

## Statement of Diversity Contribution

Marissa Birke

I grew up a Korean adoptee in a predominately Caucasian suburban neighborhood. I had the privilege of being raised by two working middle-class parents who were involved in my education, provided financial stability, and made me feel loved. However, I endured years of bullying at school for being Asian, and often felt like an outsider. The harassment I encountered motivated me to want to help minorities, and inspired me to pursue a career in education.

During college I learned how to embrace and support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). I was eager to put this knowledge to practice and did my best to set up a classroom that was welcoming and accepting of all students. I integrated various cultures, abilities, beliefs, and family dynamics into my lessons and classroom materials. I did what I could on the surface, but I also knew it was important to listen and form a reciprocal relationship with my students and their families to effectively provide a holistic education.

After leaving the classroom, I was able to put my DEI experience to use through other avenues. I taught an English language class for English as a New Language (ENL) adults at a community college, owned and operated a small art studio business, tutored a child with a visual impairment, mentored a neurodivergent individual, and co-founded a free ENL program for adults.

I realize diversity, equity, and inclusion experience is not simply credited through osmosis. It is necessary to acknowledge, understand, and respect the rationale behind these goals to make a profound impact towards creating a DEI-friendly society. I believe it is important to collaborate with diverse groups to innovate and achieve the highest standards of outcomes in all professional fields. I am committed to continuous learning and advocacy, and would love the opportunity to contribute my creative thinking skills in a teaching position.