

Doing Affinity in Community



November 8, 2019

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CRITICALLY RETHINKING DIVERSITY

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<p>Almaden Country School Annie Wright Schools Athenian School Aurora School The Bay School of SF Bentley School The Berkeley School Bishop O'Dowd High School Black Pine Circle Day School Branson School Brentwood School Buckley School The Bush School The Carey School Castilleja School Cate School Cathedral School for Boys Catlin Gabel Children's Day School Chinese American International School College Prep Convent Elementary School Crane Country Day School The Crowden School Crystal Springs Uplands School Curtis School Drew School École Bilingue Episcopal High School</p>	<p>Escuela Bilingüe Internacional FAIS, Portland FAIS, San Francisco The Gillispie School Girls' Middle School Gulliver Schools The Hamlin School The Harker School Head Royce School Hillbrook School Holy Names Academy International High School Jewish Community HS of the Bay Kalmanovitz School of Ed, SMC Katherine Delmar Burke School Keys School Laurence School Lick-Wilmerding High School The Little School Los Gatos-Saratoga Observation Nursery School Marin Academy Marin Country Day School Marin Prep Marin Primary & Middle School Mark Day School Marlborough School Maybeck High School Menlo School Mirman School</p>	<p>Montessori Family School Moses Brown School Mount Tamalpais School National Cathedral School Oakwood School Oregon Episcopal School The Overlake School The Oxbow School Pacific Ridge School Park Day School Peninsula School Pingry School The Potomac School Presidio Hill School Principia Schools Prospect Sierra School Redwood Day School Rolling Hills Prep and Renaissance Schools Ross Valley Charter School Sacred Heart Schools, Atherton Sage Hill School Salesian College Prep St. Edmund's Academy St. Gregory College Prep St. Ignatius College Preparatory St. Mary's College St. Matthew's Episcopal Day School St. Paul's Episcopal School Salesian College Preparatory</p>	<p>Samuel Merritt University San Domenico School San Francisco Day School San Francisco Friends School The San Francisco School SF University High School San Francisco Waldorf School La Scuola Sea Crest School Seattle Academy Seattle Catholic Schools Sonoma Academy Sonoma Country Day School Spruce Street School Stuart Hall for Boys The Thacher School Town School for Boys TVT Community Day School University Prep The Urban School of San Francisco Vacaville Christian Schools Viewpoint School Village School Wesley School Westland School Westmark School Westridge School Westside Neighborhood School White Hill Middle School Wildwood School</p>
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<p><u>Other clients</u></p> <p>A.C.T. Aim High/Crossroads BAISHA Beaverton School District, OR Beyond Differences CA Teachers Development Collaborative Diversity in Governance Education Outside EPA, Region 9 The Fulcrum Foundation The Haas Center for Public Service, Stanford University Independent School Chairpersons Association Independent Schools Association of Central States The Institute for SEL Kentfield School District, CA Marin Theatre Company No Bully Northwest Association of Independent Schools Roots of Change Seattle Catholic Schools SMART Summerbridge, UHS</p>	<p><u>Conferences</u></p> <p>Affinity Group Educators Asian Educators Alliance Association of Independent School Admission Professionals Bay Area Directors of Admissions Symposium Blink's Class Conference California Association of Independent Schools Creating Balance in an Unbalanced World East Bay Independent School Association Educational Collaborative for International Schools Equity & Inclusion Through a Leadership Lens LWHS Asian-American Student Conference National Association of Independent Schools: Annual and People of Color Conferences National Partnership for Educational Access Northwest Association of Independent Schools: Board Chairs and Heads, Fall Educators and Institutional Leadership Conferences People of Color in Independent Schools of Northern CA Private Schools with Public Purpose White Privilege Conference Wildwood Multicultural Leadership Institute</p>
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Proposed agenda

- **What** affinity is—and what it *isn't*
- **Why** affinity (not just because of *some* of the kids)
- **How**: principles of how schools can effectively and impactfully implement and integrate and strengthen affinity in their communities.
- **What else?** Language, tools, tactics and more questions

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Working agreements

- Confidentiality

“What’s said here, stays here. What’s learned here, leaves”
(SHS, Atherton).

- “Yes, and...”

- Make this useful

i.e. “Look for [your] learning” (*Fakequity*)



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Poll: Who’s in the room?

- We have affinity groups

- US only
- US and MS
- US, MS, and LS/PS

- We don’t have affinity groups

- US only
- US and MS
- US, MS, and LS/PS

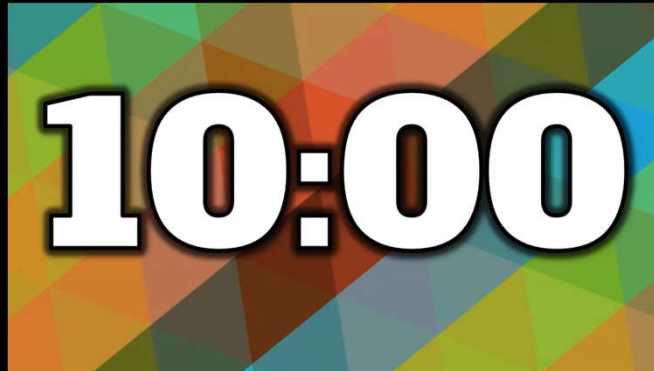


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In small groups

- Challenges?
- Questions and advice?

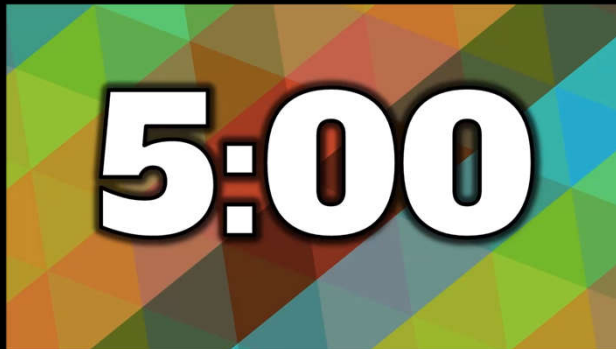


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In small groups, cont.

- ✓ Challenges? Questions and advice?
- Questions for the other group(s)?
- Report out on chart paper: 1 question for the whole group



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Small groups reflection

In your small groups with people at institutions in a similar place regarding affinity:

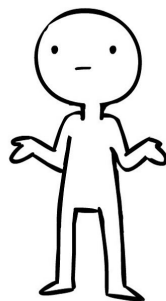
- Was it helpful? How?
- How was it *unhelpful*?
- What if you could *only* talk with people from similar affinity-status schools for this whole workshop? (i.e. no conversation as a whole group) What would the potential benefits and disadvantages be for you, and for us collectively?



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What *is* an affinity group?



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What is—and isn't—an affinity group?

A group designed around:

- A. A shared interest / focus
- B. A commitment to allyship / alliance
- C. A shared identity



Affinity is ***for***, not just ***about***.

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Affinity groups: A working definition

Affinity groups are intentional, mentored occasions that meet individuals' and groups' developmental needs to:

- learn about themselves and cultivate their self-concept
- with others who share an aspect of identity—but may otherwise be very different from each other,
- in order to add to the knowledge, skillsets, understandings and experiences that will help them thrive in their community.



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An affinity group is not
just another club.

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Affinity, experienced

By shifting an **under-represented** identity to **typical** representation, affinity reframes the power, status and experience of that identity.

By shifting a **well/over-represented** identity conscious and explicit, affinity reframes the power, status and experience of that identity.



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Privilege: a working definition

Unearned social advantage in the form of:

- entitlement to resources and opportunities;
- preferential treatment;
- or immunity from stigma, obligation or expectation

that is tacitly, automatically activated for members of a particular identity group.

See: Jones, "[The Right Hand of Privilege](#)," 2003.



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Affinity: Vital developmental experiences

- In affinity, I can learn about who I am and how I am that's "not just me."
- I can experience the *diversity* of people who identify like me.
- Particularly when my affinitized identity is "front line" in how my school community perceives me/how I frame my experience at my schools, affinity allows the rest of me to step forward.



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Identity
(Cross, 2009)

- Chameleonic
- Situational
- Social
- Historical
- Transactional

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So *why* affinity at your school?

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Why affinity for your school?

- “Cranbrook Schools are independent day and boarding schools that provide students with a challenging and comprehensive college preparatory education. We motivate students from diverse backgrounds to strive for intellectual, creative, and physical excellence, to develop a deep appreciation for the arts and different cultures, and to employ the technological tools of our modern age. Our schools seek to instill in students a strong sense of personal and social responsibility, the ability to think critically, and the competence to communicate and contribute in an increasingly global community” (*Mission*).
- “Kentucky Country Day School challenges its students to achieve their highest level of academic excellence and to grow into honorable men and women of confidence and integrity. We inspire personal growth through a diverse community and participation in arts, athletics, and community service. By doing so, Kentucky Country Day School prepares its students to live successful lives and make meaningful contributions to society. This mission is summed up in our motto: Citizen, Scholar, Steward” (*Mission*).
- The mission of University High School [of Indiana] is to expand the hearts and minds of students and to nurture excellence through academic, creative, and physical achievement” (*Mission*).

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Inclusion: a working definition

Beyond simply being nice or prohibiting discrimination, how a group actively creates an environment in which diverse members “share a sense of belonging, mutual respect, being valued for who they are, and supportive energy and commitment from others so that they can do their best work” (Miller & Katz, 2002).

The practice of inclusion begins with noticing and broadening our own sense of who “we” are and “how we do,” to cultivate shared rights and mutual stewardship of the community.



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Belonging: It's not just nice

- “[T]here is a statistically reliable, small-to moderate positive relationship between school belonging and academic performance.”
- “Moderate-to-large effects were found when academic performance was conceptualized either as a student’s GPA or as teacher ratings of the student’s current and future performance” (Moallem, 2013).
- “Social scientists studying school and work environments have identified ‘belonging uncertainty’ as a major roadblock to performance and achievement” (HermanMiller, 2017).



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Why affinity is vital

“The school respects, affirms, and protects the dignity and worth of each member of its community” (NAIS, *PGPs – Equity & Justice 2*).

“The school shall be attentive to the quality of life of all members of the learning community and take appropriate actions” (*ISACS Membership and Accreditation Guide: Appendix R, Standard C5, 2018*).

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“Isn’t affinity segregation?
Shouldn’t we be coming *together*
as a community?”



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Affinity is not segregation

Whereas the goal of **segregation** is to keep groups apart from each other, the purpose of **affinity** is to provide an opportunity in a diverse community for individuals who share an aspect of identity to intentionally be in majority with each other, in order to grow personally and collectively, so that they may more fully be themselves as members of their greater community.

Affinity is about strengthening concentric, overlapping rings of community.

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Segregation?

- Grade-levels
- Gendered groups (sports teams, health education classes, schools)

Segregation is:

1. an institutional mandate
2. that dictates where we do and don't belong
3. with the purpose of keeping us apart.



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Can we talk about race?

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I can see racial affinity for *older* kids.
But isn't lower school *too soon*?

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Racist sexist babies?

3 months:

- Show a positive bias toward attractive faces (Langlois, 1987)

6 months:

- Interested in skin color and gender differences (Bisson et al., 1955-1989)
- Able to “discriminate between different races” (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

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Developing racial identity is beneficial

- Across different ethnic groups including whites, “[t]he greater the ethnic identity, the higher the self-esteem, purpose in life and self-confidence” for adolescents (Martinez & Dukes, 1997).
- For African-Americans, stronger racial identity “has a positive impact on their life satisfaction”... “beliefs that others view African Americans more positively is related to life satisfaction because it leads individuals to perceive less racial discrimination” (Yap et al., 2011)

What might this ethnoracial-specific research suggest about the potential positive effects of developing multiple aspects of our identity (gender, socioeconomic, abilities, race...)?



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“Why don’t we have a group for white students? It’s not fair.”

and

“We can’t have a white identity group!”

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Being in the *majority* isn't the same as being in *affinity*.



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Why white affinity

- 5 yrs: 75% of white children raised by white adults don't talk about race at home (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)
- 10-12 yrs: internalize social and moral norms (Piaget, 1932)—ex. white children begin to demonstrate consciousness of appearing to be racially prejudiced, which can drive them to act in ways that do make them appear to be racially prejudiced (Apfelbaum, 2008)



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Affinity for white kids?

- Does your school teach any white history or culture?
- How could white affinity experiences enhance students' self-awareness, learning and mission-vital development?
- How does your school support white students in their identity growth?

Not just about whiteness:

- Does it matters if kids with other “typical” identities (from wealthy families, political majority, heterosexual) learn who they are? If so, how could affinity be a helpful occasion for their learning and growth?

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On “why isn’t there a group for...”

While the formation of affinity groups is typically student-led, your school should have:

- A mission-grounded vision and philosophy for affinity
- A process and criteria for community to propose affinity groups, including their vision and mission
- Expectations for affinity groups and affinity leaders
- Acknowledgment of the work of affinity groups and leaders on behalf of the school

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Vision and mission

- Think long-term: What impact do you hope your group will have? (Why will it have mattered that your group existed at your school?)
- What's the purpose for members? For the greater community?
- Among all students who identify as... whom *specifically* does your mission speak to? [Ex. students who feel marginalized already] Whom, even if they identify as... is your group not for?



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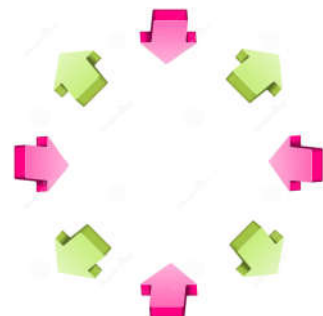
Affinity group functions

Internal

- Support to talk about experience at school?
- Place to chill?
- Space to learn about identity through current events/issues?
- "Safe" space?

External

- Community education?
- Community service?



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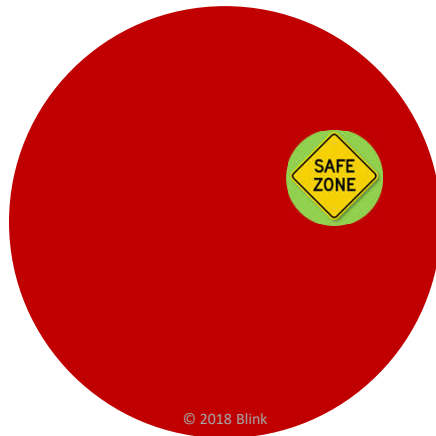
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So what do they *do* in affinity?
(Are they talking about us?)

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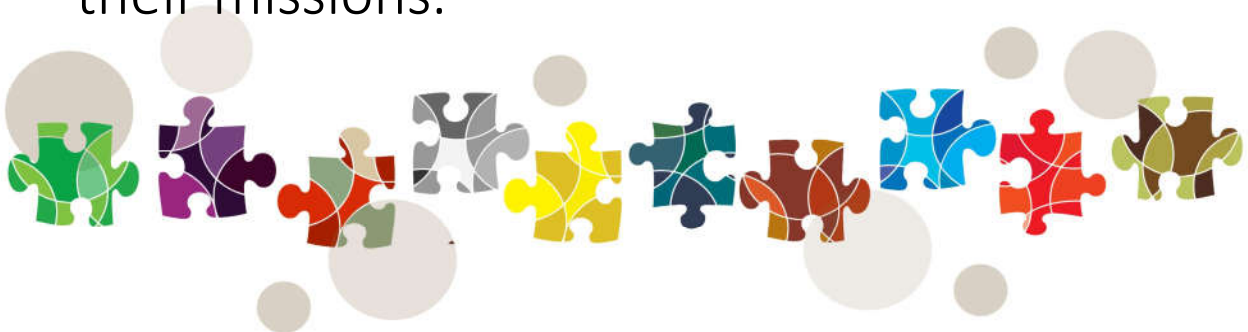
If affinity groups are a safe space,
what does that make the rest of the school?



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Affinity groups can—and may *need*—to have open meetings and ally with individuals or other groups to advance their missions.

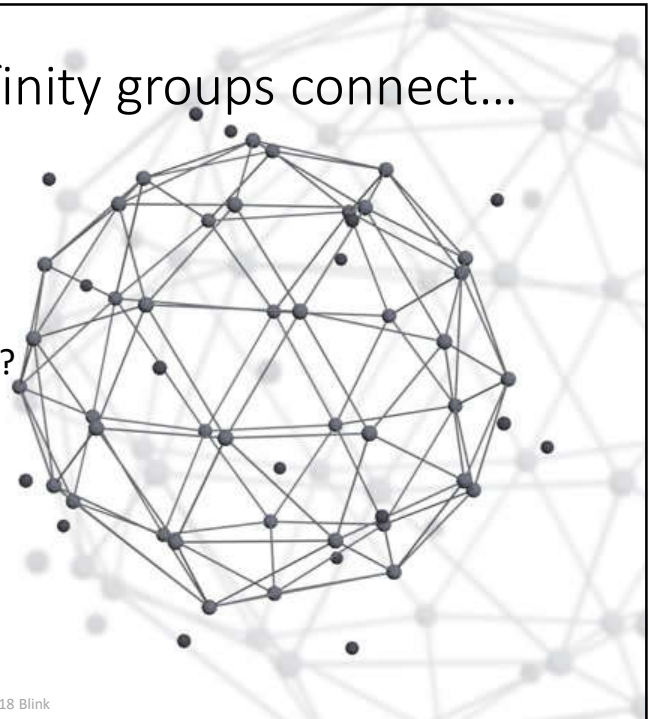


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How could/should affinity groups connect...

- To curriculum?
- To student life overall?
- To professional growth?
- To parent/guardian education?
- To admissions and hiring?
- To policy?

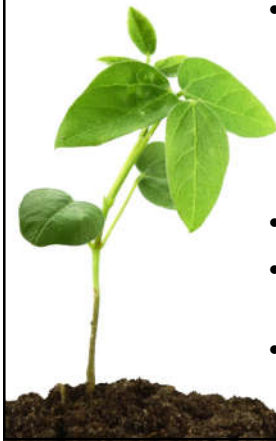


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What affinity groups need from schools

Ownership: The students may be leading this work, but that shouldn't mean we leave all the work to them.



- Education of:
 - Employees
 - Parent/guardian leaders
 - General parent/guardian and student bodies

To empower participation and reduce stigma

- Training and resources for affinity leaders
- Preparation for concerns and questions you can reasonably anticipate
- Ongoing support

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“I don't get it.
Why do we need
affinity groups?”



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Tips for what to say when...

- Normalize: We affinitize all the time—ex. academic grade levels, gendered sports teams, campus identities...
- Empathize: A question about affinity may have intellectual, moral and emotional aspects, and therefore, need a response in kind.
- Educate: It may help to clarify affinity and segregation.



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Ready, set...

- Next steps?
- Gots, needs, questions?



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