

## Diversity Statement

When it comes to exceptionalities, no one should get something handed to them; work ethic is crucial, but some must work harder for a 'normal work ethic' than others. More often than not, if a person is rewarded without earning it, they can become lazy and/or take advantage of others to 'get by.' On the other hand, most people who are on the disability spectrum want to earn things and not just have it given to them when they struggle. As a child I grew up with minor dyslexia. From kindergarten till fourth grade, my teachers would just let me slide by in reading and writing even though I could not do it. This hindered my progress and growth; I was so far behind that I would write half of a sentence and then move on to another. I didn't realize I was doing it because I thought it was ok, no one told me different. It was not until fourth grade that this was addressed, and a teacher took her time to work with me after school. She made sure I read out loud in my class to help with the dyslexia and did not let me slip through learning essential reading and writing fundamentals. Ever since then, I accumulated a habit of working earnestly to speak clearly when reading and taking extra time and care when writing my papers, helping me to articulate clear and succinct introspective thoughts on paper. It is particularly gratifying for me to complete a paper, nostalgic of my past work ethic that now supports my capability to be precise and concise with me. The problem with exceptionalities the kids with a learning curve, but the education system that let those kids slide because they feel bad that they have a hard time with it, or they do not know how to curate differentiated learning. When differentiated learning is upheld and no student is left behind, students learn, witness, and embody a sense of self-motivation and pride for what they are doing. I believe if someone has a disability, the teacher should of course be considerate of the problem, but also push them to be challenged and grow.

Pretty privilege is rooted in white supremacy and gender bias. The human race is evolving, and research shows that the more intellectual someone is the more attractive they are, relating pretty profiling to how clean and professional they are, to respect and how committed the person is predicted to be. Not to mention, our society has become very sexualized and looks have become a sort of necessity for success. First impressions are a big deal within 'being successful,' from in person to social media, thanks to our society's sexualization and deeply rooted racial profiling. Adding on to pretty privilege profiling is skin color, and our societies white supremacy places all people of color at a lesser advantage on first impressions. Outside of the classroom a painful example is police force, inside the classroom teachers may be easier on those 'prettier' than others or give an unfair advantage in learning by giving those students more help/time. These are just a glimpse of how people who have privilege is not fair. It should not be this way, but it is, and it must be dealt with. Teachers, including myself, must give equal time and opportunity to ALL. No space is a safe space in relation to privilege and must be addressed; classrooms that uphold 'all problems left at the door' is a privileged thought and upholds white supremacy by silencing students who will never be able to 'leave their problems at the door.' For example, within the ballet technique, black dancers cannot 'leave their problems at the door,' as ballet is inherently supremacist. One inherently supremacist aspect of ballet is requiring black students to wear pink tights and shoes, covering up their black skin to blend in with white peers. A step closer to equality in the classroom begins with acknowledging privilege, identifying the self within that privilege, actively listening to ALL students, and leading group discussions on how to actively work against privilege.

Age is just a number and does not always show a person's true mental maturity. There are grown men at the age of twenty-eight who act like they are seventeen, and have all these life responsibilities

they can't handle. I believe that someone's age should not justify the amount of responsibilities they should hold. In the classroom setting, for example, a group of tenth graders are not all going to have the same maturity levels. The class will have some students who cause distractions and are silly like a seventh grader would be and some students who are so serious about school you would think they were in a college classroom setting. Therefore, a teacher can't rely on the age of the class to determine the maturity of the class and should be prepared to deal with any and all different ages in a one age level class. Within ageism, I find it important to note that within my own teaching practice I acknowledge that I can, and will, learn and grow along my students. I have just as much to learn from them as they do from me.

Sexual orientation and gender are separate entities, and the majority of people find it confusing to separate because society has made two specific binary orientations the normal: a boy who has a penis and no breasts, and a girl who has a vagina and breasts. Within this binary, sexual orientation is boy like girls, girl likes boy. What about people beyond the binary, or being attracted to the same gender, or all genders? What about the people that have a penis and breasts, or a vagina and no breasts? People are born this way; doctors encourage gender reconstruction surgery and parents comply it because hegemonic culture finds it socially unacceptable. It is a spectrum, and no one person identifies in gender or sexual orientation in exactly the same way. Similar to young transgender girls and boys; children beyond the binary in sexual orientation and gender should not be made fun of by their peers and teachers. I was one of those kids; a closeted pansexual and non-binary until graduate school. Queer students should be accepted just like anyone else; their exceptionality does not inhibit their right to an excellent learning experience. The right to learn in a supportive and inclusive environment is to ALL students as every student has the potentiality to give back to the community because exceptionalities of all kinds does not hinder their abilities to be a potentially amazing citizen of society. The male and female gender has become a 'correct' binary pronounced as what is right in societies.

Gender is an idea that had been created and evolved by societies and is also similar to sexual orientation because it is the social side of what a male or female should act like. Boys/men are strong, and girls/women are frail and lesser to the male. Both boys and girls put down the girl gender by saying things like 'you run like a girl'. This puts girls in the mindset that they aren't as good and can't be as good as the boy gender. Every single person has the potential to be great at whatever they want to be great in if they work hard enough for it and should not be afraid to pursue their dreams because of what society has deemed acceptable for a gender role.

Socio-economic status is different in every culture, America's socio-economic status is based off of wealth, whereas in India's is based off of their religious purity/cleanliness. It is all based on that particular society's overall culture and major beliefs. In America, the wealthier someone is the higher status/power they have; consequently, people with lesser wealth less advantages, socially and economically. People of more wealth are viewed as 'better' people than those of lesser wealth because it is easier for them to look presentable and successful. People assume that poor people are uneducated because they cannot afford to look as nice. Wealth discrimination often lays in being able to afford luxuries that boost their level in the social aspect. I once knew a boy who was extremely poor but was one of the smartest and hardest working peers I knew. He once told me that he worked hard because he wanted to be rich, so people would like him. He genuinely believed he was not popular because he didn't have money. I remember teachers thinking he cheated, when in reality other kids were the ones

using him to cheat because they knew he would let them because he wanted to be liked. The teacher even assumed he cheated; my guess was because he didn't have the socio-economic status that the boys around him had (high middle class). This creates a handicap for everyone who isn't wealthy and pushes them to think less of themselves. No child should be shut down since they have the potential to be as great as they want to be. If they are shut down, then they will never reach their true potential.

Religion is something someone should choose to believe in, not be forced to believe one thing as the only way. No one religion/belief is wrong, and a person should have the chance to learn enough information about religions before making an intellectual decision for themselves in what they believe in. This is why I think the rule about not discussing religion in the classroom setting is a great rule because it prevents a religion being pushed at a child before they can form an opinion of their own. Religion in a classroom setting should be discussed from an outsider's perspective, so it is strictly about learning the doctrines, history, and practices of a religion. Even if someone is trying to sway a person to believe something, shoving it down their throat will make that person hate it more instead of believing it. It then becomes a subject they dread because they are not willingly learning and loving it. Religion often parallels a society's cultural norms. Someone should not be judged because of where they are from; just because a person is different from what someone else is accustomed to does not mean they are wrong. One religion is not lesser than another, acceptance of diversity of belief is pertinent to accepting and having an open mind to cultural and societal differences.

A theme within this diversity statement revolves around the notion of being non-judgmental. My utopic space includes but is not limited to, a world that no one judges anyone, is open-minded and accepting even if it is different/unusual than what is normal, and everyone is heard and respected. In my classroom setting, I will work towards a liberatory space that all students will be acknowledged and heard. If a problem arises it is not swept under the rug, rather it is actively addressed and resolved together. Where equal opportunity is the forefront of all activities and differentiated learning is not an 'alternative' style of learn, rather is normalized that all types of learning are always distinct and clear. Over time, it will teach students to be more sociable, accepting of others, and understanding of other's feelings. This environment will allow for all students to work hard, grow, and learn together. It is important that I work hard to distribute encouragement equally, so every child has positive reinforcement, constructive criticism, and wants to learn. My classroom environment will be of equality and equal learning opportunity, a space where we all learn from each other.