

Theatre Supports Students of Diverse Backgrounds

Throughout my career as a theatre educator, director, and voice specialist, I have had the privilege of working with students across a wide range of identities, lived experiences, and educational pathways. From the urban, city-centered campuses of Virginia Commonwealth University and Old Dominion University to the conservatory-style programs at Point Park and the global online graduate community at Regent University, my teaching has been shaped by environments where diversity is not theoretical. It is the daily fabric of classroom life. These experiences have formed the foundation of my commitment to inclusive theatre education grounded in empathy, respect, and artistic bravery.

Theatre training asks students to be vulnerable: to step into unfamiliar roles, explore text with honesty, and take creative risks. I believe vulnerability is only possible when students feel supported, seen, and valued for *who they are* – right here, right now. In every rehearsal room and classroom, I work to cultivate kindness, joy, and a sense of belonging so students can engage courageously with the work at hand. My pedagogical philosophy centers on ensuring that *every* student (especially those historically marginalized in academic and artistic spaces) can bring their full selves into the learning environment. We are richer for it.

Much of my artistic and academic work has focused on platforming voices and stories that have not always held space on stage. Whether directing, assigning text or coaching, I approach storytelling with awareness of cultural context and a commitment to uplifting narratives that expand representation. I encourage students to explore plays and musical works by creators of color, queer and non-binary artists, women, and communities whose stories have long been overlooked. My goal is to help emerging artists understand whose shoulders we stand on, whose stories still need telling, and how theatre can be a tool for cultural connection and social awareness.

I am dedicated to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion, and I hold myself accountable to continuing education in this work. I am continually learning – through workshops, scholarship, community engagement, listening to my students and engaging with my own wildly diverse family – how to best support students of color, queer and trans students, first-generation students, international students, and those navigating varied cultural or linguistic backgrounds. In voice and speech instruction especially, I am mindful of the ways “standard” speech has historically been weaponized against certain identities. I work to demystify voice and dialect work, frame it as a tool rather than a corrective, and empower students to honor *both* their natural voice and the voices required by theatrical worlds.

Whether teaching students pursuing their B.A., B.F.A., M.A., M.F.A., or doctorates, I tailor my teaching to meet students where they are, recognizing that equity means providing different forms of support to create an equally rich opportunity for learning. Students are not monoliths and deserve to take up space physically, digitally and emotionally, therefore I incorporate flexible modalities, tailored curricula and tools for community-building that transcend geography, social class or background.

Ultimately, my commitment to supporting students from diverse backgrounds is rooted in my belief that theatre is at its best when it reflects the full spectrum of human experience. My role as an educator is not only to teach craft, but to steward a space in which students feel brave enough to explore, question, and grow. I will continue to learn, continue to listen, and continue to evolve my practices so that all students – regardless of identity or background – can thrive and collaborate authentically and with care and dignity.