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](https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/summer-2015/making-space)
- FAQ on Affinity Groups- [https://www.smore.com/app/attachments/download/5a539fb3f9ccd501b7fff2f7](https://www.smore.com/app/attachments/download/5a539fb3f9ccd501b7fff2f7)
Questions