

Happy School year 2023-2024,

Calling all educators in the Westwood school district that identify as BIPOC. This is for teachers, IAs, ABA tutors, specialists, special educators, BCBA's EL educators, instructional coaches, school nurses, guidance counselors and SLPs figuring out how to work in predominantly White schools, as a minority requires affirmation. Providing a safe space for staff of color to share experiences while reviewing data, providing productive tools to dismantle negative experiences surrounding bias, and continuing to celebrate our diversity that is a gift given to our district are some of the objectives for our affinity group. Affinity groups give affirmations of identity that provide professional development and networking.

Affinity groups also:

- foster a collection of voices and partnership with our leaders at the district level
- provide a community of support and respect
- encourage engagement for recruitment and retention efforts
- provide more awareness for our district educators on the importance of cultural humanity, as we prepare our current and future students in becoming the next civic leaders of tomorrow.

The BIPOC Affinity group of Westwood was founded in 2020. Like many things affected by the pandemic, the group was put on hold. Last year we had our BIPOC affinity group meet once again. We had the opportunity to come together and speak to our individual experiences within the Westwood district related to identity. Our purpose of the affinity space was to provide support to all of our BIPOC employees and students by way of representation. The diversity of the broader world as it relates to the various backgrounds of our own school community, proved that this space was and still is needed. Another purpose was to positively impact the hiring and retention of talented educators of color. In partnership with our district central office, we have observed a need for educators and other support staff who identify as BIPOC, and this need was echoed in the findings of our [Equity Audit](#) pages 41-43

With the support of our Director of Equity, integration, and Community Partnerships, [REDACTED], our Assistant Superintendent, [REDACTED], and our new Superintendent, Tim Piwowar, I am working to revamp the intention of our district's affinity space for educators. As a part of a capstone project related to graduate coursework, I will be working to provide our BIPOC staff with an environment that has a sense of belonging, an opportunity to influence that drive positive change in policy, and pathways for leadership and professional growth. If this affinity space is something you are interested in or you know someone who would love to be a part of this group you can send an email to our Elementary METCO coordinator [REDACTED] or call her at [REDACTED]. A sign up sheet will be sent to you with survey questions about possible times, locations, and safety practices for our 1st Kickoff Affinity Group meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warmly,



Elementary METCO Coordinator