



**CHATHAM**  
COUNTY SCHOOLS

**AFFINITY GROUPS**  
**EQUITY ROUNDTABLE**



# WHAT IS AN AFFINITY GROUP?

An Affinity Group is defined as a “safe space” where everyone in the group shares a particular identity. The identity can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, language or nationality and other indicators.

Affinity groups are designed so students can find connection, support, and inspiration.



# WHY AFFINITY GROUPS?

- Affinity Groups

- Help students feel more connected and can give a sense of belonging to our schools which will reduce office referrals and suspensions
- Help students feel more included and visible in schools
- Research has shown these groups increase student achievement, reduce dropouts, and increase student self-esteem.
- Reducing the isolation and frustration our students report feeling
- Helps to create positive affirmation of identity and builds capacity for learning
- Continue supporting a culture of *LOVE* in our schools



# WHY AFFINITY GROUPS?

“Gathering in safe spaces around shared identity allows students to engage in conversations about how they can subvert the structures that push them to the margins.”



# WHAT ARE SOME TYPES OF AFFINITY GROUPS?

- Faith/Religion Based
- Family Structure
- LGBTQIA+
- Race/Ethnicity Based Groups



# HOW TO GET ONE STARTED AT MY SCHOOL?

- Collect/Review Data
  - Academic Data/Achievement Data
  - Student Survey Data/Student Voice
- Have an advisor/teacher leader committed to the work
  - Look for advisors/teacher leaders who are connected to the group in question when possible.
    - Latinx group = Latinx leader
- Empower the students in the group
  - Have students generate the name of the group
  - Have students generate 2-3 manageable goals
- Go beyond celebrations
  - Connect students with leadership opportunities in the school and community
- Communicate with families



# STUDENT AFFINITY GROUPS IN CHATHAM

- My Brother's Keeper (NHS)
- My Sister's Keeper (NHS)
- Asian American Culture Club (NHS)
- Pride/Gay Straight Alliance (Seaforth, NHS, and JM)
- LASO (NHS)
- Orgullo Latinx Pride (Seaforth/JMHS)
- GM Horton Boys' Group
- VCE's Girls' Group
- Silk Hope and Moncure Boys' Group
- FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes)



# DO'S AND DON'TS

- Make sure your staff members understand the “WHY”
  - Every school’s “WHY” will be different
- Ensure you have a strong Advisor/Teacher Leader
- Selecting the Group’s Name is Important
  - Student Drive
  - Consider your parent population and your staff
- Clear Staff Boundaries/Expectations
  - Respect the space
  - Ask for permission to visit meetings. Don’t just assume it’s ok to show up
- Affinity groups should not serve as the only time that students discuss diverse and multicultural topics. These themes should be explored throughout their curriculum and classroom discussions





# HOW TO BE AN AFFINITY GROUP ALLY

- Show Support
  - Monitor conversation with Staff and Students (kids are listening)
- Form Relationships
  - Get to know students and their interest
- Be Positive
- Share group events and celebrations with the School community
- Stay informed
  - Ask Questions and Don't make Assumptions



# COACHING WHEN THERE IS STAFF PUSH BACK

- Stay calm
- Ask questions to unpack their understanding
  - What concerns do you have?
  - What specifically about the group is a concern?
  - What solutions do you have other than not having the group?
  - Are there groups that you belong to? (church, job, community, etc)
  - Address issues from a mindset of educating and coaching, but **do** address concerns where possible
- Be clear that supporting all students is your ultimate goal
- Share that there is research supporting how affinity groups increase achievement and student self perceptions



# RESOURCES

- [Expanding Affinity Potential](#) (Video 5:22)
- [The Virtue of Affinity Groups](#) (Video 9:14)
- Teaching Tolerance Article on Affinity Groups- (has tips for successful groups)  
<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2015/making-space>
- Teaching Tolerance Toolkit for Making Affinity Spaces-  
<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2015/toolkit-for-making-space>
- FAQ on Affinity Groups-  
<https://www.smore.com/app/attachments/download/5a539fb3f9ccd501b7fff2f7>



# QUESTIONS



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