



**Presidio Hill
School**
Since 1918

Affinity Groups 101

Shared Understandings

<p>Diversity</p> <p>A difference that can be measured; quantitative. Diversity only exists in relation to others.</p>	<p>Multiculturalism</p> <p>The quality of the lived experience of those in the community; quantitative. It is possible to have high diversity, yet low multiculturalism.</p>
<p>Equality</p> <p>A strategy used to promote fairness that provides everyone with the same treatment and/or resources.</p>	<p>Equity</p> <p>An approach that provides people with what they need in order to be successful. Equity recognizes that access to resources is uneven due to cultural and institutional systems of oppression.</p>
<p>Safety</p> <p>A feeling of emotional trust and identity affirmation that is needed in order for learning to occur. Safety means being able to be in a space where you can be your full self.</p>	<p>Comfort</p> <p>A feeling of contentment or ease that does not require engaging in risk. Comfort is when you feel like you are in a space where your reality will be agreed with, validated, and unchallenged. You don't have to explain yourself to be understood and you don't have to justify your perspective because everyone shares it.</p>
<p>Intent</p> <p>This is what we hope will happen with our words, actions, or behavior, regardless of what actually happens.</p>	<p>Impact</p> <p>This is the consequence - positive or negative - of our words, actions, and behavior despite intention.</p>

What are affinity groups?

The term *affinity group* refers to people who share a similar identity or interest but not necessarily the same experience(s). Rather, participants recognize that identity has an effect on the way that they move through the world. Affinity groups make space for affirmation, reflection, dialogue, connection, and action.

Why do we need affinity groups?

Affinity groups enhance cross-cultural communication. The aim of affinity groups is to facilitate positive identity exploration and development working towards a larger goal of creating an inclusive and thriving learning environment. These kinds of groups offer a time and space for empowerment of the individual and of the group within the greater community. Research in schools has shown that affinity groups increase a student's sense of belonging which then has a positive impact on academic achievement. These are places where students and adults can develop a better understanding of how their own identity shapes their experiences. By becoming firmly rooted in their own identity, community members are in a much better position to understand the experiences of others.

Aren't affinity groups divisive and exclusive?

As humans, we gather in different affinities, sometimes unknowingly, all of the time - sports teams, religious groups, book clubs, etc. Affinity groups serve a particular purpose in schools and help underrepresented students in our community feel seen, heard, and affirmed. Research by Howard Stevenson, a psychologist and racial literacy scholar, has shown that when students feel invisible and disregarded within their school communities, anxiety and racial stress are created and serve as a barrier to learning. Additionally, research on stereotypes, bias, and prejudice has illuminated the need for strong identity development in order to support cross-cultural communication and healthy dialogue across difference.

How do affinity groups fit in with the other equity and inclusion work PHS is engaged in?

Anti-bias education and culturally responsive teaching focus on raising consciousness. As a school, we have embraced the Social Justice Standards, a component of the anti-bias framework created by Teaching Tolerance. The standards provide both teachers and students with developmentally appropriate language to engage in prejudice reduction and collective action. Anchored in the affective and cognitive aspects of learning, culturally responsive teaching aims to improve conditions for underrepresented groups. This pedagogical approach is rooted in expanding the learning capacity for students while building resilient, empowered learners. Affinity groups make space for students to explore and engage in collective action and they support both anti-bias and culturally responsive teaching goals.