leverage my strengths in empathy and adaptability to foster inclusive environments that empower students and colleagues alike. My long-term goal is to take on leadership roles within special education, where I can advocate for innovative teaching

practices and equitable resources. By staying attuned to the needs of students, families, and staff, I hope to build collaborative spaces that prioritize growth and understanding.

Ultimately, my ability to connect with others on a deep level will continue to guide me. Whether supporting students in the classroom, collaborating with colleagues, or leading initiatives for change, I will use my patience and empathy to create environments where everyone can succeed. This strength, cultivated through my experiences at ACDS and in my master's program, will remain at the heart of my journey in special education.