

## Diversity Statement | I Believe

Theatre draws from a wide range of personal experiences, across time and culture, and is expressed through the many facets of artistic storytelling. It is an exploratory art form in which students from diverse backgrounds can feel heard and find connection. I believe every student has something meaningful to contribute, and my role as a teacher is to create an environment in which those unique contributions are valued and supported.

Listening is an essential part of my role, allowing me to understand my students and respond to their ideas and needs. In acknowledgement of how my own identity and experience might influence my teaching, I approach my instructional choices with self-awareness and humility. Creating an inclusive environment requires knowing *when* to guide, *how* to guide, and *when to step back* and allow for student voices to be heard.

I am intentional about selecting material that connects to my students' experiences while also challenging them to think beyond them, offering opportunities to encounter lives and perspectives different from their own. Engaging with a wider range of stories, experiences and methods helps students to develop empathy and strengthens their communication skills, both of which are essential not only in theatre, but in life beyond the classroom. To me, diversity is not only representation, but also how we listen to one another and build trust through collaboration and honesty. I emphasize respectful interaction and constructive feedback by establishing discussion norms, allowing space to process before responding, and encouraging students to cite references and defend their ideas with examples. This helps students to draw from an expanding range of knowledge and make valid, honest connections.

In rehearsal and classroom spaces, I strive to create a structured and supportive environment where students feel safe taking creative risks. I am transparent about expectations and mindful of the material we explore and its potential impact. I provide multiple ways for students to engage and contribute, along with opportunities for independent learning and reflection to build self-efficacy and confidence. In production casting, I balance considerations of representation, individual student skill and growth potential with the needs of the production, while maintaining clear and open communication with students about my process and reasoning.

I recognize and value the different ways students receive and process information drawing from their varied experiences and abilities. My instructional approach remains flexible, incorporating varied strategies and accommodations so all students can participate and demonstrate understanding in ways that align with their needs and builds from their strengths. In doing so, students learn to collaborate with peers who may think, create, or communicate differently than they do. This supports their growth as performers, critical thinkers and empathetic individuals.

This work is ongoing. I am dedicated to seeking better ways to support my students in inclusive, responsive ways, while maintaining high expectations for effort and artistic growth; reflecting on my practice and finding ways to create more equitable, diverse spaces in my classroom as I grow as an educator.