



## RESOURCES

### TITLE | EDUCATION OUTSIDE'S ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

CATEGORY | Program

SUB-CATEGORY | Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

OVERVIEW | This resource is designed to share Education Outside's approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as an organization. It shares the steps we have taken to create an inclusive community in order to model these practices for our garden educators as they created their own outdoor classroom culture.

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#### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Education Outside

Education Outside consistently grappled with its organizational approach to diversity, equity and inclusion. Over the years, our garden educators and several key staff advocated for deepening our work in this area, resulting in specific key questions and areas of focus:

- Garden Educator Support and Training: In what ways can we increase the sensitivity and skills needed to work in diverse communities?
- Curriculum and Outdoor Classroom Design: How can we create lessons and gardens that are more culturally responsive, inclusive, and effective across the different schools in our program?
- Recruitment and Hiring: What processes will allow us to cast a broader and more inclusive net?

DEI is a critical lens for any garden based organization working in public schools. Below you will find a list of ways that Education Outside approached the topic with educators. Refer to the Table of Contents to see how DEI was incorporated into specific trainings, hiring, curriculum, and outdoor classroom design.

#### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmark Rubric

In order to assess the organization's use of best practices, Education Outside created a diversity, equity, and inclusion benchmark rubric. This tool measures the use of best practices across four different benchmark groups: organizational and professional development, vision and leadership, recruitment and retention, and assessment and evaluation. Once an initial assessment is made using the rubric, it can then be used to guide next steps toward greater use of DEI best practices. A copy of Education Outside's version can be found below in the **Additional Resources** section and used as a model to create your own rubric.

#### Building an Inclusive Organizational Culture

Education Outside worked to build a community of garden educators that was inclusive. By intentionally creating space for authentic relationship building, garden educators were able to build strong connections with their peers and utilize that network for professional and personal support throughout the year. Garden educators were also then better equipped to take this relationship building mindset to their outdoor garden classrooms. Some specific strategies we implemented to build an inclusive community culture were:



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## **Regional Groups**

As the cohort of garden educators grew from 4 to 58 in Education Outside's lifespan, there was a need for smaller, more specific managerial and support groups. Regional Groups were typically comprised of garden educators with either similar school demographics or geographic neighborhoods. These groups met routinely during Friday professional development sessions to debrief their teaching experience, collaborate and problem solve, and complete group workdays at each other's school sites once a month. Some groups organized outside of work for additional relationship building opportunities. Feedback from garden educators routinely shared that their Regional Group was a highly effective network of support.

## **Retreats**

Education Outside organized a variety of garden educator retreats to provide dedicated time for relationship building and professional development. Retreats allowed educators to meet new people and participate in shared experiences together. The retreat settings offered a balance of time to connect as a whole group and time to connect as smaller regional or opt-in professional development interest groups.

## **Town Hall**

The Town Hall was used primarily when major organizational updates needed to be shared with the entire garden educator community. These gatherings were held during regular Friday professional development sessions and all garden educators and staff were required to attend. In an effort for us to promote an equitable and inclusive discussion environment, it was important to find a physical space where a large full group circle was possible. Overall, there should be less of a focus on leadership speaking and more of an opportunity for everyone to participate in discussion, provide feedback, and ask questions.

## **Leadership Circles**

These opt-in small group discussions were offered as an opportunity for garden educators to connect specifically with leadership staff at Education Outside. The topics were typically programing and strategy related. These were offered in the fall and spring semesters and, depending on interest and need, could be held one or multiple times. Leadership Circle was a space for garden educators to connect with staff beyond their direct manager and engage in higher-level topics and problem solving.

## **Appreciation Activities**

Taking time to appreciate the variety of contributions made by the garden educator and staff community is important. Appreciation activities occurred at the end of each semester and during garden educator retreats. Additionally, smaller opportunities to appreciate one another in regional groups were provided during Friday professional development sessions.

## **Community Board**

To conclude our large group professional development sessions on Fridays, we held 5-10 minutes of space for what we called the "Community Board". Garden educators and staff verbally shared opportunities for folks to connect outside of work. This format allowed for the entire group to be included in invitations and announcements, instead of just a select few. At the beginning of the year, staff would prepare some examples of local weekend events to model how to engage in Community Board share-outs. Once the routine was established, garden educators regularly had items to share with the full group.

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## Pronouns

In the first all-organization meeting of the new school year, garden educators and staff shared their pronouns in a circle (see the training overview, “Laying the Foundation for Discussing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion among Garden Educators” in *Leadership for Community Engagement*, linked in the Table of Contents). Education Outside added pronouns to all name tags that were used throughout the year at Friday professional development trainings and special events. When we worked with external presenters and organizations, we talked about using gender inclusive language and not assuming the pronouns of others. If, despite our best efforts, we made a mistake with someone’s pronoun we held each other and ourselves accountable to correcting the mistake with respect.

## Affinity Groups

Education Outside utilized affinity groups to support personal and professional growth and offer opportunities to value diverse experiences across the organization. Affinity groups were a way for groups of people who share something in common (usually a part of their identities, like race or sexual orientation, or interest, like STEM education) to bond and connect outside of their regular work. Groups were composed of staff members and garden educators and met throughout the year to talk about shared experiences. We held space for different groups and made sure they met at varied times so folks could belong to more than one group. Some of the groups that formed over the years were for People of Color, LGBTQ people, and Allies. Anyone in the organization could form and run an affinity group. Suggested guidelines for an affinity group include:

- Set clear group agreements and norms.
- Allow anyone who self-identifies as part of this group to join.
- Make the purpose and goal of the group clear from the start.

## Training Garden Educators

DEI is an important lens through which to train garden educators. You can find specific training resources linked in the Table of Contents.

## Additional Resources:

- Adichie, C. (2009, July). Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story [video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story)
- Brown, A. M. (2017). *Emergent strategy: Shaping change, changing worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press.
- Emdin, C. (2017). *For white folks who teach in the hood... and the rest of y’all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Hammond, Z., & Jackson, Y. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, a SAGE Company.
- Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods: Why children need nature, how it was taken from them, and how to get it back*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.
- Rubric Reference: Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks, Standards for Organizations Around the World: [http://diversitycollegium.org/GDIB\\_2014\\_Standard\\_US\\_Letter\\_Version.pdf](http://diversitycollegium.org/GDIB_2014_Standard_US_Letter_Version.pdf)
- Rubric Reference: Islandwood Organizational Self-Assessment of Cultural Capacity Instrument: <https://islandwood.org/>

	<b>0% - No diversity and inclusion work has begun</b>	<b>25% - Compliance approach</b>	<b>50% - Beginning of a programmatic adoption</b>	<b>75% - Systemic and robust approach</b>	<b>100% - Current best practices in diversity and inclusion</b>
<b>Professional Development</b>	There are no resources or staff time dedicated to training staff around DEI issues.	DEI is limited to HR functions and compliance to prevent legal action, and staff time is dedicated for professional development related to compliance.	DEI is integrated into organizational training and education in every department, drawing from experts and best practices.	All levels of the organization have position-specific training in DEI with particular focus on stakeholder/ community relevance.	DEI is integrated into all training and education and advances the organization's strategy.  Our impact and best practices are evidence-based, and benefit the greater community and field, as we collaborate and cross train with partners.
<b>Vision &amp; Leadership</b>	DEI is not integrated into the vision, mission, policies, or goals of the organization.	Board and leadership has communicated that inclusive practices are expected, but there are no efforts from leadership dedicated to affecting policies or organizational goals.	DEI is an organizational goal, and staff time is dedicated to this priority.	Resources are dedicated to integrate DEI systemically, throughout vision, mission, policies, and goals of the organization.  There are dedicated staff to support DEI as a priority in the leadership team and in every department.	Board is dedicated to DEI and is generally representative of the communities it serves.  We expand the reach and impact of our DEI work within the larger environmental education community.
<b>Recruitment &amp; Retention</b>	No effort is made to recruit, select, advance, or retain employees from underrepresented* groups.	There is a focus on recruiting, hiring and retaining an increased percentage of employees from underrepresented* groups.	EO AmeriCorps and staff diversity increases each year to be more reflective of the communities it serves, but certain groups are still underrepresented across all levels of the organization.	Special efforts are made to retain members of underrepresented* groups by intentionally cultivating an inclusive culture and developing pathways for advancement in the organization.	EO's talent development processes have resulted in equitable recruitment, retention, advancement, and a pervasive feeling of inclusion. As a result, the EO staff, AmeriCorps, and board is generally representative of the communities in which EO serves.
<b>Assessment &amp; Evaluation</b>	DEI is not a point of analysis of organizational effectiveness.	Feedback about DEI-related issues is solicited on a spare or random basis.	DEI-specific structures are in place to measure impact and monitor progress programmatically and organizationally.	Integrated, multi-technique approaches to monitoring and evaluating DEI goals are conducted and a DEI return-on-investment study has been conducted for at least one high-impact DEI initiative.	DEI measures are included as part of the organization's overall scorecard, and prioritized in organizational strategy.  EO participates in collaborative research that accounts for indicators of cultural competence, progress, innovation, and impact.

\* Underrepresented groups at Education Outside: non-female identifying individuals, people of color, people who grew up in the Bay Area